

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
November 17, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Brian Chandler, Theodore Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini, Patrick Sheridan. 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, 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.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Mr. Maxwell Morrongiello, 127 Central Park Terrace, stated that he is here because at the next meeting the Town Council will have the opportunity to lower the property tax burden faced by middle and low-income families. He discussed a fixed amount exemption for single-family homes. He stated that higher income households would contribute a more equitable share. He asked that the Town Council add a motion to the agenda at the tax hearing meeting to assign a committee to study the proposal with the intention for it to be implemented the following year. He urged the Town Council to act regarding this proposal to promote equity and fairness and most importantly support a tax cut to Franklin residents who need it. ► Ms. Karen Miller, 246 Washington Street, thanked Mr. Hellen for a prompt response to her email. She stated that there are two major projects affecting her neighborhood: one on King Street and one on Washington Street. She stated that it appears there are many meetings going on regarding these projects and noted that there are two meetings scheduled for tomorrow night. She asked for coordination of the meetings so the neighbors can participate and be present. She stated that she wants to make sure everyone is aware of what is going on. She noted that with the major project on Washington Street they expect to have over 135 parking spaces. At the King Street interchange, a 30,000 sq. ft. distribution facility is proposed to be built with the expectation to have over 500 vehicle trips daily. She discussed how busy the traffic is in the area already. ► Mr. James Derick, 35 Wampanoag Drive, stated that tomorrow night there will be an event at the Franklin High School from 6 PM to 8 PM hosted by the Franklin Substance Abuse Task Force. It is a community conversation to help identify and address mental health and substance abuse among families in the community particular to the schools. There will be introduction and panel discussions. He stated that it is a great way to learn about mental health issues and ask questions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ► *October 20, 2021.* ► **MOTION to Approve** the October 20, 2021 meeting minutes by Dellorco. **SECOND** by Hamblen. **No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: None.

APPOINTMENTS: None.

HEARINGS: None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► *Franklin Housing Authority.* ► Mr. Hellen noted that this is an item that was brought forth by a few Town Council members regarding the various resources that the Housing Authority provides. ► Housing Authority Chair George Danello and Housing Authority Agent/Executive Director Lisa Audette discussed the housing application process and what they see as a tremendous need from the community for housing. Mr. Danello noted Housing Authority member Chris Feeley and State appointed member Andrew Kepple were in the audience. Ms. Audette stated that applicants now enter the waiting list through a state system and not directly through the housing authorities through which they want to reside. As of today, there are 2,039 senior/disabled applications, 6,391 applicants for family housing, and 126 applicants for congregate housing on the waiting list. Of that, 114 senior/disabled housing applicants and 200 families are local applicants. She discussed the Champ system and how it works. She stated that the Champ system can be accessed online at [Mass.gov/apply](https://www.mass.gov/apply) for public housing. An applicant would fill in all information and claim their preference and priority at that time. She reviewed all preferences and priorities on the application in relation to how the applicant is placed on the waiting list. For instance, she explained that Priority One is for someone who is displaced by natural forces such as a fire not due to their own negligence, Priority Four is on the list most often which is for applicants who are homeless or facing homelessness, and Priority Seven is for a standard applicant. She noted there are two preference categories: Preference One is for local residents and Preference Two is for veterans. She reviewed how the applicants are chosen from the list; she discussed people on the list who are already verified and qualified. She reviewed the annual audits by the state; she stated that waiting lists are being reviewed very closely to the point where the state looks at the application, applicant number, who was housed, and who was offered units. She stated that there is very little room to sway from the regulations. ► Town Council members asked questions. ► In response, Ms. Audette reiterated that there are 314 people on the list from Franklin. She reviewed the waiting list priorities and how an applicant can keep their placement on the waiting list. She stated that in order to try to keep Franklin people housed in Franklin, the Town can petition the state legislature to change the laws and regulations regarding public housing. ► Councilor Pellegrini asked Town Council members to start working on something like this to petition the legislature so they can take care of their own residents first. ► Mr. Cerel stated that this would require an overall amendment to current legislation. ► Mr. Hellen stated that there are two legislative routes: home rule petition and determining what bills/general legislation that was filed this session. He stated that he would reach out to Rep. Jeff Roy. Mr. Hellen noted that every town would want the same thing. He stated that this is a complicated issue. He noted that the funding for this comes from the state. ► Ms. Audette explained the process of transferring a current tenant to a different unit due to medical reasons or a smaller unit request and stated that it is an administrative transfer. Moving to a larger unit requires going on a waiting list. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed the Franklin Ridge project which is 6.5 acres of Town land donated to the Housing Affordable Trust. The Town contributed \$500,000 to the project, and staff did the work to get it permitted through the ZBA. It is 60 units of senior housing for Town of Franklin; it is a \$25 million project. Mr. Hellen stated that he had a complete study done of all public land in Franklin that could be put forth to housing. There are 3.25 acres of property on the town line near Wrentham on Washington Street. He stated that through the CPA, he will hire a consultant to essentially plan out the two pieces of land for the feasibility of doing another eight units of housing there. He noted that there is not much else for land available in Town. He stated that at the end of the day, it comes down to money. He explained that the state and federal level need to allocate more money to housing. ► Ms. Audette stated that Franklin is a desirable location due to the train station and schools; it is a warm and inviting community. She does not know where the people who list Franklin as their preferred location are coming from. She confirmed that there is no answer as to how long it will take someone on the list to get housing. ► Mr. Hellen stated that there is always an opportunity for the private sector to be involved in

housing construction. There are opportunities for in-kind donations. ► Councilor Jones asked for some logical, viable, next steps to solve this problem. He stated that he would like to see more discussion on this at a subcommittee level. ► Ms. Audette reviewed that the Franklin Housing Authority has 218 units in total. She explained how the list of applicants is pulled and the process to be followed when there is an opening. She reviewed funding priorities; buildings must be taken care of to protect the inside. They apply for every grant and program available. She reviewed the ages of the affordable housing units in Franklin and the cost of upkeep and needed renovations; they have a long list of needs. ► Mr. Cerel stated that the Housing Authority is a state agency; they are not a local agency. They are governed by the state statute and regulations. Construction costs are staggering. The driver has to be the state and federal programs to provide the funds to construct significant housing. ► Mr. Maxwell Morrongiello, 127 Central Park Terrace, stated that the town of Boxboro has a voucher, rental assistance program that is funded by the Community Preservation Act. He asked if that is something that Franklin could do. ► Mr. Hellen stated that on January 4 & 8, 2022, the CPA will have their first two public hearings for people to bring their ideas forth. He stated that vouchers are certainly eligible under CPA. He stated a cautionary note that the voucher program is not a mechanism to increase units; it is a method to subsidize low-income individuals. ► Chair Mercer thanked the presenters for their presentation.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- b. **Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- c. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** ► None.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

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

- a. ***Resolution 21-68: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Dept (\$1,000), Historical Commission (\$100) (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-68 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-68: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Dept (\$1,000), Historical Commission (\$100) by **Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen.** ► Mr. Hellen thanked the donors. He introduced Veterans' Services Officer Shannon Nisbett. ► Mr. Richard Gately, President of the Elks Riders; Mr. Paul Fiorio, Vice President of the Elks Riders; and Mr. Matt Vance, Sergeant of Arms of the Elks Riders, addressed the Town Council. ► Mr. Gately explained that the Elks Riders have their own chapter under the Elks. He explained that they had a run this year and decided to donate to the Franklin Veterans. He noted that they contribute to other charities, as well. He looks forward to working with Ms. Nisbett to make future donations. ► Mr. Fiorio stated that he has been a member of the Elks for 27 years. He stated that the Elks Riders have made contributions to Franklin Veterans for many years. ► Ms. Nisbett thanked the Elks Riders for their generous donation to Franklin Veterans. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- b. ***Resolution 21-69: General Funds Appropriation, Transfers and Adjustments FY22 (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-69 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-69: General Funds Appropriation, Transfers and Adjustments FY22 by **Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that the budget is predicated on a series of revenue and expenditure assumptions. He stated that annually in November, after state aid is done, a quarter of the year with revenue is done, and unforeseen expenses or revenues are determined, he comes back to do a budget amendment. He reviewed the list of expenditures as outlined in his November 8, 2021, memo to the Finance Committee which was provided in the Town Council's meeting packet. He noted that the next resolution regards cannabis fees. He stated that regarding the host community agreement funds, there is no state regulation or guidance directed to municipalities on how they are to process incoming revenues and the expenditures. It has been an evolving situation for years. In the

interim, there are two stores in Franklin that are licensed. Therefore, they are having a resolution to accommodate for those revenue sources. He stated that the second resolution is on the expenditure of those resources. ► Councilor Jones clarified that new Town Council members could vote on this resolution. ► Mr. Hellen stated that there are no savings from the Davis Thayer School closing because it is under the School Department. Most of the savings were reallocated throughout the school district. Regarding facilities upkeep for the school, this was already budgeted in the Town budget. He noted it was a unanimous vote for these appropriations and transfers from the Finance Committee. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- c. ***Resolution 21-70: Appropriation of Cannabis Fees (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-70 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-70: Appropriation of Cannabis Fees by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen explained that the Town has two active host community agreements for a total of \$600,000 which will be appropriated as follows: \$300,000 for Washington Street/Grove Street intersection, \$125,000 for drug interdiction, and \$175,000 for SAFE Coalition. ► Councilor Dellorco noted from the news that there were over 100,000 deaths last year from drug overdoses. He said the SAFE Coalition will be thankful for the money. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed that the host community agreement funds are earmarked for impacts of the facilities; however, the state has not really defined impacts. He noted that impacts are anticipated before they are actually there. He noted that the owners of Botera have stated that they would like to work with the SAFE Coalition. He noted that both businesses have been great in working with the community. ► Councilor Dellorco recused himself from the vote. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0, Abstain-1.**
- d. ***Resolution 21-71: Appropriation to Pay Prior Years' Bills (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-71 - 2/3 Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-71: Appropriation to Pay Prior Years' Bills by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that this is a housecleaning item; it is required by state law. He stated that it was a unanimous vote by the Finance Committee. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- e. ***Resolution 21-72: Order of Taking Approximately Seventy (70) Acres of Unimproved Land Off Maple Street (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-72 - 2/3 Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones began to read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Waive the reading by Hamblen. SECOND by Dellorco. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.** ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-72: Order of Taking Approximately Seventy (70) Acres of Unimproved Land Off Maple Street by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that the vote is the final step required to ensure a good title for the Maple Hill property. ► Mr. Cerel stated that prior to his arrival it was the practice of the Town on significant land acquisitions to do a confirmatory taking to make sure the title is good and clear. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- f. ***Resolution 21-73: Acceptance of Open Space, Access and Parking Easements at Brookview Condominium Located Off Pond Street (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-73 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-73: Acceptance of Open Space, Access and Parking Easements at Brookview Condominium Located Off Pond Street by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen reviewed that the acceptance of this open space and easements relate to the property off Pond Street (the old town sewer beds) that were sold and converted to townhouses several years ago. The open space is around the perimeter of the property and includes a small viewing and parking area of the adjacent Mine Brook. He stated that Town staff confirmed the work was completed as described. ► Mr. Cerel stated that this is a first step; there should be a conservation restriction on the land that is still being worked on. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: ► Councilor Frongillo stated that he would like to take a look at what Mr. Maxwell Morrongiello brought up at the beginning of the meeting. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger asked for a follow-up regarding the issues at the high school that were brought up at the last meeting. ► Mr. Hellen stated that all questions relating to the School Department have to go through the School Department, School Committee, or Superintendent. ► Councilor Jones stated that he would like to continue the discussion on the housing.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Cormier-Leger stated that he attended the Veterans Day celebration at the Senior Center; it was a good event. He congratulated the varsity football team. He gave condolences to the Flaherty and Van Buren families. ► Councilor Chandler noted that Rep. Jeff Roy helped pass the genocide education act. ► Councilor Pellegri stated that the Veterans Day lunch was wonderful. She stated that regarding the problems at the high school, she thinks the Town Council members have a right to say something about them because they are in charge of the budget. She stated that if this is creating a problem in the budget money-wise, then it has to be brought forward. She stated that as an elected official, she needs to know what is going on. She stated that this is criticism to the group that is doing the vandalism. She stated that Michael D'Angelo is looking into things as far as with the cameras. ► Councilor Frongillo stated that the Strong Towns event was well attended. He noted that office hours are at 8:30 AM tomorrow at the Senior Center. ► Councilor Hamblen thanked everyone that had anything to do with the veterans' luncheon event. She stated that this Saturday volunteers can to help green up the downtown area bridges. She stated this Saturday is the first Winter Farmers' Market at Fairmount Fruit Farm. She wished everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving. ► Councilor Jones stated that the Veterans Day event was very well done. He congratulated the Franklin High School theater performing group for their three showings of Mamma Mia. He congratulated the football team. ► Councilor Dellorco gave kudos to the Franklin football team. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving. ► Chair Mercer stated the Veterans Day lunch was a wonderful event. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Dellorco. SECOND by Jones. No Discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary