



**Town of Franklin Council
Agenda
February 9, 2026
6:00 p.m.**

1. **Call to Order**- Mayor Stacy Guffey
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**- Vice-Mayor Mike Lewis
3. **Adoption of the February 9, 2026 Town Council Agenda** - Town Council
4. **Approval of the Consent Agenda for February 9, 2026** - Town Council
 - A.) Approval of Minutes of January 5, 2026 regular meeting
 - B.) Budget Amendments
 - C.) Request Right to Advertise Delinquent Taxes for 2025
5. **Presentation**
 - A.) Marketing Update from Tourism Development Authority – Morgan Stewart and Devon Dupuis, Stewart Communications and TDA Chair Tim Crabtree
6. **Public Session**
7. **Items from Council**
8. **Public Hearing**
 - A.) Public Hearing beginning at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter to receive public input on a proposed lease of Town-owned property located at 95 E. Main Street for the purpose of an outdoor dining area – Amie Owens, Town Manager
9. **New Business**
 - A.) Request formal approval of Town Council to waive all late fees for January and February 2026 utility billing due to system failure – Sarah Bishop, Finance Director
 - B.) Request approval of Street Closures – Amie Owens, Town Manager
 1. Use of the Town Hall Parking Lot for the Macon County Farmers Market from May 1 through November 30 from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. – excluding days when there are town events scheduled in the same area
 2. Iotla Street on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. of each month May through October 10 to hold Pickin’ on the Square
 3. Iotla Street on Friday, May 15 from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. for Law Enforcement Memorial Day Observance
 4. Iotla Street on Friday, September 11 from 8:30 am until 9:00 a.m. for 9/11 Remembrance
 5. Iotla Street on Thursday, September 17 from 5:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. for Constitution Day Celebration
 6. Iotla Street on Tuesday, October 13 from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. for Fire Fighters Memorial Observation

10. Departmental Updates – Public Works

- A.) Public Works – Bill Deal, Public Works Director
- B.) Wastewater Treatment Plant – Jason Hopkins, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor/ORC
- C.) Water Treatment Plant – Kyle Pocquette, Water Treatment Plant Supervisor/ORC
- D.) Streets – Chris Waldroop, Streets Supervisor

11. Announcements

- A.) Next Town Council Meeting is Monday, March 2, 2026
- B.) Rescheduled Special Called Meeting - Town Council Retreat – Friday, February 20 and Saturday, February 21 at Fontana Village Resort – special meeting notice will be posted.

12. Adjourn



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 4-A

Department/Agency: Town Council

Subject Matter: Approval of Minutes

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

Request review and approval of the January 5, 2026 regular meeting minutes.

Suggested Motion: If favorable – approve the minutes as presented.

Attachments: Yes No

Action Taken: _____

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2026**

THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Monday, January 5, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street Franklin, NC.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Stacy Guffey called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Vice Mayor Mike Lewis, Council Members: Joe Collins, Travis Higdon, Rita Salain, Robbie Tompa, and Jeff Berry.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Mayor Mike Lewis.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JANUARY 5, 2026 TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA

Vice Mayor Lewis requested a change to the agenda, suggesting that item 5 (Introductions) be moved to after item 7 (Items from Council) to accommodate scheduling needs.

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Travis Higdon to approve the Town Council Agenda for January 5, 2026 with the amendment to move item 5 after item 7. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA FOR JANUARY 5, 2026

A.) Approval of the December 1, 2025 Regular Town Council Meeting Minutes

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to approve the consent agenda for January 5, 2026 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

6. PUBLIC SESSION

- Bob McCollum/Anglina Jumper - Mr. McCollum introduced Angelina Jumper, Cultural Resources Supervisor for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, who spoke about the significance of the Nikwasi/Noquisiyi Mound. Ms. Jumper expressed gratitude to the Town for stewarding the mound and emphasized the importance of co-stewardship moving forward. She noted that the mound is one of the only Cherokee mounds accessible to the public, making it an ideal place for interpretation. She also thanked those who had protected the mound historically.
- Gregory Wane Phelps - Mr. Phelps identified himself as a civil rights advocate and provided public notice regarding constitutional requirements related to criminal charges. He asserted that North Carolina's practice of charging by information rather than indictment violates the Fifth Amendment. He requested that the Council direct public officials to act in accordance with the U.S. Constitution.
- Kenneth Elkins - Mr. Elkins, a member of the Macon County committee for the 250th anniversary of the United States, requested permission to install commemorative signs. He described plans to create three different signs and asked to place one in front of Town Hall, noting that he had already obtained

permission from the DOT for signs on Georgia Road and Otto. (Town Attorney Henning noted he will review policy to ensure Town's liability).

- Kim Leister - Ms. Leister, town resident, discussed the issue of trash collection. She noted that Franklin is the only Town in the area that does not provide trash and recycling pickup. She presented information on how nearby towns handle trash collection and emphasized benefits of municipal trash service, including improving neighborhood cleanliness, helping older residents, and encouraging recycling to extend the life of the Macon County landfill.
- Elizabeth Bolstad Ridler, Regional Director, Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT)- Town Manager Amie Owens read a statement from Ms. Riddler, Regional Director of the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks. The statement outlined current bills being considered in Congress that would allow heavier commercial trucks on roads. The coalition requested that the town send letters to North Carolina's congressional delegation opposing these increases.

7. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

- Mayor Guffey thanked Council Member Jeff Berry for consistently volunteering at Town events. He also provided updates on the potential historic district designation for downtown Franklin, which will be determined on February 12, 2026. Mayor Guffey explained that this designation would incentivize redevelopment by qualifying buildings for a 40% federal historic tax credit. He noted that this designation has been a factor in the Scott Griffin Hotel redevelopment project.
- Council Member Higdon expressed concerns about the crosswalk at Lazy Hiker, noting visibility issues, particularly after dark. He suggested adding lighting and possibly moving the crosswalk location, and Mayor Guffey indicated they would address this with NCDOT at an upcoming meeting.
- Council Member Salain brought up two issues: recycling bins for public events, which would be discussed at the upcoming planning session, and the need to replace trees in downtown Franklin.
- Council Member Tompa expressed excitement for the coming year, particularly regarding the TDA board's activities and potential housing initiatives for the community.

5. INTRODUCTION/RECOGNITION

- A.) Hunter Cornwell, Police Officer – introduction by Police Chief Devin Holland
- B.) Truitt Curry, Police Officer - introduction by Police Chief Devin Holland
- C.) Marcus McCarson, Police Officer - introduction by Police Chief Devin Holland

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Mike Lewis to go ahead and discuss items 9E & 9F due to the out-of-town guest in attendance. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

Request approval of Resolution Endorsing Transfer of Nikwasi Mound/Noquisiyi to the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians - Town Attorney John Henning, Jr., and Mayor Stacy Guffey

Mayor Stacy Guffey provided historical context about the Nikwasi/Noquisiyi Mound. Town Attorney John Henning Jr. explained the legal procedure for transferring the property. He noted that the Town conveyed the mound to the Nikwasi Initiative nonprofit in 2019, and now the Initiative seeks to transfer it to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). He also noted that the property remains subject to restrictions ensuring preservation and public access, which will be maintained in the transfer.

Bob McCollum, Elaine Eisenbraun (Executive Director), and other representatives from the Nikwasi Initiative and the EBCI spoke in support of the transfer. Ms. Eisenbraun requested clarification on record that the Initiative would be relieved of encumbrances in the preservation agreement that would not be appropriate for the tribe, such as retaining nonprofit status.

After reading the full Resolution, Town Attorney Henning confirmed that the Resolution addresses the concerns about encumbrances.

Council Member Travis Higdon made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to approve the Resolution endorsing the transfer of the Nikwasi/Noquisiyi Mound to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

Request approval of Resolution for the Town Council for the Town of Franklin Celebrating Preservation of the Nikwasi/Noquisiyi Mound – Mayor Stacy Guffey

Council Member Rita Salain read the Resolution, which honored citizens who helped preserve the mound in 1946. Vice Mayor Lewis suggested adding language to annually recognize October 7 (the date of the original transfer) as a commemorative day and potentially involving local schools in naming and celebrating this day.

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the Resolution Celebrating Preservation of the Nikwasi/Noquisiyi Mound, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

A brief recess was taken for a group photograph with tribal representatives. The meeting resumed at 7:08 p.m.

8. PRESENTATION

A.) Annual Audit Report

Lutchia Perkins (Senior Staff Accountant with Martin Starnes & Associates) presented the fiscal year 2025 audit report. She reported that the town received a clean, unmodified opinion with no findings or questioned costs.

- The general fund increased by about \$1.8 million (17%), primarily due to property taxes and intergovernmental revenues
- Available fund balance increased to approximately \$11.5 million
- The available fund balance as a percentage of general fund expenditures increased by 16%, representing roughly 25 months of expenditures
- Water and sewer operating income was approximately \$1,150,000
- The quick ratio was 13.4, well above the 1.0 threshold considered healthy

The Local Government Commission noted no concerns with the Town's financial position.

B.) Main Street Visioning Plan – Allison Smicht, NC Department of Commerce Rescheduled for February

C.) Final Feasibility Study for old Angel Medical Center Property – Sarah VanLear, Project Manager, Development Finance Initiative

Sarah VanLear, Project Manager with the Development Finance Initiative, presented findings on the redevelopment potential of the former Angel Medical Center site. Key findings included:

- The 13-acre site is partially demolished with roadways, retaining walls, and basement walls remaining
- Only about 5 acres are immediately developable due to steep slopes and topographical challenges
- Reuse of existing structures would be challenging and costly
- The site could potentially support 50 for-sale units or 125 rental units, plus 5,000 square feet of retail
- Significant site preparation costs (\$500,000-\$700,000) would create barriers for developers
- The resulting premium sale prices needed to make the project financially viable (\$350,000 for townhomes, \$550,000 for single-family homes) have not been proven in the Franklin market
- Public or private development each present different challenges and risks

The study concluded that while demand exists for housing and retail in Franklin, the combination of acquisition costs and site preparation would require price points not yet established in the local market.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- A.) Request approval of Resolution of the Town Council for the Town of Franklin Withdrawing Its Offer to Purchase the Former Angel Hospital Site-Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. and Mayor Stacy Guffey
Town Attorney John Henning Jr., read the Resolution, which detailed the Town's previous work exploring potential uses for the property, including the DFI study. The resolution noted that HCA representatives had not made the property available for due diligence inspections and had indicated the offered purchase price may no longer be acceptable.

Mayor Guffey expressed disappointment in how negotiations with HCA had proceeded, noting that after significant time and effort, they were told in a casual manner that HCA might not be willing to sell at the offered price. Despite the disappointment, the feasibility study indicated the project would likely not have been viable at the proposed purchase price.

There was additional discussion on why HCA did not allow access for further inspections and if the lower parcel was still going to be gifted to the Town. Town Attorney Henning reminded Town Council that large scale development of the property would fall under Conditional Zoning and would need to come to Town Council for approval.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Mike Lewis to approve the Resolution Withdrawing the Town's Offer to Purchase the Former Angel Medical Center Site, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

- B.) Request approval of amendment to personnel policy- Annual Performance Review- Human Resources Director, Nicole Bradley

Human Resources Director Nicole Bradley explained a proposed change to the personnel policy regarding annual performance reviews. The current policy required employees to be in their position for six months to be eligible for step increases, which penalized employees who received promotions. The amendment would allow employees who have been with the town for at least six months to receive

prorated step increases even if they changed positions, while maintaining the six-month requirement for new hires.

Council Member Rita Salain made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to approve the amendment to the personnel policy- Annual Performance Review, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

C.) Request from adjacent property owner to lease Town property for outdoor dining area – Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Amie Owens explained that a new owner, Scott Higdon, was requesting to lease the same 15' by 40' tract previously leased for outdoor dining next to the shop house. The proposed three-year lease would include a \$300 annual escalator. A public hearing would be required before approval.

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to call for Public Hearing on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain input regarding the request to lease Town property for outdoor dining, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

D.) Request approval of proposed 2026-2027 Budget Calendar – Town Manager, Amie Owens Town Manager

Amie Owens presented the proposed budget calendar, which outlined the schedule from January through June 1, 2026, when budget approval is anticipated.

Council Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Mike Lewis to adopt the 2026-2027 budget schedule, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6-0.

10. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

A.) Sarah Bishop, Finance Director reported that:

- Sales and use tax revenue has begun to show a slight decrease over the past three months, though still higher than the previous year
- Investment earnings are also starting to trend downward
- The finance department is beginning budget preparation work
- She and Mayor Guffey met with Allison Smith from the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center, who provided valuable insights for the town's Main Street program application in 2027

B.) Justin Setser, Town Planner/IT Director provided an annual review of planning activities in 2025:

- 58 zoning permits were issued
- 32 new residential structures were permitted, plus a 60-unit apartment complex and a 56-unit townhome complex
- Code enforcement issued 200 notices of violation and collected 284 illegal signs
- The downtown historic district application will be reviewed on February 12
- A public meeting for property owners in the downtown district is scheduled for January 21
- Upcoming projects include a bike-walk plan, updates to the hazard mitigation plan, and a new town website
- Two in-town planning board seats and one ETJ seat will expire in February

- Mr. Setser also presented data on sidewalk improvements since 2020, noting that 28 streets totaling nearly a mile have been upgraded from poor to good condition, and six streets totaling 8,396 feet have been upgraded from fair to good. He is also tracking vacant buildings, with 25 currently identified within city limits.

C.) Devin Holland, Police Chief reported that:

- The department is now fully staffed for the first time in five years
- The organization No Wrong Door donated a drug incinerator
- In 2025, the department collected approximately 230 pounds of pills and 30 opioid liquids/patches
- Recent enforcement operations included underage alcohol sales checks (5 of 14 retailers sold to underage buyers)
- Speed humps have arrived and will be installed in residential areas with speeding issues
- Officers have been conducting traffic enforcement on Main Street since December 8, resulting in 39 stops, 14 warnings, and 7 citations
- Longstanding issues in the East Franklin neighborhood have been resolved through combined efforts of police enforcement, code enforcement, and property ownership changes
- The department's 2025 statistics included 680 incident reports, 335 arrests, 639 citation charges, 810 warning ticket charges, 310 collision reports, 64 DWI arrests, and 12,270 calls for service

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

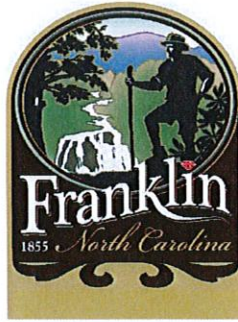
- A.) Next Town Council Meeting is Monday, February 2, 2026
- B.) Joint Meeting with ABC Board and Town Council – Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. at Town Hall – special called meeting notice will be posted
- C.) Essentials of Local Government Course – Asheville – January 15-16, 2026 – quorum of Town Council Attending – notice of attendance will be posted
- D.) Town Offices Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday – January 19, 2026 – in accordance with NC State Holiday Schedule
- E.) Town Council Retreat – Friday, January 23 and Saturday, January 24, 2026 at Fontana Village Resort – special called meeting notice will be posted

12. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Travis Higdon to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6-0.

Stacy J. Guffey, Mayor

Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 4-B

Department/Agency: Finance

Subject Matter: Budget Amendment

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval.

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval.

- Appropriate funds from Powell Bill – Fund Balance in the amount of \$46,401.89 for balloon payment at end of 3-year lease for purchase of John Deere 60G compact excavator and move to Powell Bill – Capital Outlay Equipment and Other Services for property taxes. This equipment is used for right of way maintenance, sidewalk repair and installation and necessary street repairs.
- Appropriate funds from General Fund Fund Balance of \$50,000 to Information Technology – for contract services and computer software/relicensing fees. Due to hardening of the IT system, additional services and software are required.
- Appropriate funds from Police Department Insurance Settlements of \$8,081.54 to Vehicle Maintenance
- Appropriate funds from Police Department Donations \$1,500 to Police – Non-Capital Equipment for purchase of spike strips for all patrol vehicles.
- Appropriate Donations from Donations and Fund Balance (Previous Year's Donations) to purchase equipment for new fire truck - \$58,940.

Suggested Motion: If favorable – approve budget amendments as presented.

Attachments: Yes No

Action Taken: _____



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 4-C

Department/Agency: Tax Collections

Subject Matter: Authorization for Tax Collector to Advertise 2025 delinquent taxes

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval.

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval.

Request is for permission to send second notices for delinquent taxes from 2025 on March 1 and to publish delinquent taxes in the newspaper in mid-April 2026.

Suggested Motion: If favorable – authorize Tax Collector to send second notices and advertise/publish delinquent 2025 taxes.

Attachments: Yes X No

Action Taken: _____

Right to Advertise 2025 taxes

As Tax Collector, I am asking the boards permission, to advertise the past due 2025 Real-estate taxes. There are 437 parcels past due, with the amount of \$312,319.95 due. All taxes not paid in first week of April, will be advertised in the next issue of the Franklin Press.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Scruggs', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sabrina Scruggs, Tax Collector



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 5-A

Department/Agency: Town Council/TDA

Subject Matter: Marketing Update from Tourism Development Authority

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

Morgan Stewart and Devon Dupuis from Stewart Communications and TDA Board Chairman Tim Crabtree will be providing the annual marketing update for the TDA.

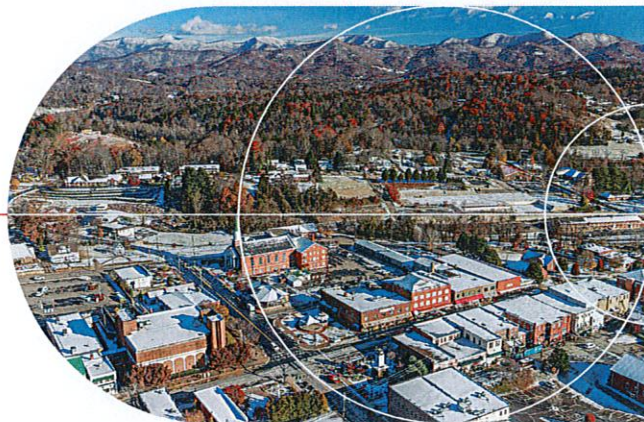
Suggested Motion: N/A – received for information only

Attachments: Yes ____ No X

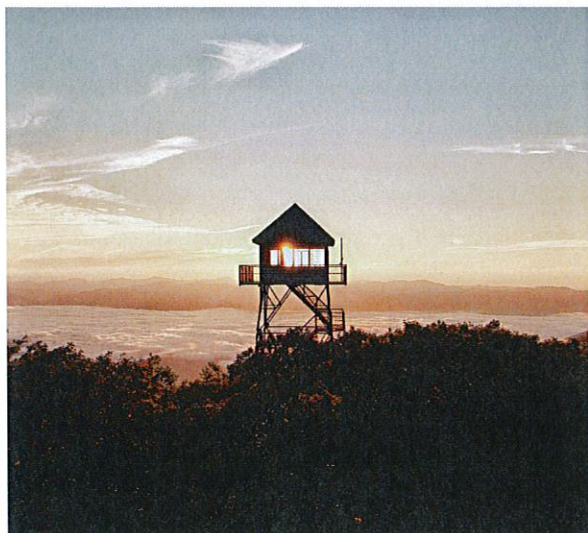
Action Taken: _____



Franklin TDA *Marketing Update*



Agenda



- 01 Information Sources
- 02 Tactics/Channels
- 03 Helene Aftermath
- 04 Examples
- 05 Results
- 06 2026 Goals



Information Sources

Research

HubSpot
Travel and Leisure
Travel and Tour World
Reddit
LinkedIn
The Roaming Boomers
National Library of Medicine

Country Living
Recreation USA
The Camper Report
Hilton
Statista Emerald Publishing
AARP
RV Share

Information Sources



Stakeholder Meetings

Held multiple stakeholder meetings to gain input from local entities and individuals.



Surveys

Conducted both in-person and email surveys with visitors.



Tourism Partners

Collaborated with regional tourism partners and neighbors to share insights.

Helene Aftermath: Tourism Crisis

September 2024

We pivoted to Crisis Management

Franklin led the charge with:

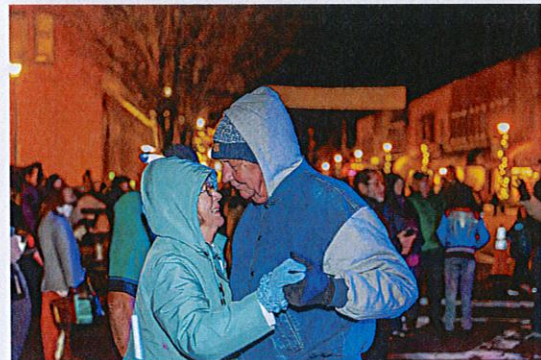
- Regional Tourism Partners
- WNC Neighboring Towns/Counties
- Local/State/Federal Officials

To combat the image that all of WNC was closed to visitors after Helene.



Tactics/Channels

- **Website**
- Social media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
- Billboards
- Email Subscribers
- Local, Regional and National Media
- Print travel guides
- Partnerships
 - Visit Smokies
 - TDC



Our team continuously adds **new image assets** to our media library, which include and equal emphasis on people, events, landscapes and scenery.

Telling Franklin's Stories



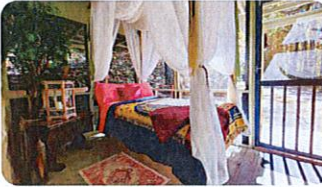
Antiquing in Franklin: A Treasure Hunt in the Heart of the Mountains



Gas Station Gourmets: Where Franklin's Food Scene Fuels Up



It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas



Our Top 10 Most Romantic Airbnbs in Franklin, NC — Valentine's Day Edition



The Best Bed & Breakfasts in Franklin, NC



Best Cool Weather Hikes in Franklin, NC

Telling Franklin's Stories



Fall Activity Guide: Franklin, NC - October 2025



Franklin's Vibrant Art Scene: A Guide to Local Galleries



Why Hike The Appalachian Trail: Bugs



More Than A Scenic View: Franklin Through the Lens of Chief Devin Holland



"Voluntourism": 5 Ways to Make Your Mountain Visit Matter

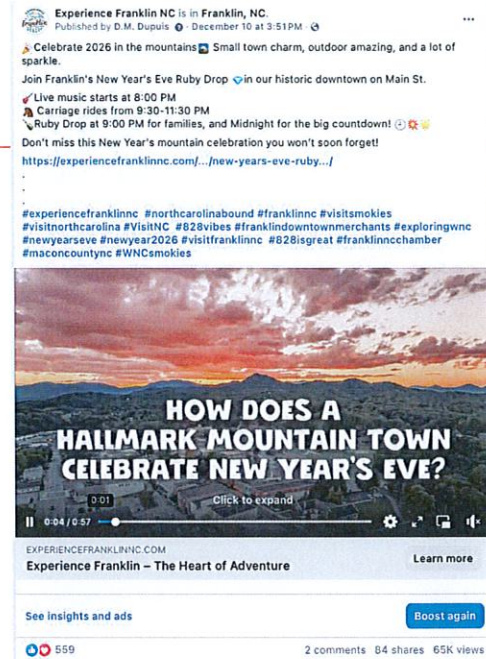


A Guide to Dog-Friendly Travel in Franklin, NC

Paid Advertising

Amplification of quality content:

Not just paying for the click, we seek Reach.



Experience Franklin NC is in Franklin, NC. Published by D.M. Dupuis · December 10 at 3:51 PM

Celebrate 2026 in the mountains 🏔️ Small town charm, outdoor amazing, and a lot of sparkle.

Join Franklin's New Year's Eve Ruby Drop 🎉 in our historic downtown on Main St.

🎵 Live music starts at 8:00 PM

🎠 Carriage rides from 9:30-11:30 PM

🎄 Ruby Drop at 9:00 PM for families, and Midnight for the big countdown! 🎉🎆

Don't miss this New Year's mountain celebration you won't soon forget!

<https://experiencefranklinnc.com/new-years-eve-ruby-.../>

#experiencefranklinnc #northcarolinabound #franklinnc #visitsmokies #visitnorthcarolina #VisitNC #628vibes #franklindowntownmerchants #exploringwnc #newyearsve #newyear2026 #visitfranklinnc #828isgreat #franklinncchamber #macountync #WNCsmokies

HOW DOES A HALLMARK MOUNTAIN TOWN CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S EVE?

EXPERIENCEFRANKLINNC.COM
Experience Franklin – The Heart of Adventure [Learn more](#)

[See insights and ads](#) [Boost again](#)

👍❤️ 559 2 comments 84 shares 65K views

Paid Advertising

Amplification of quality content:

Not just paying for the click, we seek Reach.



Experience Franklin NC Published by Morgan Stewart · September 6, 2025

Fall and the beautiful leaf season 🍁, PumpkinFest 🎃, Winter Wonderland ❄️🌲, the Ruby Drop 🎉...mountains 🏔️, waterfalls 💧, hiking adventures 🥾, stunning views 🌄, small town vibes, farmers markets 🍷, Main St. shopping 🛍️, digital detox 📵, relaxation, dining 🍴, live music 🎵...and so much more...Plan your trip today <https://experiencefranklinnc.com/things-to-do/>


ExperienceFranklinNC.com Franklin

[See insights and ads](#) [Boost post](#)

Paid Advertising

Amplification of quality content:

Not just paying for the click, we seek Reach.



The image shows a Facebook post from 'Experience Franklin NC' published by Morgan Stewart on August 2, 2025. The post text describes the 'Naturalist 25/50K Trail Run' as an extreme event in the Nantahala National Forest, highlighting the challenging elevation and technical trail. It includes a list of relevant hashtags such as #freemusic, #fourstatemagazine, #yondercommunitymarket, #blueridgebartramtrailconservancy, #blueridgebartramtrail, #trailmagic, #outdoor76, #hikertlife, #smokymountains, #nantahalahikingclub, #SmokyMountains, #appalachianmountains, #appalachiantrail, #digitaldetoxing, #exploringwnc, #828vibes, #digitaldetox, #VisitSmokies, #northcarolinaoutdoors, #WNCsmokies, #VisitNC, #visitnorthcarolina, #franklinnc, #maconcountync, #visitfranklinnc, #828isgreat, and #northcarolinabound. Below the text is a photograph of runners at the start of the race, with a banner that reads 'THE NATURALIST 25/50K Trail Run' and 'OCTOBER 4, 2025'. At the bottom of the post are buttons for 'See insights and ads' and 'Boost post'.

Results

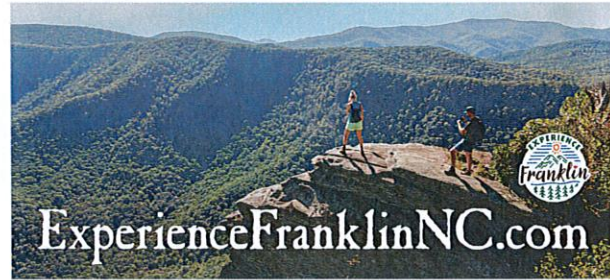
- ➔ **Facebook:** 5.69 Million Content Views Since November 2024
- ➔ **Website:** Achieved 10,000 CONTENT CLICKS per month in 2025 (July 1 - Dec. 31 = more than 15,000 clicks)

Results

→ **Billboards:** approx. 400,000 views per week in Clayton and Florida

→ **SMH Travel Guide:**

- ◆ Travel Guide = 50,000 copies distributed at visitor centers statewide +
- ◆ Video boards for 80,000 visitors at Information Center



Results

→ Tourism Advertising Spend: \$45K since Nov. 2024

→ Franklin Occupancy Taxes: 2024/25: **2nd highest year on record in 15 years**

→ Macon County Occupancy Taxes: **Up 25% Year Over Year** (Aug 2024-Aug 2025)

2026 Goals

Goal 1

Create a Visitor Guide in both print and digital format. Strictly target tourism attractions relevant to the Franklin area. (Visit Smokies sample)

Goal 3

Double our email subscriber list.

Goal 5

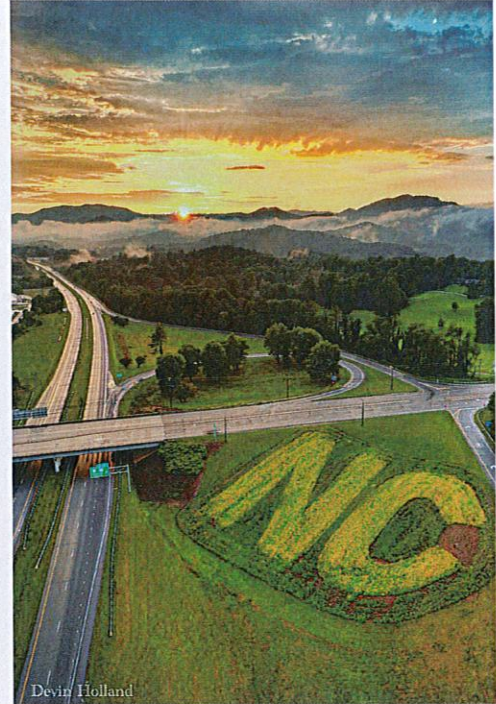
Enhance the website with more interactive features to engage travelers.

Goal 2

Double our current Facebook followers.

Goal 4

Build on our current branding equity to include AAA (Authentic, Approachable, Affordable).



February 2, 2026

Franklin TDA Marketing Update





Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 7-A

Department/Agency: Town Council

Subject Matter: Public Hearing to gain public input on a proposed lease agreement for Town-owned property for the purpose of an outdoor dining space

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend approval.

Town Council has indicated that they would like to consider ways to make Main Street more economically viable. The Town Manager was approached by the new owner of property at 77 East Main Street immediately adjacent to Town Hall regarding potentially leasing space for an outdoor dining area.

The Town previously leased the same area to Root and Barrel Kitchen, LLC for the same purpose. The lease agreement was for three (3) years with a \$300.00 escalator each year. No dining area was ever developed and the lease expired on April 30, 2025.

The proposed lease area would be the same as was in the previous lease, a 15' x 40' portion of land. The Town Attorney has developed a lease agreement and as this is public land, the public hearing is being held to gain public input.

The notice of the public hearing was published on January 21 and January 28, 2026 in the Franklin Press and was posted on the Town's website and on the Town Hall bulletin board.

Suggested Motion: If favorable – approve the lease and terms and authorize the Town Manager to execute.

Attachments: Yes No

Action Taken: _____

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF MACON

LEASE AGREEMENT

Parcel ID: Portion of # 6595-10-7487

Prepared By and Return To:
John F. Henning, Jr.
A Licensed NC Attorney
Campbell Shatley, PLLC
674 Merrimon Avenue, Suite 210
Asheville, NC 28804

THIS CONTRACT AND AGREEMENT (the Agreement), made and entered into as of the 1st day of March, 2026, by and between THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN, a body politic and corporate of the state of North Carolina with its principal place of business being located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, North Carolina 28734, Lessor; and SCOTT DOUGLAS HIGGINS, of 1188 Tobacco Branch Road, Almond, NC, 28702, Lessee;

WITNESSETH:

THAT subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, the said Lessor does hereby let and lease unto the said Lessee, and said Lessee does hereby accept as tenant of said Lessor, a portion of that certain tract or parcel of land, located at 95 Main Street, Franklin, Macon County, North Carolina, as shown on the attached Exhibit A.

The terms and conditions of this Agreement are as follows:

Lessee shall have the quiet and undisturbed enjoyment and possession of the property shown on Exhibit A for a term of three (3) years, and shall pay to Lessor the following sums: a) for the initial lease year commencing March 1, 2026 and ending February 28, 2027, the sum of One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,200.00); b) for the second lease year commencing March 1, 2027 and ending February 29, 2028, the sum of One Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,500.00); and c) for the third lease year, commencing March 1, 2028 and ending February 28, 2029, the sum of

One Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$1,800.00). Each rental amount shall be payable on the first day of each year of the term of this lease, as rent for the aforesaid premises. Unless sooner terminated by either party as set forth herein, this contract of rental shall exist and continue until the 28th day of February, 2029.

As further consideration for and as a condition precedent to this Agreement, the Lessee agrees that it shall, within ninety (90) days of the commencement of the Lease and at its sole expense, relocate any drains causing rainwater or any other runoff to enter the Lessor's property. At no time during the term of this Agreement or any extension thereof shall the Lessee allow any vehicle, structure, or any other obstruction to block the Lessor's use of its property. The Lessee shall keep the leased area in good repair, reasonably attractive in appearance from the public way, and shall use reasonable efforts to prevent its use in manner that constitutes a nuisance. Failure at any time during the term of this Agreement to fulfill these or any other conditions stated herein may result, in the Lessor's sole discretion and in addition to any other remedies available in this Agreement or at law, in the immediate termination of this agreement and Lessee's forfeiture of the leasehold created hereby.

At the expiration of the initial term of this Agreement or any extension thereof, the Lessee shall deliver the leased property into the possession of the Lessor in as good condition as the same now is, ordinary wear and tear excepted.

It is agreed that all improvements and repairs upon said premises made by Lessee shall be considered as part of the real estate and taken as rent in addition, but not set-off to or in lieu of, the sums above set forth. Provided, however, that 1) materials used for construction shall be of a kind that may be removed at the termination of this Lease without jackhammering or similar demolition, such as pavers; 2) the Town Council shall have the right to review and approve any additions before any construction of improvements; and 3) any such improvements shall be at the sole expense of the Lessee and shall be accomplished in a workmanlike manner, in compliance with all applicable building codes and regulations. Provided further, the Lessor shall have the right to require the Lessee to remove any structure erected upon the leased premises at the conclusion of the lease.

The Lessee shall, during the term of this lease, be responsible for any and all utilities on the subject property (i.e. telephone, electric) and for maintaining insurance on any equipment and personal property. The Lessee shall hold harmless and indemnify the Lessor against any loss on

account thereof and against any liability therefore, and for any liability whatsoever arising from their leasehold of the property, whether sounding in tort or in contract; and the Lessee shall, during the term of this lease, be responsible for maintaining a liability insurance policy for her business activities which shall name the Town of Franklin as an additional insured. Such policy of insurance shall be in an amount of not less than One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence and aggregate, and shall require provision of at least thirty (30) days' notice to the Town prior to cancellation. Any delinquency in utility bills or taxes payable to the Lessor and remaining unpaid for more than sixty (60) days shall constitute a breach of the terms of this lease, and shall result in the immediate termination of the Lessee's leasehold. During the term of this lease, Lessee shall at all times possess a valid business license issued by Lessor, and shall be in compliance with any applicable laws or regulations related to Lessee's use of the demised leasehold property.

If the Lessee fails to pay any installment of rental within the later of fifteen (15) days after the due date or ten (10) days after written notice (such written notice not being required to be given more often than twice in any calendar year), or fails to perform any other of the obligations which Lessee is obligated to perform hereunder within thirty (30) days after written notice to cure is given by Lessor to Lessee; or if a bankruptcy proceeding is filed by the Lessee or is filed against the Lessee and is not stayed, dismissed, or the subject of a Plan of Reorganization in which all Lessee's obligations under this Lease are preserved, within six months; or if a proceeding to suspend or dissolve the Lessee's corporate status is filed by the Lessee or is filed against the Lessee and is not stayed or dismissed within six months; or if a receiver is appointed for the Lessee or if Lessee makes an assignment for the benefit of creditors; or if any legal action or process is undertaken against Lessee wherein this Lease or the leased premises are sought to be taken or occupied, then and in any of such events Lessor shall have the right to immediately terminate this Lease without notice to Lessee and Lessee shall immediately vacate the leased premises and Lessor may re-enter the leased premises and take immediate possession thereof. Any rental which remains due and payable after the 15th day after the due date thereof as set forth hereinabove shall bear interest at the rate of eighteen (18%) percent per annum from the due date until paid. In the event that the Lessor is ever required to refer this matter to a collection agency or to institute a lawsuit, in its sole discretion, the Lessee shall be liable for such amounts as are then owed under this lease, and shall also reimburse the Lessor for its expenses, including a reasonable attorneys fee.

This Agreement shall be construed under the laws of the state of North Carolina. Any dispute arising among the parties shall be heard in Superior Court in Macon County, North Carolina. This instrument shall be deemed to have been jointly drafted by the parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, said parties have executed this contract in duplicate originals, one of which is retained by each party hereto, the day and year first above written.

[SIGNATURES APPEAR ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE]

_____(SEAL)
Scott Douglas Higgins

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MACON

I, a Notary Public, do hereby certify that Scott Douglas Higgins, who is known personally to me or who produced satisfactory government-issued identification, personally appeared before me this day, and acknowledged the due execution of the foregoing instrument for the purposes therein expressed, as the act and on behalf of the said company.

Witness my hand and notarial seal, this the _____ day of _____, 2026.

(NOTARIAL SEAL)

Notary Public
My Commission Expires: _____

THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN, a municipal corporation

By: _____
Stacy J. Guffey, Mayor

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MACON

I, a Notary Public, do hereby certify that Stacy J. Guffey personally appeared before me this day and acknowledged that he is the duly elected Mayor of the Town of Franklin, a municipal corporation, and that by authority duly given and as the act of the said Town of Franklin, the foregoing instrument was signed in its name by him as its Mayor.

Witness my hand and notarial seal, this the _____ day of _____, 2026.

(NOTARIAL SEAL)

Notary Public
My Commission Expires: _____

Exhibit A -- To Be Supplied

PUBLIC NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

The Town Council of the Town of Franklin at their January 5, 2026 meeting announced that a proposed lease of public property adjacent to the Town Hall was requested. In accordance with NCGS 160A-272, public notice of this potential lease of property is offered for approval via public hearing at the February 2, 2026 meeting. The public hearing will be held by the Town Council of the Town of Franklin, North Carolina at 6:05 p.m. or as soon as possible thereafter on Monday, February 2, 2026 in the Town Hall boardroom.

- The proposed Lessee is Scott Douglas Higgins.
- The proposed lease area is a tract of land 15' x 40' that lies between the Franklin Town Hall and the JR Chophouse restaurant – 95 East Main Street.
- The proposed lease is for three (3) years with annual lease payments for the property is \$1,200 in year one, \$1,500 in year two and \$1,800 in year three.
- The proposed use for the property is for an outdoor dining area.

A full copy of the proposed lease agreement is available for viewing at the Town Hall.

This is 8th Day of January 2026.

s/Amie Owens

Amie Owens, Town Manager

Publication date: January 21 and January 28, 2026



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 9-A

Department/Agency: Administration/Finance

Subject Matter: Request formal approval of waiver of all late fees for utility accounts for January and February 2026

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval.

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval.

The payment due date for utility bills is the 15th of each month. As there was a system interruption beginning on January 14 which impacted the payment system, in order to ensure that no customer was improperly penalized due to a matter outside of their control, notification was provided to customers that no late fees or utility interruptions would occur until at least February 1. As billing did not go out by the 22nd of January and the regular due date is February 15 with late penalties beginning on the 16th, the request is to waive any late fees for February as well.

The Public Works Director has the authority to waive such fees on a case-by-case basis; however, as this action was for all accounts, Town Council is requested to formally vote to approve the waiver of all late fees for utility payments for January and February 2026.

Suggested Motion: If favorable – approve the waiver of all late fees for utility accounts for January and February 2026.

Attachments: Yes ___ No X

Action Taken: _____



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 9-B

Department/Agency: Town Council

Subject Matter: Quarterly Street Closure Requests

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

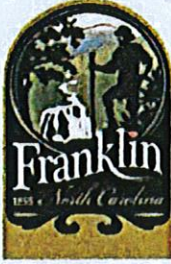
Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: Recommend Approval

1. Use of the Town Hall Parking Lot for the Macon County Farmers Market from May 1 through November 30 from 7:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. – excluding days when there are town events scheduled in the same area
2. Iotla Street on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. of each month May through October 10 to hold Pickin' on the Square
3. Iotla Street on Friday, May 15 from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. for Law Enforcement Memorial Day Observance
4. Iotla Street on Friday, September 11 from 8:30 am until 9:00 a.m. for 9/11 Remembrance
5. Iotla Street on Thursday, September 17 from 5:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. for Constitution Day Celebration
6. Iotla Street on Tuesday, October 13 from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. for Fire Fighters Memorial Observance

Suggested Motion: If favorable – approve the requested street closures as presented.

Attachments: Yes No

Action Taken: _____



TOWN OF FRANKLIN

Post Office Box 1479
Franklin, North Carolina 28744
(828) 524-2516

Check List for Street Closing Requests

Please check all Street(s) that you are requesting to be closed:

- Iotla Street
- Phillips Street
- Main Street
- Other Street Town Hall Parking Lot + grassy areas, as needed.

Name of organization or individual requesting closure: Macon County Farmers Market

Phone number for organization or individual requesting closure: 828-200-7876

Purpose of Street closure request: Farmers Market

Date of requested Street closure: Saturdays May-Nov 2026

Time Street needs to be closed: 5:30 am

Time Street needs to be re-opened: 4:00 pm

Additional notes regarding Street closure request:

Request excludes dates of Town Sponsored events (i.e. Pumpkinfest)

[Signature]
Signature of Individual Requesting Street Closure

11/30/25
Date

All Street closings must be presented to the Town Council for approval. All requests must be submitted to the Town Manager one week prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. The Town Council meets the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Boardroom located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734.

Town Council Meeting Date _____ Approved Denied

Town Council Changes to Request _____



Town of Franklin

Post Office Box 1479
Franklin, North Carolina 28744
(828) 524-2516

Check List for Street Closing Requests

Please check all Street(s) that you are requesting to be closed:

Iotla Street

Phillips Street

Main Street

Other: _____

Name of organization or individual requesting closure: Town of Franklin

Phone Number for organization or individual requesting closure: 828-524-2516 - Sabrina Scruggs

Purpose of Street Closure Request: 2026 Season of Pickin' on the Square

Date of Requested Street Closure: Second and Fourth Saturdays May - October 10, 2026

Time Street needs to be closed: 4:00 p.m.

Time Street needs to be re-opened: 9:00 p.m.

Do you wish to suspend the Social District as part of your street closure for your event? (please circle)

YES

NO

Additional notes regarding street closure request: Social District is not allowed at the Gazebo Square where the event will occur, but other areas within the street closure are included in the social district.


Signature of individual requesting street closure

1-22-2026
Date

All street closures must be presented to the Town Council for approval. All requests must be submitted to the Town Manager one week prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. The Town Council meets the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734.



Town of Franklin

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(828) 524-2516

Check List for Street Closing Requests

Please check all Street(s) that you are requesting to be closed:

Iotla Street

Phillips Street

Main Street

Other: _____

Name of organization or individual requesting closure: Fraternal Order of Police/Chaplains

Phone Number for organization or individual requesting closure: 828-421-2536 - Bonnie Peggs

Purpose of Street Closure Request: Law Enforcement Memorial Day

Date of Requested Street Closure: Friday, 05-15-2026

Time Street needs to be closed: 11:30 a.m.

Time Street needs to be re-opened: 1:00 p.m.

Do you wish to suspend the Social District as part of your street closure for your event? (please circle)

YES

NO

Additional notes regarding street closure request: Social District is not allowed on the Gazebo Square where the event will occur.

Bonnie Peggs
Signature of individual requesting street closure

Jan 15, 2026
Date

All street closures must be presented to the Town Council for approval. All requests must be submitted to the Town Manager one week prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. The Town Council meets the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734.



Town of Franklin

Post Office Box 1479
Franklin, North Carolina 28744
(828) 524-2516

Check List for Street Closing Requests

Please check all Street(s) that you are requesting to be closed:

Iotla Street

Phillips Street

Main Street

Other: _____

Name of organization or individual requesting closure: Macon County Chaplains

Phone Number for organization or individual requesting closure: 828-421-2536 - Bonnie Peggs

Purpose of Street Closure Request: 9/11 Remembrance - Fire Fighters Memorial Day

Date of Requested Street Closure: Friday, 09-11-2026

Time Street needs to be closed: 8:00 a.m.

Time Street needs to be re-opened: 9:30 a.m.

Do you wish to suspend the Social District as part of your street closure for your event? (please circle)

YES

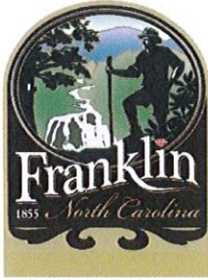
NO

Additional notes regarding street closure request: Social District is not allowed at the Gazebo Square where the event will occur.

Bonnie Peggs
Signature of individual requesting street closure

Jan 15, 2026
Date

All street closures must be presented to the Town Council for approval. All requests must be submitted to the Town Manager one week prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. The Town Council meets the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734.



Town of Franklin

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Check List for Street Closing Requests

Please check all Street(s) that you are requesting to be closed:

Iotla Street

Phillips Street

Main Street

Other: _____

Name of organization or individual requesting closure: _____

Joseph Serrinski

Phone Number for organization or individual requesting closure: _____

828-371-7307

Purpose of Street Closure Request: _____

Constitution Day Celebration

Date of Requested Street Closure: _____

Sept. 17, 2026

Time Street needs to be closed: _____

5:30pm - 8:00pm

Time Street needs to be re-opened: _____

8:00pm

Do you wish to suspend the Social District as part of your street closure for your event? (please circle)

YES

NO

Additional notes regarding street closure request:

Joseph J. Serrinski

Signature of individual requesting street closure

12/22/2025

Date

All street closures must be presented to the Town Council for approval. All requests must be submitted to the Town Manager one week prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. The Town Council meets the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734.



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Check List for Street Closing Requests

Please check all Street(s) that you are requesting to be closed:

Iotla Street

Phillips Street

Main Street

Other: _____

Name of organization or individual requesting closure: Macon County Chaplains

Phone Number for organization or individual requesting closure: Bonnie Peggs 828-421-2536

Purpose of Street Closure Request: Fire Fighters Memorial

Date of Requested Street Closure: Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Time Street needs to be closed: 11:30 a.m.

Time Street needs to be re-opened: 1:00 p.m.

Do you wish to suspend the Social District as part of your street closure for your event? (please circle)

YES

NO

Additional notes regarding street closure request:

Bonnie Peggs
Signature of individual requesting street closure

Jan. 15, 2026
Date

All street closures must be presented to the Town Council for approval. All requests must be submitted to the Town Manager one week prior to the scheduled Town Council meeting. The Town Council meets the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street, Franklin, NC 28734.



Agenda Item – Town Council

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Agenda Item #: 10 A-D

Department/Agency: Public Works – All Divisions

Subject Matter: Quarterly Departmental Reporting

Department Head's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

Town Manager's Comments/Recommendation: N/A

As a suggestion from Town Council, department directors will be providing quarterly updates to the Council. Monthly reports will still be provided as part of the agenda packet, but this will provide the opportunity to address the Council directly and answer any questions that the Town Council Members may have.

Suggested Motion: N/A – received for information only

Attachments: Yes _____ No X

Action Taken: _____