

April 3, 2017 meeting,

The regular meeting of the Town of Franklin Board of Aldermen was held on Monday April 3, 2017 at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room. Mayor Robert S. Scott presided. Vice-Mayor Patti Abel and Aldermen Joe Collins, Adam Kimsey, Billy Mashburn, Brandon McMahan and Barbara McRae were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was done by Lili Vitale.

Adoption of the April 3, 2017 Town Board Agenda:

Motion was made by McRae, seconded by Abel to adopt the April 3, 2017 agenda as presented. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

Approval of the March 6, 2017 Town Board minutes:

Motion was made by McMahan, seconded by McRae to approve the March 6, 2017 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0. A copy of the minutes are attached.

Public Session

No one spoke at the Public Session.

Public Hearing 7:05 p.m. regarding the Charter of the Town of Franklin to change the style of the Municipal Corporation from Board of Aldermen to Town Council

Lili Vitale – Thank you for letting me speak tonight about changing the term from “Aldermen” to “Council Member.” The term “Aldermen” derives from Old English and means old men. I believe it is of paramount importance to get younger generations involved in local government but when we use archaic terms such as Aldermen it is unappealing to young women who may have aspirations of serving on the Town Board. I feel as though it is important to change this term to Council Member because it will gain universal appeal and it will be easier to translate when educating young children about local government and the functions of the Town Board. Our nation has rapidly progressed since the time that the term aldermen was adopted. Women can vote, women can choose to be informed about politics in our nation, and women can run for office if they so choose. I feel as though if we want to be up-to-date in the 21st century, that we want to encourage young women to live professional lives and to be involved in local politics, it is of great importance that we adopt simple measures like this. Council Member is an inclusive title and Franklin is an inclusive town. That is why I believe this change fitting. Thank you. I hope the change is made.

Laurie Beegle – I have worked for the Town of Franklin for over 20 years. I started at the Police Department as a secretary and then I went to Basic Law Enforcement Training and became a sworn officer. I brought my first badge with me tonight. It says “Policewoman.” At the time I accepted that because I was a rookie and I just thought I would go along with it. It also has a number but every time you would get promoted or somebody left and you moved, you got a new badge. So instead of spending a thousand dollars I just went with what we had so my next badge said “Policeman.” But some time over the years we had new procedures and policies written by the town and it became “Police Officer.” All gender roles were eliminated. They also removed the number so now you could keep your badge.

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Laurie Beegle – One of the concerns that I saw was that it may cost so much. Almost everything we do is digital and it would just require changing it digitally in our statutes. Then when somebody needs it they can just print it. Like [Lili Vitale] said, it would be welcoming to everyone. After 10 years, I now have a new badge and it just says “Sergeant.” The Town has changed before and there was no issue.

Nancy Scott – I would speak in favor of the change. I served on the Board of Aldermen for 11 years. I served with four different mayors. Dr. Henson, Steal Smith, Thomas Woodley and Mr. Collins. The idea of Aldermen never was an issue but it was awkward. People would say “Alder-Woman” which isn’t a word and Alderman which didn’t fit. I think this is a common sense change and it’s time to do it. I like tradition but this is obsolete.

Joyce Handley – I was an Alderman for eight years. I ran for Alderman. I knew that was my title. It never bothered me one way or another. I knew my sex. Yes, it was awkward sometimes. You had to explain it but once you did people just kind of shrugged their shoulders. To me its history. A lot of people have held that office, a lot of women. We did it to better our town. We didn’t care what we were called. I think a change is always good but do we have to? I don’t think a lot of young women that are coming up aren’t going to care whether they are called an Alderman or Alderwoman or Council. They are out there to do the job and get it done. Thank you.

Susannah Koppers – I come here on behalf of a group of progressive women to speak in favor of the change to Town Council. There is research to backup that language is powerful. It not only serves as a reflection of history and the society that we’re in but it continues to shape those perceptions. If we continue to use language that is not inclusive then it continues to render women and those who don’t conform to binary genders as invisible. So we support this change.

Joyce Handley – Could I say one thing? There are going to be fees for changing this and do our tax-payers want to be paying this at this time?

Mayor Scott closed the Public Hearing at 7:11 p.m.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – Mr. Mayor just as a quick procedural note. Reading over the statute it says that following the Public Hearing but not earlier than the next regularly scheduled meeting and no later than 60 days after the Public Hearing can you consider adopting an ordinance. So you’re not permitted to take action on this tonight. I should have said that earlier.

Mayor Scott – Yeah I think you should have let us know that because we were prepared to vote tonight.

New Business: Discussion Regarding the Charter of the Town of Franklin to change the style of the Municipal Corporation from Board of Aldermen to Town Council

Vice-Mayor Abel – I would like to know what the cost would be.

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Mayor Scott – I can explain some of that. We did some research. Basically as we pass new ordinances and we do new changes in the ordinance book, the cost to have a front page that can be copied local and put in the front of all our ordinance books is basically going to cost \$18.50. That allows us to have a front page that notes that where the term “Alderman” is used it is now known as “Council Member.” Is that not what we can do?

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – I think that would be sufficient for at least the first run at the change. I think it is legally sufficient to say that this term is understood to mean that.

Mayor Scott – As people rotate in and off the Board, the business cards to do have Alderman on them but they can be replaced.

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – To echo Mayor Scott, it does appear that in the ordinance book that we have and in speaking with American Legal Publishing, it will cost you \$18-18.50. That is per page. It's per page whether the term is used once or 20 times. The ordinance book is about 276 pages. So if you were to do the whole book at once and keep in mind that not every page is going to have the term, the worst case scenario is \$4,968.

Alderman Mashburn – So about \$5,000.

Mayor Scott – That is not what I have been led to believe. My understanding was that all we need to do is make the change with one page at the very beginning.

Alderman Mashburn – But at some time isn't the whole book going to have to be done? This is basically a Band-Aid.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – And that does happen on a regular basis anyway. It's one of the reasons we are trying to move away from printed ordinances. Ideally we would like to have one printed ordinance book that's in the Town Clerk's office and otherwise you can go online and find all of it. I do think it's legally sufficient to put in a front page.

Alderman Mashburn – How much does it cost to change the name plates in the Board Room?

Summer Woodard – Town Manger – Those cost about \$100. You can rotate it in or phase it in one at a time if you wanted.

Alderman Mashburn – Isn't this something that is going to be implemented by the Town Manager? If we vote to change it, she is the one who has to implement it so it's going to be up to her to figure out which way she wants to do it so it's not really going to be up to us at this point is it? I'm thinking that any costs after our vote is going to be up to her and not up to the Town Council.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – I'm not sure there is a pinned down number.

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Summer Woodard – Town Manager – Well there is. If you want to follow Mayor Scott's suggestion then you can phase it in over time, but the total ballpark cost of the ordinance book is \$4,968. You could have legal fees and other things that could put it closer to \$8,000.

Mayor Scott – I would like to get a consensus of the Board and see how the Board feels.

Alderman McRae – I would like to make a comment in regard to the history of it. It's my understanding that the first members of the Board were called Commissioners so at some point it was changed to Aldermen.

Mayor Scott – We've done a lot of things to change. We got rid of that old seal and now people know what the Town of Franklin is about. We no longer refer to firemen or policemen as that. This town is changing. We're a high-tech center, a regional medical center, a tourist destination, a center for environmental groups, arts and our outdoor activities. It is time to move into that period and one of the ways that we do it is this. In the past 27 years there have been two women on every one of these boards that we're sitting on. Women are going into every kind of public service. They are becoming CEO's of organizations, they're becoming managers. This allows us to be gender neutral. I for one can't see where there is any harm in doing that. I think the costs have been overstated because it's something that we can do over time just as we have done our stationary. Change is inevitable. Whether we like it or not, it is coming to Franklin.

Alderman McRae – I want to thank everybody who spoke tonight. I think you all made some wonderful points. I think that especially young women are excited about this. What you call somebody really does matter.

Vice-Mayor Abel - Since we're talking about it being gender neutral and about making women want to do the job, I kind of go with Joyce [Handley] on this. I knew what the name was when I got into this. I don't get into political correctness, I knew it was Alderman. As far as what I'm called, I could care less. It's the job that I do. I look at it as are we making it pretty for people to want to do it? I don't care if we change it one way or another. If it doesn't cost us money then I'm fine, but I also don't like to send the message that the job that you do is in the name that it holds.

Alderman McMahan – Pending the costs, I am in favor of the change. If it's \$5,000 then I'll probably change my mind but if it's \$18.50 then I would be in favor of it. My thought, like Patti [Abel] is that I could really care less of what I'm called but if it makes people feel that we are more approachable and inclusive then I don't see a reason not to change it. I have no attachment to the term necessarily. There is that aspect that people don't always know what it is. For me personally, it never weighed that heavy but I see that it is important for people in this town and people that I care about. I would be in favor of changing it if it makes it more inviting for those individuals.

Alderman Kimsey – Is there any way we could get more information for the public at the next meeting?

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – We will certainly do that.

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New Business: Forward River District Overlay to Town Planning Board

Land Use Administrator Justin Setser presented this item.

Motion was made by Kimsey, seconded by Abel to forward River District Overlay to the Town Planning Board. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

New Business: Street Closing Request for Holly Springs Baptist Church

Town Manager Summer Woodard presented this item.

Motion was made by Kimsey, seconded by McMahan to allow close Iotla Street Sunday April 16, 2017 from 6:00 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

New Business: Depot Street Sidewalk Construction Agreement between the Town of Franklin and the North Carolina Department of Transportation

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – We sent a letter of support back in November of 2016 to possibly do a 20 percent match to construct new sidewalks along Depot Street. DOT has sent us a construction agreement and the Town's cost would be \$55,200 and you would be able to take that from your Powell Bill funds.

Motion was made by Collins, seconded by McRae to agree to the expenditure of funds and a 20 percent match in conjunction with the NCDOT to allow construction on the Depot Street Sidewalks. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

New Business: Discussion of Speed Enforcement on Bidwell Street

Town Manager Summer Woodard presented the item.

It was the will of the Board to install two more speed limit signs on the street.

New Business: Budget Amendment

Finance Officer Kyra Doster presented this item.

Motion was made by Collins, seconded by Mashburn to allocate \$560.00 to the Police Overtime line item. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

Legal: Cross-Connection Control Ordinance

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – Sorry to disappoint everybody but I need more time to look at this. I would ask you to table the discussion.

Motion made by Kimsey, seconded by Abel to motion to table discussion of the Cross-Connection Ordinance. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

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Legal: Traffic Ordinance Adjusting Speed on Mimosa Drive and the Direction of Travel on Watauga Street

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – We looked at addressing the traffic schedule to conform to the ordinances and one street, Mimosa Drive had a 15 mile per hour speed limit sign posted. I have prepared an ordinance that would change that to 20 miles per hour. The other issue is the one-way street on Watauga Street. It is currently scheduled as a one-way street but I'm not sure when it was made a two-way street. This ordinance would delete it from the list of one-way streets.

Laurie Beegle – Police Sergeant – That is where the buses line up at the school in the afternoon and I think it was turned two way to alleviate the problem of people coming up and passing the buses when it was one way.

Alderman Collins – I think we should ask the principal of the school. I would hate to go to two-way and then have to readdress it later on.

John Henning Jr. – Town Attorney – Do you all want to reserve judgement on Mimosa Drive as well and just look at it all at once?

Alderman Mashburn – We can go ahead and vote on Mimosa Drive.

Motion was made by Mashburn, seconded by McMahan to adopt the ordinance with deletion to section 2 concerning Watauga Street and setting a 20 mph speed limit on Watauga Drive. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

Announcements

Town Hall Offices will be closed Friday April 14, 2017 in Observation of Good Friday.

Town Board Budget Work Session will be Monday April 17, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Boardroom.

Adjourn:

Motion was made by McMahan, seconded by Abel to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Motion carried. Vote: 6 to 0.

Robert S. Scott, Mayor

Travis Tallent, Town Clerk

