

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL  
RETREAT/ PLANNING SESSION  
January 27, 2024**

**THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL** held a special strategic planning session on Saturday, January 27, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at The Vineyard at High Holly in Scaly Mountain, NC.

**1. Call to Order- Mayor Jack Horton**

**Mayor Jack Horton called the meeting to order at 8:54 a.m. with the following members present:**

Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey, Council Members David Culpepper, Joe Collins, Robbie Tompa, Mike Lewis and Rita Salain.

Staff members present: Amie Owens, Sarah Bishop, Nicole Bradley, Justin Setser, Sabrina Scruggs, Alison Stamey, Bill Deal, Jason Hopkins, Chris Waldroop, Devin Holland and Ben Ormond.

**2. Request approval of fee for Conditional Zoning Permit and update of fee schedule- Amie Owens, Town Manager**

Town Council adopted the Conditional Zoning Ordinance at their December 4, 2023 meeting. However, a fee for Conditional Zoning Applications was not set. Town Planner Justin Setser gave a review of Conditional Zoning and stated the Special Use Permit Application fee was \$500.

Council Member Culpepper would like to revisit Conditional Rezoning and wants make the process as easy as possible.

***Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the fee of \$500 for Conditional Zoning Applications as presented. The motion carried.***

***Vote: 5- 1. Council Member Culpepper voted in opposition.***

**3. Request approval to enter into 2-year contract for internet service- Amie Owens, Town Manager**

Town Manager Owens stated that since the internet services contract is a multi-year contract Town Council's approval of the contract is required. This contract would allow for faster speeds at a lower cost.

***Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member David Culpepper approve the 2-year contract for internet services as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

**4. Resolutions:**

A. Supporting Macon County Schools Grant Application- Mayor Jack Horton

The proposed Resolution is to support Macon County Schools in their grant application for sixty-two million dollars (\$62,000,000) for the construction of a new Franklin High School.

***Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Joe Collins adopt the Resolution in Support of Macon County Schools Grant Application as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

B. Purchase of Fire Apparatus and One-Time Down Payment Assistance- Amie Owens, Town Manager

Town Manager Owens discussed the purchase of new fire truck for Franklin Fire & Rescue. The price of the fire truck has increased \$10,000 since the January 2, 2024 Council Meeting, where the vendor was selected. Discussion was held on using funds from the General Funds fund balance or remaining ARP funds to assist with the downpayment.

Councilman Collins was concerned that supplementing the fire department's expenses will become a line item in the General Fund Budget.

Additional discussion was held on the funding of the Franklin Fire & Rescue Department. Their revenue comes from the Franklin District fire tax. However, the district fire tax rate is set by the Macon County Board of Commissioners and not Town Council.

***Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to adopt the Resolution to use Fund Balance from the General Fund for the One-Time Down Payment Assistance on the purchase of Fire Apparatus as presented. The motion carried. Vote: 4- 2. Council Member David Culpepper and Council Member Joe Collins voted in opposition.***

***Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to advocate to the Macon County Board of Commissioners to increase the Franklin Fire District tax rate. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

5. Policy:

A. Mission and Vision

Town Manager Owens discussed the Mission and Vision statement for the Town. The current Franklin Comprehensive Land Use Plan contains a Vision and Mission statement on page 34. Discussion will continue on adjustments to the current statements that fit the Council's mission and vision for the Town into the future. This discussion may occur at upcoming Council meetings.

B. Town Council Rules and Procedures

Mayor Jack Horton discussed the changes to the Town Council Rules and Procedures that were suggested by Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. The changes were made to conform with actual practices.

***Council Member Rita Salain made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to approve the changes to the Rules and Procedures for Town Council as suggested by Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

C. Fund Balance Policy

Finance Director Sarah Bishop reviewed the proposed Fund Balance Policy that was presented at Friday night's retreat/planning session.

Council Member Culpepper would like to hold off on a vote until the February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

D. Step and Grade Policy

Town Manager Amie Owens reviewed the proposed Step and Grade Policy that was presented at Friday night's retreat/planning session.

***Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to approve the Step and Grade Policy as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

**6. Council Discussion regarding priorities for the year and beyond**

\* Discussion was held regarding the future of the Franklin ABC Store: build own building, own/lease the building, find a location, run as a department through Town.

\* Discussion was held regarding the New Macon County Farmers Market: close Iotla Street from red light to First Baptist, every Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

\* Discussion was held regarding the addition of a Main Street Coordinator position: Main Street program, economic development, and grant writing.

\* Discussion was held to make Pickin' on the Square a Town led event (There was a consensus from the Board to move the planning of Pickin' on the Square in-house). Town Manager Owens will contact Donnie Clay and let him know about the change.

\* Discussion was held regarding the status of the Downtown Wi-Fi project and Mr. Setser updated regarding the need to have antenna on privately owned businesses as there was an issue with using power poles.

\* Discussion was held regarding the proposed Franklin Downtown Historic District to assist with the Scott Griffin Hotel project.

***Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to move \$7,000 to pay Hanbury Preservation Consulting for their help on the architectural survey of the proposed Franklin Downtown Historic District project as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

\* Discussion was held regarding affordable housing: offering incentives to developers. Ms. Owens provided sample incentives for consideration.

\* Discussion was held regarding the future of the Town's raw water storage.

\* Discussion was held regarding the beautification of Franklin: flower baskets, banners, roundabouts, roadside trash pickup, and code enforcement.

\* Discussion was held regarding the Gazebo Square and having conversations with the Macon County Board of County Commissioners about potential purchase.

\* Discussion was held regarding homelessness and how to better utilize resources available in the community.

\* Mayor Horton would like to set up a meeting for the Council of Government (Town Council, Macon County Commissioners and the Town of Highlands Commissioners) to better work inter-governmentally on various projects.

Mayor Horton discussed committee appointments for Council Members.

- a. Councilman Joe Collins liaison to the ABC Board
- b. Councilman David Culpepper liaison to the Appalachian Trail Community Council
- c. Councilwoman Rita Salain liaison to the Southwestern NC Home Consortium
- d. Councilman Robbie Tompa liaison to the Ordinance Review Committee
- e. Councilman Mike Lewis liaison to the Macon County Program for Progress Board
- f. Vice Mayor Guffey liaison to the Macon County Economic Development Commission

Council Members will consider these appointments and will let Mayor Horton know at the next Town Council meeting if they will work for their schedules.

Department Directors and Supervisors gave a brief update of their current department's projects and thanked Town Council for all their support.

## 7. Adjournment

***Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to adjourn the meeting at 1:14 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6- 0.***

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C. Jack Horton, Mayor

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Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk