

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 6, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Andrew Bissanti, Brian Chandler, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney; Alecia Alleyne, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

CALL TO ORDER: ►Chair Mercer called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 now welcome to attend public board and committee meetings in person. Additionally, in an effort to maximize citizen engagement opportunities and comply with open meeting law regulations, citizens will be able to continue to participate remotely via phone or Zoom. The meetings will also be live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. He stated that this meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV and may also be recorded by others. ►Chair Mercer announced that he appointment Councilor Chandler to the Budget Subcommittee.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ►Ms. Karen Miller, 246 Washington Street, stated that she received a registered letter to attend a Planning Board meeting earlier this week as a company is looking to put a large commercial business at the end of Talf Drive across the wetlands in a residential area. She stated that there are many concerns about this project such as traffic, the Charter School in the area, and 18 wheelers delivering items. She would like the Town Council to be aware of this issue. ►Ms. Jane Callaway-Tripp, 607 Maple Street, stated that her daughter is putting on a 14-mile walk for the 13 Fallen Soldiers; information is available on social media. She stated that the military and American flags will be carried. If a person would like to attend and is not on social media, reach out to Ms. Callaway-Tripp and she will provide information.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ►*September 1, 2021, and September 15, 2021.* ►**MOTION to Approve** the September 1, 2021 meeting minutes by **Dellorco. SECOND by Jones. No discussion.** ►**VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.** ►**MOTION to Approve** the September 15, 2021 meeting minutes by **Dellorco. SECOND by Jones. No discussion.** ►**VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: ►*Franklin Cultural Council - 2021 Cultural Festival.*

►Councilor Frongillo read aloud a proclamation from the Town Council recognizing Ms. Kaye Kelly of the Franklin Cultural Council on the 2021 Cultural Festival. ►Ms. Kelly reviewed the mission and vision for the festival. She stated that the theme of the festival was community unity. She shared quotes from people in the community. She requested that the Town Council add a line item to the budget to help continue the festival in 2022; however, they will continue to look for sponsorships. She said that events like this will help the community heal; she is in favor of more events like this. She thanked Mr. Hellen and everyone for their support. ►Chair Mercer thanked Ms. Kelly and her committee; he stated that it was a great event.

APPOINTMENTS: ►*Susan Younis - Municipal Affordable Housing Trust.* ►Councilor Jones read the appointment. ►**MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Susan L. Younis to serve as member of the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, with a term to expire on June 30, 2022, by **Jones. SECOND by Dellorco. Discussion:** ►Mr. Hellen stated that Ms. Younis applied some time ago and recently

this vacancy came up. ► Ms. Younis thanked the Town Council for the opportunity and reviewed her experience. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**

► **Candice Narsasian - Cultural District Committee.** ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Candice Narsasian to serve as a member of the Cultural District Committee, with a term to expire on June 30, 2024, by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco.**

Discussion: ► Mr. Hellen stated that Ms. Narsasian is relatively new to Franklin; he noted that she will bring her social media and web design knowledge to the Cultural District Committee. ► Ms. Narsasian stated that she is excited to be part of the committee. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**

► **Anne Bergen - Franklin TV Board of Directors.** ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Anne Bergen to serve as a member of the Franklin TV Board of Directors, with a term to expire on June 30, 2024, by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:**

► Mr. Hellen stated that both Ms. Bergen and Mr. Norman have been long-term volunteers on the Franklin TV Board of Directors. ► Ms. Bergen stated that Franklin TV is a gem in the community; their board has the honor of overseeing all the activity of this organization. She stated that Mr. Norman has been an incredible presence on this board. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**

► **Ken Norman - Franklin TV Board of Directors.** ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of William K. Norman to serve as a member of the Franklin TV Board of Directors, with a term to expire on June 30, 2024, by **Jones. SECOND** by **Hamblen. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-7, No-1, Absent-0.** (Mr. Bissanti voted no.)

HEARINGS: None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► **Franklin School Department Update to Town Council: Dr. Sara Ahern, Superintendent of Schools.** ► Dr. Ahern noted that there were School Committee members attending the meeting. She narrated a slideshow presentation which was provided in the Town Council's meeting packet. She stated that tonight they would be discussing an enrollment/staffing update including pandemic recovery; financial update including Chapter 70/new school spending, Franklin per pupil spending, and COVID relief funding; and school facility planning including Davis Thayer closure and master facilities plan. She reviewed the strategy for district improvement 2018-2021 which included: 1. social-emotional well-being of students and staff, 2. engaging and rigorous curriculum, 2. high-quality instruction to meet the academic needs of each learner, and 4. effective two-way communication to support student learning. She reviewed the 2021 enrollment preliminary information and noted that three of the elementary schools have more enrollment than projected. She stated that there has been a decrease of enrollment in the middle schools. She stated this is primarily due to decreased birth rates. She stated that the high school is also experiencing a decline in enrollment. She stated that in total last year Franklin public school enrollment was 4,848 and this year's enrollment is at 4,771. She reviewed staff headcount and noted that roles have evolved to accommodate expanded student needs. She stated that the schools have provided adjustment counselors. She reviewed the provided graphs showing elementary enrollment versus number of elementary classroom teachers 2008 to 2022; the average class size is 20.6. She reviewed the provided graph showing middle school enrollment versus number of grades 6 to 8 classroom teachers 2019 to 2022. ► Ms. Miriam Goodman, School Business Administrator, reviewed each slide of the financial update, which was provided in the Town Council's meeting packet. She provided an update of a district's Chapter 70 aid and reviewed that it is determined in three basic steps: 1.) It defines and calculates a foundation budget, an adequate funding level for each district, given the specific grades, programs, and demographic characteristics of its students. The FY2022 foundation budget

reflects Student Opportunity Act. 2.) It then determines an equitable local contribution, how much of that “foundation budget” should be paid for by each city and town’s property tax, based upon the relative wealth of the community. 3.) The remainder is funded by Chapter 70 state aid. She explained that Franklin will only receive minimum aid, \$30 per pupil, until the excess base is reduced. She stated that enrollment is down 4 percent; the foundation budget is down 0.67 percent. She reviewed the required local contribution as a percentage of foundation budget is 71 percent. She reviewed that in-district per pupil expenditure is \$14,698; the state average is \$16,936. She discussed net school spending to comply with state law. She noted that in FY20, Franklin spent \$7.6 million more than required net school spending. ► Dr. Ahern discussed the slides reviewing the impact of the pandemic on funding and implications. She stated that there were not massive layoffs; they were able to recall the staff. She reviewed highlights of strategic pandemic-related investments. She reviewed the major takeaways which included: current proposed FY22 budget plans for continued support of students in post-pandemic recovery; prioritizing class sizes and academic/SEL interventions; anticipating being able to support the FY22 budget with available revenue sources and supplemental state and federal aid to meet pandemic learning needs; Franklin is in the 25th percentile for per pupil expenditure and 22nd percentile for actual net school spending; percentage of local funding towards the FPS budget has increased and will continue to increase over time; and need to be planning for the long-term learning needs of FPS students. She discussed school facility planning including the facilities planning timelines and noted the implications of the pandemic on facilities planning. She discussed that space needs have changed based on the pandemic. ► Town Council members asked questions, made comments, confirmed information provided on the slides, and thanked the presenters for their presentation. ► In response to questions, Dr. Ahern agreed that if unfunded mandates were not upon them, they would have more funding to use for other purposes. She stated that in the budget materials they break down the mandated professional development amount. ► Ms. Goodman confirmed that any fundings allocated to the School Department that they do not spend is returned to the Town; generally, the School Department spends 99 percent of the funding, so there is very little returned. She reviewed the per pupil spending calculation. ► Dr. Ahern stated, in response to how Franklin test scores compare to the towns that are providing more per pupil spending, that she did not have that answer tonight. She discussed that they are seeing some students who are not at grade level expectations due to the pandemic year; she stated curriculum specialists and interventionists are providing a critical role in addressing this. She discussed that the MCAS may not reflect higher level skills of students. She stated that from the Department of Education, they are not allowed to do only remote learning at this time. She noted that there are trends that have emerged regarding drug addiction and gave thanks to the SAFE Coalition. She discussed how success/outcomes are measured. She stated that they are in an environment where they measure it with test scores. She stated that there are remarkable things going on at the high school where students are exceeding at national challenges such as DECA and the mock trial team. She stated that post-secondary pursuits are a way to measure success. She stated that in younger students, measures of success include the eighth-grade civics projects. She stated that she would love to see more project-based learning. She reviewed the U.S. News Report and stated that the student to teacher ratio is not favorable and it does cost the Town in the rankings; they also look at test scores which are related to the student to teacher ratio. She reviewed the formula for receiving the expected local contribution from the Town and the student enrollment decrease. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed the aggregate wealth model enacted in 2006 which balances income wealth and land values in the community. He stated that the town administrator presents the Town budget as part of the process. He stated that all departments are obligated to give the finance director and town administrator a proposed FY23 budget; then around March, all departments are met with and every line item is evaluated. In April, the Finance Committee process begins and the Town Council budget review process is in May. He stated there is a dialogue between him and every department including the schools regarding each department’s proposed budget. He encouraged citizens to look at the budget narratives and documents and participate in the upcoming meetings to lend their voices to these issues. ► Dr. Ahern confirmed that the Franklin schools are having food supply-chain issues. She stated that the percentage of students choosing to go to private schools is staying the same. She stated that there seems to be an increase in home schooling. She explained that although there are so many specialists, it is not

taking away from the classroom. She stated that, now, a team of people are supporting the classroom; there is a more diverse set of needs in the classroom. ► Director of Public Facilities Michael D'Angelo stated that the final phase install is being completed this week; all buildings will have UVI installed. ► Ms. Goodman discussed the bus driver shortage. She stated that all students are begin transported to and from school; after school activities and athletic runs are having struggles being supported.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- b. **Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- c. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** ► Ms. Hamblen stated that the next meeting is October 20th prior to the Town Council meeting.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

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

- a. ***Resolution 21-54: A Resolution Adopting the Town of Franklin 2021 Housing Production Plan (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-54 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-54: A Resolution Adopting the Town of Franklin 2021 Housing Production Plan by **Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated approval of the plan was a goal for the Town Council and Town Administrator for this legislative session, as voted on by the Town Council in January 2020. The last local and state approved plan was in 2012 and is outdated. He reminded the community that this is only a plan; there are no requirements to implement any of these items. This plan will very likely receive state approval for checking all of the boxes they require. The plan received unanimous support from the Town Council's Economic Development Committee (EDC) in June. The Planning Board unanimously approved the Plan at its September 27, 2021, meeting. He stated that HPP guidance requires Town Council and Planning Board approval in order for the State to approve the plan. He thanked all those involved in the preparation of this plan. ► Councilor Bissanti stated that he hopes they can obtain these goals; he thinks it can be done. This is a framework and road map. ► Mr. Hellen confirmed this plan includes Franklin Ridge. ► Councilor Chandler stated that senior housing is very important. ► Councilor Hamblen stated that this was one of the EDC goals. She thanked the Department of Planning and Community Development for their hard work on this. ► Councilor Jones stated that this plan is a positive step forward to address affordable housing. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed the timeline for approval when this is sent to the State. He stated that there are 60 units of senior housing at Franklin Ridge. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**
- b. ***Resolution 21-55: Gift Acceptance - Veterans Department, \$1000 (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-55 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-55: Gift Acceptance - Veterans Department, \$1000 by **Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen thanked Mr. Joseph Halligan for his generous donation. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**
- c. ***Resolution 21-56: Gift Acceptance - Conservation Commission, \$1000 (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-56 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-56: Gift Acceptance - Conservation Commission, \$1000 by **Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen thanked Mr. Joseph Halligan for his generous donation. He explained that Mr. Halligan has donated many times over the years to Earth Day. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**
- d. ***Resolution 21-57: Gift Acceptance - Town of Franklin, Dog Park Gazebo (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-57 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-57: Gift Acceptance - Town of Franklin, Dog Park Gazebo by **Dellorco. SECOND by**

Hamblen. Discussion: ► Mr. Hellen thanked the donors for their generosity. He noted the donation has been approved by the Building Commissioner. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**

- e. Resolution 21-58: Cable Funds in Support of PEG Service and Programming per MGL Ch. 44, §53F3/4 (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-58 - Majority Vote).* ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-58: Cable Funds in Support of PEG Service and Programming per MGL Ch. 44, §53F3/4 by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that this is a requirement by the State. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► Mr. Hellen announced that the Town will be awarded a \$2.2 million MassWorks Grant for the reconstruction at the corner of Washington Street and Grove Street. He gave a shout-out to the Planning Board as they began the conversation based on traffic studies. He stated that between this grant, authorizations made by the Town Council, and host agreement monies, the Town will have \$3 million to improve the intersection. He thanked the legislative delegation, Marcus Partners, and others for their work on obtaining this grant. He stated that the Town was awarded \$75,000 by the Department of Housing and Community Development for a community planning grant. He stated that the downtown study that was financed will be paid for by this grant program. He stated that \$22,000 was received by the Chief of Police in a road safety grant to allow mobilize controls to help with speeding, seatbelts, and distracted driving. He stated that the Senior Center is implementing a vaccination policy; as of October 18, 2021, to enter the Senior Center, everyone will have to show proof of vaccination or they will have to wear a mask while not consuming food or beverages in the café. He noted that 49 Franklin residents have died as a result of COVID. He stated that for all Town sponsored events held in the Senior Center, that is the policy. He noted that private events held in the Senior Center do not have to follow the policy. He stated that the Senior Center staff recommends all people wear masks, if possible. He stated that there are 51 active COVID cases in Franklin. He stated that the 215 Prospect Street appraisal has been completed at \$2.065 million. The next step is that the opponents can come back with their appraisal. He stated that this week there will be another open house at the Fire Department on Saturday, October 9th, from 10 AM to 2 PM. Regarding municipal aggregation, National Grid's rate as of last week was 14.8 cents per KWh; the Town of Franklin is at 10.7 cents per KWh. He stated that according to Lisa Audette of the Franklin Housing Authority, the waiting list for Franklin housing, although not all on the waiting list are from Franklin, shows 6,087 have applied for public housing.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: ► Councilor Frongillo stated that he is excited of the passing of the HPP. ► Councilor Bissanti stated that his homeless presentation will be forthcoming. ► Councilor Pellegri stated that she would like the Housing Authority to provide an update to the Town Council.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Pellegri noted the passing of Mr. Julio Renzi, former Town Council member. ► Councilor Hamblen thanked the School Department for their presentation. She thanked the Franklin Downtown Partnership and all others involved in the Harvest Festival; it was wonderful. ► Councilor Bissanti stated that he attended the Veterans coffee; he commended Health Director Cathleen Liberty as she did a great presentation on COVID and vaccinations. He stated that the Harvest Festival was wonderful. He noted the Recreation Department and all they do. ► Councilor Chandler noted that a police exam will be given in December. He thanked the Town, DPW, and others for the great work done at the dog park; he thanked Councilor Bissanti and his family for the generous donation. ► Councilor Frongillo thanked the Downtown Partnership for the fabulous Harvest Festival. ► Councilor Jones noted the successful festivals that have been held in Franklin. He thanked the School Department for the presentation. ► Councilor Dellorco stated that the Harvest Festival was great. He thanked Councilor Bissanti for his generous donation. He gave a shout-out to the high school basketball team. ► Chair Mercer thanked Dr. Ahern for the presentation. He stated that the Harvest Festival was great success for the community. He gave condolences to the Renzi family.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Dellorco. SECOND by Jones. No Discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary