

May 16, 2016 meeting,

A special called meeting of the Town of Franklin Board of Aldermen was held on Monday May 16, 2016 at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room. Mayor Robert S. Scott presided. Vice-Mayor Patti Abel, Aldermen Joe Collins, Adam Kimsey, Billy Mashburn, Brandon McMahan and Barbara McRae were present. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the 2016-2017 fiscal year proposed budget.

Town Manager Summer Woodard, Finance Officer Kyra Doster, Fire Chief Kevin Rohrer and Town Clerk Chad Simons were present.

Mayor Scott called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Mayor Scott – I was going to put down a public session, but the person wanting to speak to us isn't here. Would anyone like to speak? We will move on because there is no need to revise the agenda. The first item of business is the discussion on the proposed budget. I'll turn it over to our manager.

Town Manager Summer Woodard read the budget message. A copy of the message is attached.

Town Manager Summer Woodard and Kyra Doster reviewed the proposed fiscal year budget by departmental line-items, revenues and expenditures.

Summer Woodard –Town Manager – In 2009 the manager at the time approached the Board about a generator for the police department. They went ahead and poured the cement pad and got everything set up for the generator, except the generator. The police department is the only department in the Town of Franklin without a generator. There are some concerns with power outages or prolonged state of emergencies because there is no access to the building. There is also concern about being able to pull reports from computers.

Alderman Mashburn – Once the power goes out you can't get into the building. You have an evidence room and you can't access it. That's a nightmare so we need to get a generator.

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – We looked at trying to buy a generator and sharing it with the fire department. The fire department has an aging generator so we thought this would be possible. However, when we talked to some electricians the buildings are not set up for that. You would have to rewire one of the buildings to make it work, because they are on two different circuits.

Mayor Scott – I'm very concerned about the evidence room. Most of the evidence rooms I've dealt with have manual lock and keys. I wonder what it would cost to put one door on a mechanical lock, and another access door on a manual lock. Town Hall, in the case of emergencies, has a state of the art generator. This would be the place we would be running the town from. That's my concern.

Patti Abel – Vice Mayor – That's not the only reason. They also need computer access.

Mayor Scott – I can go with what the Board wants. But we will run the Town from here in the event of a natural disaster.

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – The police chief also stated using the police department as an overflow shelter.

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Alderman Collins – What is the life expectancy of a generator that cost \$25,000?

Summer Woodard – Town Manager – Thirty years.

Alderman Collins – It seems like a no brainer to me. We will get our money for it.

Mayor Scott – I can live with it.

The Town Board continued to discuss the proposed budget at length.

Mayor Scott – I think I'm getting redundant here. I think all we are doing is maintaining. I'm worried about it. We're really not doing a lot of improving. I wouldn't mind calling for a two cent tax increase again this year. One cent would generate \$60,000 and I wouldn't be against restricting what we would use that money for. We are proud of a low tax rate, but what are we doing to increase services when we keep bragging about a low tax rate. There is a correlation between your level of services and the tax rate. I don't see how we are doing the public a favor when we keep taxes low and some of our infrastructure is really in bad shape. I'd like to hear from the Board on this. Let's talk about it. Let's look down the road. Is it better to bite the bullet now or wait until the bullet is even more untasteful?

Alderman McRae – Do we have a list of the things you want to improve?

Alderman Collins – What are you suggesting we do with the \$120,000?

Mayor Scott – I would like to improve our sidewalks.

Patti Abel – Vice Mayor – I think we need a plan in place before increasing taxes.

Mayor Scott – Our sidewalks are in terrible shape. We have places put in for handicap ramps and you trip over them. We could spend \$500,000 just bringing downtown up to par. We have parks and the Whitmire Property we are going to discuss in the coming year. I don't want to be the only one talking.

Patti Abel – Vice Mayor – I agree we should look toward the future, but we need a plan in place first before we increase taxes. If we are spending money on sidewalks, where? I would also want to look at our current assets that we might not need anymore. Maybe we can sell them.

Mayor Scott – If you take Whitmire off the table and maybe some other assets it won't do the public any good. Right now our privilege licenses are only \$10 a business. Is that going to generate benefits to the public?

Alderman Mashburn – I don't think now is the time to discuss that.

Alderman Collins – At this budget cycle we are here, at a balance somewhat. If the suggestion is to go up two cents this year, and we will figure out what to do with it once we get it, I don't think that's fiscally responsible. Maybe we can do this in a future budget. We are adding four percent to water and sewer.

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Alderman McRae – I think people would be behind a tax increase if they knew what the money would be used for.

Mayor Scott – Which comes first? Can we do anything without any money?

Patti Abel – Vice Mayor – The planning comes first.

Mayor Scott – Where is our planning from this Board? We need to start long range strategic planning.

Alderman Mashburn – We have invested in water and sewer for about \$10 million dollars. That's a long range project.

Mayor Scott – I just don't think we have a vision in place.

Alderman Mashburn – I just think our visions are different.

Mayor Scott – And that's what makes this a Board.

Alderman McRae – We've talked about a lot of things, a parking study, a parking garage and some other things.

Alderman Collins –What generally happens is the budget sneaks up on you. It's just how it works out. If we want to develop a long term plan we need to have a retreat much sooner than February or March.

Alderman McRae – I think we should really do that instead of just saying it.

Mayor Scott – We've also heard some things on downtown revitalization.

Patti Abel – Vice Mayor – Maybe there will be more grants available in the future.

Mayor Scott – Most of the grant monies are dried up. The Rural Center and Community Develop Block Grants are gone. Appalachian Regional Commission grant monies are gone. I hate it. I really do. I've had my say.

Patti Abel – Vice Mayor – We need to try.

Alderman McRae – I just don't think we should increase taxes for vague purposes. People wouldn't be for it.

Mayor Scott –For a \$200,000 property a one cent increase would be \$20.00 more. We could put it to the public to see what we would do with the \$60,000.

Alderman McRae – I know we have been pinching pennies.

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Mayor Scott – Our town employees have done great. I know what they put into this budget. If there was a knife they were sharpening it would be turned into a razor. There is no fat in this budget. We have no cushion for anything. Some of the equipment our public works people are driving is an absolute embarrassment. I don't mean to end this on a sour note. We just owe it to our employees to give them a cushion. But alright, any other business?

Motion was made by Collins, seconded by Abel to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried.

Vote: 6 to 0.

Robert S. Scott, Mayor

Chad B. Simons, Town Clerk