

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 1, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, December 1, 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 Pellegri, 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. ► Chair Mercer announced the following subcommittee appointments and board appointment. He noted that he is appointing vice chairs to the subcommittees this year.

Budget Subcommittee

- Chair – Thomas Mercer
- Vice Chair – Brian Chandler
- Members – Melanie Hamblen and Cobi Frongillo

Capital Budget Subcommittee

- Chair – Deborah Pellegri
- Vice Chair – Robert Dellorco
- Members – Brian Chandler and Theodore Cormier-Leger

Economic Development Subcommittee

- Chair – Melanie Hamblen
- Vice Chair – Cobi Frongillo
- Members – Glenn Jones and Patrick Sheridan

Rules of Procedure Subcommittee

- Glenn Jones
- Deborah Pellegri
- Thomas Mercer

Franklin's Board member on the GATRA Board

- Deborah Pellegri

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None.

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: None.

APPOINTMENTS: None.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

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

- g. **Resolution 21-80: Cable Funds in Support of PEG Service and Programming per MGL Ch. 44, §53F3/4 (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-80 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-80: 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 the quarterly revenue that they are required to accept by state law that goes to Franklin TV. ► Councilor Pellegri stated that none of this money can be used to help residents with their bills. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- h. **Resolution 21-81: Gift Acceptances - Veterans' Services Department (\$1,215) and Agricultural Commission (\$200) (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-81 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-81: Gift Acceptances - Veterans' Services Department (\$1,215) and Agricultural Commission (\$200) by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen thanked the donors for their donations. He thanked all those who responded for their generosity. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

HEARINGS: 7:10pm. Franklin Tax Classification Hearing - Legislation for Action Items: a, b, c, d, and e. ► Chair Mercer opened the public hearing. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed that all the information for this hearing is provided in the Town Council's meeting packet which is available on the Town website. The hearing is required by Massachusetts law for the Town Council to set the FY22 tax rate. He noted the proposed tax rate is dropping from \$14.65 in FY21 to \$14.05 in FY22. The residential single-family property assessment has increased 7 percent from \$473,300 to \$506,800. He thanked the Board of Assessor's and assessing staff. He stated that Kevin Doyle, Director of Assessing, and Christopher Feeley, Chair, Board of Assessors, will give a presentation. ► Mr. Doyle reviewed the following: new growth regarding its role and where it's coming from; levy limit component discussion; median (middle) single-family valuation and tax; and classification options with perspective on single versus split tax rate. He reviewed that the addition to the tax levy through new growth includes new buildings, additions to buildings, renovations, and divisions of land; these are major sources of revenue. Once certified, this amount has been added to this year's levy. He reviewed the levy limit which for FY21 was approximately \$80.7 million. From the required calculations, the FY22 maximum allowed levy is approximately \$87.7 million. He stated that the median single-family valuation for FY22 is \$470,800. He reviewed the approximately 80/20 split for residential/commercial. He stated that there has been some growth in the commercial/industrial/personal property sector. He reviewed the Share Percentages chart showing the various shift scenarios in 5 percent increments from no shift which is a residential factor of 1 to 150 percent. ► Ms. Jane Callaway-Tripp, 607 Maple Street, confirmed that as the value of homes has gone up, even though the tax rate is going slightly down, a homeowner will pay more in taxes. Using her home as an example, she explained that her home has not been updated in 20 years. She stated that when her mother passed away, she had to have the house valued based on the current condition and everything in the house, and she had to get the appraisal amount. She stated that the value that her house is being valued at by the Town is much higher than what it was appraised at over one year ago. She asked how the Town is appraising everyone's home when no one is actually coming in and appraising the home. She stated that she could not sell her house for what it is being appraised for by the Town. She stated that as such, her taxes are going up well over \$6,000. ► Mr. Feeley stated that they do not physically go to everyone's home every year. There are certain things about homes that are used in the valuation. If a person has a question about their property, they will send someone out to that particular property to address that. He explained the calculation to determine the tax rate. If the home values go up by more than 2.5 percent, the tax rate will go down. He explained how a resident can file for an abatement of taxes through the Assessor's Office. Once they have the application, they would physically go see the home. A determination would be

made, then the Board would vote on that. ► Mr. Maxwell Morrongiello, 127 Central Park Terrace, asked about the residential exemption regarding how it would be applied. ► Mr. Feeley stated that if the residential exemption were applied, it would change the rate in that class of property only. ► Mr. Cerel confirmed there is a specific time period to file for an abatement. ► Town Council members made comments. ► Councilors indicated that they were in favor of a single tax rate. ► Chair Mercer declared the public hearing closed.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION (continued):

- a. **Resolution 21-74: Tax Classification Residential Factor (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-74 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-74: Tax Classification Residential Factor that the Residential Factor will be set at 1.000000 by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. No discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- b. **Resolution 21-75: Tax Classification Open Space Exemption. (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-75 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-75: Tax Classification Open Space Exemption that there not be an exemption for open space by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion: ► Mr. Hellen stated that open space is land that nothing is on. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- c. **Resolution 21-76: Tax Classification Small Business Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-76 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-76: Tax Classification Small Business Exemption that there not be an exemption for small businesses by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. No discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- d. **Resolution 21-77: Tax Classification Residential Property Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-77 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-77: Tax Classification Residential Property Exemption that there not be an exemption for residential properties by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion: ► Mr. Maxwell Morrongiello, 127 Central Park Terrace, stated that he was continuing to ask for a residential property tax exemption for next year. He stated that this would provide a tax cut to those who need it most; it would make the tax code more progressive. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- e. **Resolution 21-78: Tax Classification Senior Means Tested Exemption (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-78 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-78: Tax Classification Senior Means Tested Exemption that there not be an exemption for senior means tested by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. No discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- f. **Resolution 21-79: Town Council 2022 Meeting Calendar (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-79 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 21-79: Town Council 2022 Meeting Calendar by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. No discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► Snow Removal: Robert “Brutus” Cantoreggi, Director of Public Works. ► Brutus Cantoreggi, Director of Public Works; Carlos Rebelo, Highway & Grounds Superintendent; and Tony Brunetta, Assistant Highway & Grounds Superintendent, addressed the Town Council. ► Mr. Cantoreggi narrated a slideshow presentation which was provided in the Town Council’s meeting packet. He reviewed that the snow removal priorities were roadways, public buildings/schools, and sidewalks. He reviewed that their goals include to always be prepared, respond with the appropriate resources in a timely

manner, ensure that emergency vehicles can always respond during snow/ice events, and have all roadways cleared, i.e., showing some asphalt, less than one inch of snow and ice within four hours of the end of the storm. He reviewed the FY21 approved budget of \$1,056,500.00 with \$375,500.00 for road treatments salt. He noted that salt is now \$65 per ton; it was \$45 per ton last year. He stated that the mixing rate is 100 percent salt. He discussed that using the five-truck route costs \$9,640.00 versus treating the whole Town which costs \$31,620.00. This saves money and less salt is used. He discussed the environmental concerns of rising salt levels in the water supply. DEP recommends less than 20 ppm. In 2021, at Well #3 Grove Street, it is at 66.0 ppm. He stated that with 35 pieces of DPW equipment on the road at one time, the DPW employees' cost is \$1,537.50 per hour. He reviewed that they have 80 pieces of hired equipment; the contractors' cost for this is \$9,450.00 per hour. He reviewed that there is a labor/contractor shortage; there are no drivers. The effect of this includes longer timetable to clear roads, more delays/cancellation of schools, longer time to clear sidewalks, extended time to fix missed areas, clear corners, etc., downtown snow removal delays, and delays in repairing potholes/other work. He discussed the challenges of clearing over 35 miles of sidewalks identified for snow removal operations including school walking routes, downtown areas, and high traffic/speed routes. Items that can affect response time include timing of storm (day of week, hour of day), duration of storm, amount and type of precipitation, temperature during storm, weather pattern such as warm to cold or cold to warm, frost in/on ground, month of storm, and recent storm activity. He reviewed the Town bylaw that pushing or putting snow into the road is not allowed. He reviewed the winter storm overnight parking ban Town bylaw: The parking of any motor vehicle within the layout or right-of-way of any public street or any roadway open to the public is prohibited between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. while a winter storm parking ban is in effect. He noted that due to the safety of employees and residents, DEP regulations, and liability issues, there is no salt available at the DPW yard. He stated that DPW does not clear fire hydrants, and he asked residents to clear the hydrants. He discussed the mailbox reimbursement policy of up to \$45 if a resident's mailbox is knocked over, and that basketball hoops are not allowed in the public right of way. He reviewed the most common complaints of citizens regarding snow/snow removal. ► Town Council members asked questions. ► In response, Mr. Cantoreggi discussed the prioritization of clearing roads before sidewalks because the roads need to be cleared for emergency vehicles. As well, operationally, when clearing the roads, snow goes onto the sidewalks making it difficult to clear roads and sidewalks at the same time. To do so, would be at a greater expense. He discussed that at the end of the snow season he fills up the salt shed so it is ready for the following snow season. He stated that he estimates 5,600 tons of salt. ► Mr. Hellen thanked the presenters and DPW staff. He stated the difficulty in getting drivers and parts is real. He stated they appreciate the residents' patience.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

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

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► Mr. Hellen stated that it was one year ago this month that National Grid was at a Town Council meeting and they made a series of commitments. He stated that this past week he received the pole petition from National Grid to install a new pole on Grove Street which is the last piece of those commitments made one year ago. This is the pole that will have the technology to detect the power outages and send that information to National Grid at a faster rate. He gave a shout-out to National Grid as there have been fewer outages during high wind storms in the past year.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Cormier-Leger reminded residents to check their electricity bill to make sure they are opted in to the program as it will save them money on electricity. If there are any

questions, contact the Town Administrator's office for more information. He thanked the youth hockey team and DPW for the decorations on the Town Common. He noted thanks for the festivities that were held on the Town Common. He noted a directory that lists all non-profits if someone is looking for opportunities to give or get involved. ► Councilor Chandler gave condolences to the family of Philip Gelineau. He stated that the Red Brick Schoolhouse is looking worse. ► Mr. Hellen stated that the schoolhouse has lead paint. If it is going to be restored, the woodwork and repairs will require the lead paint to be removed. They have hired a designer to do the work to remove the lead paint. They are getting cost estimates. He stated this should be a high priority for CPA. It will take a long time and specific techniques to preserve the building. He stated they are open to feedback and comments on this. ► Councilor Pellegrini stated that she thought things would have been going on faster regarding the schoolhouse. She asked about grants. She noted the museum gift store has many gifts. She invited seniors on the third Thursday of the month to come to the Senior Center and fill her in on how the bus is working. She gave condolences to the family of Philip Gelineau. ► Mr. Hellen stated that regardless of the source of the funds, the ability to get a contractor onsite is almost impossible, especially with that type of specialty. ► Councilor Sheridan confirmed that the entire Red Brick Schoolhouse was lead paint. ► Councilor Frongillo stated that next Wednesday at 6 PM at the Black Box the Franklin Freedom team is working with some high school groups to put together an open mike night in the name of Love Franklin; they are inviting people to share their stories and art. He stated that Franklin First gift cards are available. ► Councilor Hamblen agreed that electricity has not been lost as often in the past year. She thanked all those involved in decorating the bridge. She wished her father happy 96th birthday. She stated that she has been asked to participate in the Massachusetts Municipal Association's councilor training; she will be representing Franklin on a panel. She noted the Winter Farmers' Market from 10 AM to 2 PM on Saturday. ► Councilor Dellorco stated that the museum will be open Saturday from 10 AM to 1 PM and Sunday from 1 PM to 4 PM. He gave condolences to the families in Michigan regarding the high school shooting. He stated that Phil Gelineau will be greatly missed. ► Chair Mercer stated that Phil Gelineau will be sadly missed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: ► *Considering the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Public Body.* ► Chair Mercer so declared that the Town Council needs to meet in executive session for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board.

► **MOTION to Enter** executive session for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board, and the Chair has so declared, and the open meeting will not reconvene at the conclusion of the executive session by **Jones. SECOND** by **Hamblen. No Discussion.** ► **ROLL CALL VOTE:** **Chandler-YES; Cormier-Leger-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES; Sheridan-YES.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

Open Session ended at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary