

Town of Franklin

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January 29, 2019

The Honorable Karen E. Spilka
Senate President
Room 332
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 01233

Rebecca Rausch
State Senator
Room 419
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 01233

Jeffrey N. Roy
State Representative
Room 236
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 01233

Re: 2019-2020 Legislative Priorities

Dear Madame President & the Franklin Legislative Delegation:

The Town of Franklin takes this opportunity to thank you and the rest of the Franklin legislative delegation for their support in our legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session. We greatly appreciate the willingness of you and your staff to be available to listen to our priorities.

Charter School financing

Our first priority for the upcoming legislative session is legislation aimed to fix the charter school funding formula, specifically to eliminate, or reduce, the responsibility of cities and towns to pay the per pupil cost for children in town that attend charter schools. The Town does not have any objection to charter schools as a statewide education policy. In fact, the Town has an excellent charter school in Franklin and have always had a strong working relationship with the school. We have supported that institution as a choice for families. That said, the current formula has been penalizing public school districts for decades and should be overhauled as part of any education reform package this legislative session.

To illustrate this point, the Town of Franklin pays approximately a net of \$3.6 million a year (FY19) to fund the local charter school, which is also equivalent to the demand our school district has for the coming Fiscal Year 2020 budget presented by the Superintendent. Since Fiscal Year 2009, the Town has transferred almost \$37 million to the charter school from money that would normally be used in the Franklin Public School District. This annual amount is the equivalent of a large property tax override or two smaller overrides every year, which is something the Town will unquestionably need to do in the future in order to maintain current service levels.

The Town believes the public is seeking bold change on this issue. In 2016, the Commonwealth held a ballot question regarding expansion of the cap on charter schools in Massachusetts during the highest turnout in state election history. That ballot question was soundly defeated 62% opposed to increasing the cap on charter schools to 38% in favor statewide. Locally, Franklin voters voted even more overwhelmingly to oppose the expansion of charter schools at that ballot question. Franklin voted 34%

in favor of expanding the cap and 66% against the proposed expansion of charter schools in Massachusetts (results attached). We believe this was a message sent from the voters of this state, and in Town, to take a pause on the expansion of charter schools. But it is also a message to increase support to public school districts due to the outstanding success of our public school districts since Education Reform in 1993. The main components of the Education Reform Act of 1993, including MCAS and Chapter 70, have all seen major reforms and smaller legislative fixes many times since 1993. The charter school funding formula should be next in line to be reexamined and reformed to relieve municipalities of this financial burden.

As the Town was setting its legislative priorities for the upcoming session, it came to our attention through the Governor's budget proposal this past week that the Town could have as much as \$6.33 million siphoned out of our local aid in FY20 and redirected to the local charter school -- a potential increase of over \$2 million than the previous year. While we understand this is a worse case scenario and the actual number will certainly be lower than this number, the structural deficit will remain for the foreseeable future as the Charter School doubles in size over the next few years. The trends that occur will only deepen the structural budget deficit in our town and school budget and impacting the families that attend our Public School District.

Our state government should be ashamed they have allowed this system to thrive for so long. With the Governor and other legislative leaders proposing education reforms this session, we believe now is the time to fix the Charter School Funding formula and stop penalizing public school districts for charter school enrollment. The Commonwealth can do better than this for all of our students!

Firefighter cancer liability & smoking

Second, the Town requests your offices revisit and make corrections to two laws approved in the last legislative session: (1) Chapter 148 of the Acts of 2018, "An Act Further Regulating the Disability Benefits Provided to Certain Police Officers and Firefighters" and (2) Chapter 210 of the Acts of 2018, "An Act providing Firefighters and Police Officers with the opportunity to enter a smoking cessation program prior to termination". How the legislature can give a cancer presumption for lung cancer, relieve the 30-year prohibition of firefighters and police officers to smoke and then force the municipality to pay the medical costs is an astonishing and regressive revelation from the last legislative session.

First, the Town agrees there should be a cancer presumption for firefighters and fully supports this concept as the Legislature approved Chapter 148 of the Acts of 2018. However, we disagree that municipalities are the entity who should pay for the related medical costs. One claim, whether it was related to the job or not, will significantly harm most municipal finances. The Town encourages the Legislature to address this issue and have health care providers pay the associated medical costs just like any other medical procedure.

Second, the Town strongly disagrees with the law, Chapter 210 of the Acts of 2018, which now allows for firefighters and police officers to begin smoking again by offering smoking cessation programs before termination. The law prohibiting public safety officials from smoking has been on the books for 30 years and has increased the overall health of our public safety officials. The Town believes Chapter 210 of the Acts of 2018 is highly regressive and dilutes the cancer presumption law. Allowing firefighters and police officers to smoke again seems contradictory to sound fiscal policy and good public health principles for public safety officials. The Town encourages the Legislature to amend this law and return to prohibiting smoking for all firefighters and police officers.

Commercial Solar

The Town seeks legislative action to correct recent court decisions to make commercial solar farms tax exempt. We encourage the legislature to make commercial solar facilities pay their fair share of property taxes like all other commercial entities and residents. Commercial solar facilities are for-profit companies and should pay their fair share in taxation as being a corporate entity.

Increase GATRA funding

The Town supports the Legislature moving to increase the state funding to the GATRA regional transportation services. For the first time in 15 years, GATRA is increasing their fares due to struggling funding. The increase in fares are going to directly affect many seniors and low income families in our community. Anything your offices can do to support GATRA will only assist those most in need have the ability to do their errands, make doctor's appointments and visit the Senior Center.

Franklin State Forest Parking Lot

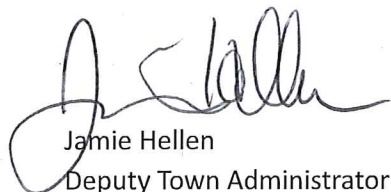
Finally, the Town requests a \$100,000 legislative appropriation in the FY20 state budget for the Franklin State Forest to build a parking lot on state property near the cross streets of Grove Street and Beaver Street. This parking lot will provide great access to the state forest and the SNETT trail network we are currently building, with signage and maps. Patrons of the forest should have a safe and accessible place to park. The lack of parking has become a huge public safety hazard as cars continue to park along Grove street, which is in our industrial zone and is a cut through for thousands of cars daily. The Town just invested a significant amount of money in the redesign of the Grove Street/Beaver Street intersection for traffic calming and a parking lot would enhance pedestrian options.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Nutting
Town Administrator



Jamie Hellen
Deputy Town Administrator

Cc: Puja Mehta, District Director, Office of Senate President Karen E. Spilka

**Massachusetts
State Election
Franklin**

November 8, 2016

COUNTY COMMISSIONER									
BLANKS	2435	2395	2355	2772	2562	2278	2738	2676	20211
FRANCIS W O'BRIEN	1278	1299	1363	1465	1443	1256	1501	1354	10959
JOSEPH P. SHEA	649	651	636	697	727	659	741	711	5471
Write-in votes	24	21	20	40	32	33	26	29	225
Total	4386	4366	4374	4974	4764	4226	5006	4770	36866
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
QUESTION 1									
BLANKS	90	97	109	86	90	97	89	76	734
YES	815	843	878	934	881	843	931	888	7013
NO	1288	1243	1200	1467	1411	1173	1483	1421	10686
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
QUESTION 2									
BLANKS	38	44	40	39	45	43	38	24	311
YES	758	819	804	943	853	774	812	820	6583
NO	1397	1320	1343	1505	1484	1296	1653	1541	11539
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
QUESTION 3									
BLANKS	54	48	46	47	50	46	56	39	386
YES	1680	1656	1677	1897	1825	1654	1882	1807	14078
NO	459	479	464	543	507	413	565	539	3969
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
QUESTION 4									
BLANKS	31	32	28	29	26	24	43	22	235
YES	1096	1060	1157	1164	1226	1163	1181	1157	9204
NO	1066	1091	1002	1294	1130	926	1279	1206	8994
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433

**Massachusetts
State Election
Franklin**

November 8, 2016

	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
PRESIDENT & VICE-PRESIDENT									
BLANKS	34	24	31	41	49	30	43	32	284
CLINTON and KAINE	1132	1130	1127	1236	1252	1139	1355	1156	9527
JOHNSON and WELD	109	112	108	129	119	138	137	136	988
STEIN and BARAKA	21	19	20	16	19	29	22	26	172
TRUMP and PENCE	843	846	844	989	885	730	888	971	6996
Write-in votes	54	52	57	76	58	47	58	64	466
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
REP. IN CONGRESS									
BLANKS	90	91	64	72	100	92	94	103	706
JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, III	1412	1399	1470	1535	1590	1436	1604	1438	11884
DAVID A. ROSA	684	691	650	878	687	580	802	843	5815
Write-in votes	7	2	3	2	5	5	3	1	28
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
COUNCILLOR									
BLANKS	284	248	224	247	298	228	292	282	2103
ROBERT L. JUBINVILLE	1027	1087	1123	1136	1218	1110	1168	1059	8928
BRAD WILLIAMS	875	846	837	1097	861	770	1040	1041	7367
Write-in votes	7	2	3	7	5	5	3	3	35
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
SENATOR IN GENERAL COURT 2ND MIDDLESEX & NORFOLK									
BLANKS					693	580		762	2035
KAREN E. SPILKA					1656	1497		1583	4736
Write-in votes					33	36		40	109
Total					2382	2113		2385	6880
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
SENATOR IN GENERAL COURT NORFOLK, BRISTOL & MIDDLESEX									
BLANKS	281	266	244	287			299		1377
RICHARD J. ROSS	1213	1221	1214	1496			1465		6609
KRISTOPHER K. ALEKSOV	692	693	728	700			737		3550
Write-in votes	7	3	1	4			2		17
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487			2503		11553
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
REP. IN GENERAL COURT									
BLANKS	482	458	436	532	528	443	489	613	3981
JEFFREY N. ROY	1683	1695	1714	1911	1825	1640	1990	1735	14193
Write-in votes	28	30	37	44	29	30	24	37	259
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total
SHERIFF									
BLANKS	589	538	494	655	613	525	656	698	4768
MICHAEL G. BELLOTTI	1584	1622	1665	1797	1749	1564	1827	1658	13466
Write-in votes	20	23	28	35	20	24	20	29	199
Total	2193	2183	2187	2487	2382	2113	2503	2385	18433
	Pct.1	Pct.2	Pct.3	Pct.4	Pct.5	Pct.6	Pct.7	Pct.8	Total