

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
June 2, 2025**

THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Monday, June 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street Franklin, NC.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jack Horton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey and Council Members: Joe Collins, David Culpepper, Mike Lewis and Rita Salain.

Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to excuse Councilman Robbie Tompa. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5-0.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey.

3. ADOPTION OF THE JUNE 2, 2025 TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA

Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to adopt the Town Council Agenda for June 2, 2025 as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5 – 0.

4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA JUNE 2, 2025

- A.) Approval of the Town Council Minutes for the April 21, 2025 Special Called Meeting and May 5, 2025 Regular Meeting
- B.) Approval of Payment to NC DOT for close out of Depot Street Sidewalk project
- ~~C.) Request Town Clerk to review two (2) voluntary annexation petitions~~
- ~~D.) Request appointment of member to TDA Board~~

Vice Mayor Guffey asked for clarification on items “C & D”. On item “C”, he asked if they were just voting to have the annexations reviewed. Town Manager Owens said they were just being referred to the Clerk for certification. On item “D”, he asked if that position on the TDA Board filled the obligation to collect occupancy tax. Town Manager Owens said yes, the individual for appointment collects occupancy tax within the Town limits.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member David Culpepper to approve the consent agenda for the June 2, 2025 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5 – 0.

5. RECOGNITIONS

- A.) Fire Department Life Saving Award - presented by Fire Chief Ben Ormond
Darian Green, Fire Fighter and Joe Templeton, Fire Fighter
- B.) NC Fire Fighter Certifications - presented by Fire Chief Ben Ormond
Josh Anderson, Aiden Carpenter, Maveric Waldroop

- C.) Driver Operator Aerial Certifications - presented by Fire Chief Ben Ormond
Dennis Carpenter, Killian Carpenter, Michael Gerra, Clay Gibson, Zach Ledford, Gabe McKay, Mark Stanfield
- D.) AAS Degrees – Police Chief Devin Holland
Diane Mahoney, Evidence Technician/Executive Assistant; Sgt Garrett Hovis; Officer Jonathan Lauffer and Officer Logan Mack

6. PUBLIC SESSION

No one signed up to speak.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- A.) Request from Larry Fouts regarding fee for 1” water tap – Town Manager Amie Owens
Larry Fouts paid \$1,000 in October 2000 for a 1 ½” water tap that was never installed. Town Manager Owens stated that she only has the ability to reduce the cost of the tap by \$1,000 (original amount paid). The current cost for a 1” tap fee plus accessories and availability fee is \$5,278.

Mr. Fouts stated the he was not able get access of the neighboring property to install the water line he paid the tap fee for in October 2000. He recently obtained an easement off Hwy 28 in 2025 to put in the water line. He stated he didn’t care to pay a little bit, but didn’t feel he needed the full amount.

Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. said that it is at Town Council’s discretion to honor the original payment.

Mayor Horton asked Mr. Fouts if the Town were to waive the availability fee if he could pay the difference in what he had already paid (\$1,000) and the current cost of the tap/accessory fee. Town Manager Owens noted that amount would be \$2,528. Mr. Fouts said he didn’t mind to pay \$500 or \$700, but he could not afford the full amount.

Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve a payment of \$500 and credit of \$1,000 already paid and the Town would install the water tap. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5 – 0.

Councilman Collins was concerned about setting a precedent.

Mayor Horton suggested setting an expiration date on tap installations.

- B.) Request from Franklin R/C Flyers for renewal of License Agreements - Town Manager Amie Owens
The Franklin R/C Flyers submitted a renewal License Agreement, July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2030 with four (4) one-year renewals for the use of the old landfill property. This is a three (3) party agreement and the Macon County Board of County Commissioners approved the agreement at their May 13, 2025 meeting.

Council Member Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to approve the License Agreement with the Franklin R/C Flyers for use of the old landfill property as an airfield for model airplanes as approved by NCDEQ as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5 – 0.

- C.) Request approval of the Notice of Award and subsequent Construction Contract with Haren Construction for Clearwell and High Service Pump Station project- Town Manager Amie Owens and Town Attorney John Henning, Jr.

Town Manager Owens said that the lowest, responsive, responsible bidder on the project was not the lowest bidder. The Town cannot appropriate funds or do a Capital Project Ordinance until the Town can prove there is funding. However, the Town cannot get funding until there is a signed contract. The contract amount is for \$6,301,400.00 and the contract would begin July 2, 2025.

There was additional discussion on the financing of the project.

Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Council Member Joe Collins to approve the Notice of Award and Construction Contract between the Town of Franklin and Haren Construction and to direct the Town Manager and Finance Director to move forward with the development of financing RFP as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5 – 0.

8. PUBLIC HEARING

A.) Public Hearing on Monday, June 2, 2025 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter as possible to gain public input on the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget-Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Owens gave an overview on the FY 2025-2026 Budget: General Fund the tax rate will remain at \$0.33, there will be a \$30,000 Fund Balance appropriation to balance the budget, and there are funds set aside for Recreation Capital Projects; Water/Sewer Fund has a proposed 10% rate increase and \$729,071.79 will need to be appropriated from Retained Earnings to balance the water/sewer budget; Fire Department Fund, the fire district tax will remain at \$0.07 and the debt service for the fire substation is \$44,842.

There is a proposed 4% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) built into the budget, as well as an increase for the Town Council stipend (January 2026). There are two (2) positions that will be reclassified in the budget - Police Captain to be reclassified to Assistant Police Chief and Budget & Fiscal Analyst to Deputy Finance Director.

There is a 4% increase in health care benefits, 3.3% increase in dental benefits and mandatory increases in the NC State Retirement System contributions. There are also increase to workers compensation, property & liability insurance policies and 10% increase in utilities for Duke Energy, Toccoa Natural Gas, Verizon, etc.

Town Manager Owens noted the priority items from Town Council that are included in the FY 2025/2026 Budget: \$25,000 for new website design, \$25,000 for roundabout beautification, \$7,500 to the Garden Club for beautification and an additional \$30,000 for Town beautification, \$60,000 for economic development incentives, part/time Main Street Coordinator position and \$227,443 set aside for the greenway connector.

The new fee schedule adjustments: Online Utility Exchange (3 tier account deposit credit check) increase Appeal Fee for Planning/Zoning to \$100, 10% increase for water/sewer, 5% increase for availability fee and 15% for tap fees.

Mayor Horton opened the Public Hearing at 6:45 p.m.

No one signed up to speak.

Mayor Horton closed the Public Hearing at 6:46 p.m.

Vice Mayor Guffey inquired about the budgeted Powell Bill funds and projects. Town Manager Owens noted the extra funds after the projects are used for sweeper brooms, small tools, etc.

There was discussion about the ABC Board profits and the amount budgeted and what funds are provided to the town, Council/Community Relations and Beautification line items, and the lack of CIP for Governing Board.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to approve the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget and Budget Ordinance as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5 – 0.

9. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

- A.) Human Resources -Nicole Bradley, Human Resources Director gave an update on the annual benefit open enrollment, job vacancies, new hires and thanked Town Council for passing the 4% COLA in the budget.
- B.) Tax Collections/Events -Sabrina Scruggs, Tax Collector/Event Coordinator gave an update on 2025 business registration mailings, 97.7% collection rate for 2024 taxes, Pickin' on the Square, and upcoming July 4th festivities.
- C.) Fire Department -Chief Ben Ormond gave an update on second quarter calls for service, recent trainings, NC Safe Kids care seat clinic (31 seats checked and 12 new seats provided), and the fire substation (Grand re-opening TBD).

10. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Councilman Collins said that Southwestern Community College will hold their 11th annual Boots, Blues & Bling Gala on Saturday September 27 at Harrah's in Cherokee. He would like Town Council to sponsor a table.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to sponsor a table at the 11th annual Boots, Blue Jeans and Bling Gala. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5-0.

Councilman Culpepper said that he was excited about the future greenway connector.

Councilwoman Salain said she hopes to have a plan for the additional \$30,000 beautification funds. She will be attending a housing meeting at Western (along with Vice Mayor Guffey and Councilman Tompa). She also inquired about the status of the Cat Creek Estates property. Town Planner Setser said that the property was cleaned up and the house had been boarded up. The cost was \$1,500.

Councilman Mike Lewis thanked everyone for their work on the 2025/2026 budget.

Vice Mayor Guffey discussed the Duncan property. Mr. Duncan approached Vice Mayor Guffey about an extension on the payment for the demolition of the property. The cost of the demolition was \$16,000 plus the daily interest accrual. Vice Mayor Guffey said it was his understanding that the Duncan's are willing to pay the interest that is currently owed and are anticipating the sale of the property to pay off the remaining balance.

Mr. John Duncan was in attendance and said he would be happy to answer questions. He said the property is listed for sale and there has been interest in it.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member David Culpepper to allow the Duncan's to pay the interest through 6/2/2025 and extend the obligation for one (1) year at 8% or at the sale/closing of the property, whichever comes first. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 4-1 (Councilwoman Salain voted in opposition).

Councilwoman Salain commented on her concerns of how long the property sat and individuals begging Council to do something about it. She said she felt that the year for repayment was generous.

Mayor Horton made the announcement that he was not planning to run for re-election of another term.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A.) Next Town Council Regular Meeting is Monday, July 7, 2025
- B.) Town Offices will be closed on Friday, July 4, 2025 in observance of Independence Day in accordance with the NC State Holiday Schedule
- C.) Pickin' on the Square-Saturday June 14 and Saturday June 28, 2025
- D.) July 4th activities downtown -10 a.m. until 2 p.m.; Fireworks in the Park 4 p.m. until 10 p.m.

12. CLOSED SESSION

- A.) Enter into Closed Session under NC General Statute § 143-318.11(a)(5) to discuss acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease.

Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to enter into Closed Session under NC General Statute § 143-318.11(a)(5) to discuss acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5-0.

The Town Council entered closed session at 7:31 p.m.

The Town Council returned to open session at 7:44 p.m.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member David Culpepper to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5-0.

C. Jack Horton, Mayor

Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk