

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
November 21, 2023**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Brian Chandler, Theodore Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco (via Zoom), Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini, Patrick Sheridan (via Zoom). Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Amy Frigulietti, Deputy Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney.

**CALL TO ORDER:** ► Chair Mercer called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Chair Mercer called for a moment of silence. All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** ► Chair Mercer reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are welcome to attend public board and committee meetings in person. Meetings are live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. In an effort to maximize citizen engagement opportunities, citizens will be able to continue to participate remotely via phone or Zoom. He announced that this meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV; this meeting may be recorded by others. ► Chair Mercer stated that Councilor Dellorco and Councilor Sheridan will be participating remotely via Zoom.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** ► Mr. Steve Sherlock, 13 Magnolia Drive, citizen reporter for Franklin Matters and Franklin Public Radio, welcomed back the Town Council members and congratulated the voters. He reminded the Town Council members to speak into their microphones so residents can hear them.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS: 6:00 PM.** ► *Franklin Tax Classification Hearing (Legislation for Action Items: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e).* ► Chair Mercer stated that he declared the public hearing open. ► Mr. Hellen introduced Mr. Chris Feeley, Chair, Board of Assessors, and Mr. Kevin Doyle, Director of Assessing. ► Mr. Feeley and Mr. Doyle addressed the Town Council. Mr. Feeley introduced new member Ms. Chery Hanly. He narrated the FY24 Tax Classification Hearing slideshow presentation which was provided in the meeting packet. He reviewed the first slide indicating the following four items were to be discussed: new growth, levy limit, median (middle) single-family valuation and tax, and classification options on single versus split tax rate. He stated that there was about \$58 million of new growth value which equates to approximately \$1.1 million in new tax. He reviewed the levy limit for FY22 and FY23 and how it was calculated for FY24. He said the total levy limit in round numbers is \$94.2. He reviewed the history of the median value which means the middle value of a single-family home in Franklin with the single rate, and the amount of tax which it would equate to for each year from 2005 to 2024. He said that for 2024, the middle tax bill is going to go up \$145. He discussed the split rate. He stated that if a split rate were use, it would decrease the residential rate by about \$1.40 and increase the commercial/industrial by about \$6.00. He said the new tax rate for this year will be \$11.79. ► Chair Mercer noted that it was over \$12 last year and that we are going down in the tax rate. ► Mr. Feeley explained that the Town has the ability to raise a certain levy, and it is based on all the properties' fair market value. He said that this past year the fair market value went up a lot; the levy limit can only go up by 2.5 percent. He explained that this year the value of the property went up far more than the 2.5 percent; so, the rate goes down. ► Town Council members asked questions and made comments. ► Councilor Chandler noted that pages two and three that were provided answer all questions. He said he votes for the single rate. ► Councilor Jones asked for last year's valuation. ► Mr. Feeley said in round numbers it is up about 10 percent. ► Councilor Hamblen thanked them for their hard work. She noted the three pages provided in the meeting packet documentation regarding how the tax bill changes is helpful. She said people get confused about the tax

rate and they think about industrial/commercial buildings that they could pay more. She said you cannot separate that, and it would raise the taxes on the mom-and-pop shops also. ► Councilor Frongillo said that he was looking for the commercial vacancy rate. ► Mr. Doyle said they develop that number annually; vacancy and collection loss is typically the vacancy aspect and is stratified by groups, industrial, office, small retail, larger retail. ► Mr. Feeley confirmed that is a number he can provide. ► Councilor Frongillo said it seems that the residential vacancy rate is at an all-time low. He said his guess is that it is more difficult to attract and obtain businesses than residents. He asked about exemptions and what is offered. ► Mr. Feeley said there are veterans, widow, and senior citizens exemptions. ► Councilor Frongillo said he was looking for small business exemptions. ► Ms. Hanly said she was an assessor in another town that has a split-tax rate, and she was formerly the assistant assessor in Bellingham and they had a split tax rate and a small business exemption. She explained that if a Town does not have a split tax rate, it is not appropriate to have a small business exemption. ► Councilor Frongillo asked about a residential exemption. He said the idea that x-amount of everyone's residential property would be exempted and then it would be shifted upward beyond the first \$10,000. ► Mr. Feeley explained that it is the first \$100,000 of residential property that is owner occupied. He said when that is done, the rate is going to go up within that class. ► Ms. Hanly said that most of the cities that do that are larger cities like Boston and Cambridge that have many non-owner-occupied properties or are resort communities. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger thanked them for their work on this. He said they have seen commercial deplete since Covid. He would not be in favor of placing additional burden on them as he would want them to stay in Franklin. He confirmed that everyone would see a new assessed value on their bills this year even though the rate is going down. ► Mr. Feeley reiterated that the average would go up approximately \$145 based on the middle. He noted that it is \$11.79 based on \$1,000 value. ► Councilor Pellegri said that people do not understand this, but she thinks that Mr. Feeley explained it well. ► Mr. Feeley said that all the work that is done is from Mr. Doyle and the people in his department; the credit is due there. ► Chair Mercer thanked the presenters for their presentation. He noted that there is a deadline to set the tax rate which is why they had this special meeting tonight. ► Chair Mercer declared the public hearing closed.

#### **LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:**

**Note:** Two-Thirds Vote requires six votes; Majority Vote requires majority of members present and voting.

- a. **Resolution 23-66: Tax Classification Residential Factor (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-66 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 23-66:** Tax Classification Residential Factor that the Residential Factor will be set at 1.000000 by **Hamblen. SECOND by Cormier-Leger. Discussion:** ► Mr. Feeley explained that to set at 1.0 is that it is not a split rate. ► **ROLL CALL VOTE: Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegri-YES.** ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.** (Councilor Sheridan's Zoom connection had failed).
- b. **Resolution 23-67: Tax Classification Open Space Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-67 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 23-67:** Tax Classification Open Space Exemption that there Not Be an exemption for open space by **Hamblen. SECOND by Cormier-Leger. No discussion.** ► **ROLL CALL VOTE: Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegri-YES.** ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.** (Councilor Sheridan's Zoom connection had failed).
- c. **Resolution 23-68: Tax Classification Small Business Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-68 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 23-68:** Tax Classification Small Business Exemption that there Not Be an exemption for small businesses by **Hamblen. SECOND by Cormier-Leger. No discussion.** ► **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

**Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES. ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.** (Councilor Sheridan's Zoom connection had failed).

- d. **Resolution 23-69: Tax Classification Residential Property Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-69 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 23-69: Tax Classification Residential Property Exemption that there Not Be an exemption for residential properties by **Hamblen. SECOND** by **Cormier-Leger. No discussion. ► ROLL CALL VOTE: Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES. ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.** (Councilor Sheridan's Zoom connection had failed).
- e. **Resolution 23-70: Tax Classification Senior Means Tested Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-70 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 23-70: Tax Classification Senior Means Tested Exemption that there Not Be an exemption for senior means tested by **Hamblen. SECOND** by **Cormier-Leger. Discussion:** ► Mr. Feeley stated that this is tied to the circuit breaker from the state so you would have to ask people for tax returns for circuit breaker credit they received. He said this could end up hurting them because it reduces their taxes and reduces their circuit breaker credit as well the following year. ► **ROLL CALL VOTE: Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES. ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.** (Councilor Sheridan's Zoom connection had failed).

**ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Hamblen. SECOND by Jones. No discussion. ► ROLL CALL VOTE: Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES. ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.** (Councilor Sheridan's Zoom connection had failed).

**Meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Judith Lizardi  
Recording Secretary