

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 17, 2024**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Tuesday, January 17, 2024, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Brian Chandler, Theodore Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini, Patrick Sheridan. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Amy Frigulietti, Deputy Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney.

CALL TO ORDER: ► Chair Mercer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Mercer called for a moment of silence. All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: ► Chair Mercer reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are welcome to attend public board and committee meetings in person. Meetings are live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. In an effort to maximize citizen engagement opportunities, citizens will be able to continue to participate remotely via phone or Zoom. He announced that this meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV; this meeting may be recorded by others. ► He announced Town Council office hours are on January 18 from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM at the Senior Center.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Ms. Sue Cass, 146 Longhill Road, said she wanted to speak about the dog park and said that the chair of the committee, Mr. Gennarino D'Onofrio, has retired. She said the dog park and the chair have been a treasure. She said the chair was not from Franklin; however, he was at the dog park twice everyday making sure it was clean. She said if anything can be done to acknowledge this effort, that would be wonderful. ► Town Clerk Nancy Danello said that she opted to get the census out really early and encouraged all to send them in. She said she was in need of election workers; she explained some of the duties of the election workers. She said there would be early voting for all three elections. She said the presidential primary is on March 5, 2024, from 6 AM to 8 PM. She said in-person early voting starts February 24, 2024, at Franklin High School, from 9 AM to 1 PM. She reviewed additional dates and times for early voting. She said early voting will also be available at the Town Clerk's office during regular business hours. She said she reached out to GATRA if they would be interested in taking people to the high school on election day to vote. She said that unenrolled is the old independent. She said that for primaries, a party must be declared. She explained the process for sending in the card for requesting a ballot be mailed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ► *December 20, 2023; January 3, 2024.* ► **MOTION to Approve** the December 20, 2023 meeting minutes by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Jones. Discussion:** Councilor Cormier-Leger said that on page 3, the minutes indicate audience member who did not identify themselves, and the person was Scott from the YMCA; he asked if that could be changed. ► Chair Mercer asked Councilor Dellorco if that could be added in his motion. ► Councilor Dellorco said yes. ► **VOTE (on the motion as amended/adjusted): Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.** ► **MOTION to Approve** the January 3, 2024 meeting minutes by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Jones. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: ► **Proclamation: FISH of Franklin.** ► Chair Mercer read aloud the proclamation honoring FISH of Franklin, a non-profit organization of volunteers by providing free transportation to medical appointments for Franklin residents who have no other means of transportation, on the occasion of their 50th anniversary. ► Ms. Terry Robbins, incoming FISH president, accepted the proclamation. She thanked the Town Council for honoring FISH for their 50 years of serving

the community. She acknowledged and thanked Ms. Barbara Steele, FISH president for the past 12 years. She also thanked Ms. Nancy Rappa and Ms. Joanne Solomon who were present at the meeting. She noted that FISH has received about 18,000 calls during the past 50 years. She said the volunteers use their own cars and their own gas to provide the transportation services. She thanked all the volunteers who have served in many capacities over the past 50 years. She said that anyone interested in learning about volunteer opportunities can call FISH at 508-528-2121 and leave a message; the call will be returned quickly.

APPOINTMENTS: None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS - 7:00 PM: None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► *Discussion: Franklin Food Pantry Update - Tina Powderly, Executive Director.* ► Ms. Tina Powderly, Executive Director, narrated a slideshow presentation. She said she would be reviewing who is the Franklin Food Pantry, what does the Pantry do, trends, and how to help. She thanked everyone for their help and support. She gave special thanks to the Town Council and administration to hopefully vote to appropriate \$100,000 of Town ARPA money. She said their mission is to alleviate food insecurity and compassionately empower our community through resources and collaboration. She said they have nine staff, 11 board members, 100 volunteers a week, and one refrigerated box truck. She reviewed some statistics from FY23: 1,324 people served in 666 households, 31,732 grocery bags distributed, 1,162 bags delivered to three different sites, and 81 children received a backpack each week. She explained that all of this is trending up showing growth in their services. She said one in three adults and one in three children face food insecurity in Massachusetts. She said that since the Pantry's move to the larger, intentionally designed space six months ago, client visits have increased by 30 percent. She gave some stories of some of the clients who visit the pantry. She provided information on ways to help and/or make monetary donations and showed links to information. She reviewed that there is a tour of the Pantry online. ► Town Council members asked questions, made comments, and thanked the Food Pantry. ► In response to questions, Ms. Powderly said they have been fortunate about the people who contribute; she said their revenue is growing, but so are their expenses. She said they are a solid financial organization; she said she knows if they want to expand their programs, they will need to attract funding to support that. She thanked the Town Council for the \$100,000. She said the Town Council has always been supportive. She said the Town Council should continue doing what they are doing. She said housing is a huge need; there is not affordable housing in this community and surrounding communities. She said it is a larger problem. She said transportation is another big problem. She said there are always challenges with medical bills as well. She said GATRA is a help, but not a perfect solution to the transportation problem. She explained the backpack program. She said the recipients of the backpacks are Franklin public school students; it is a confidential program. She said the nurses at the schools identify children in need. She said it shows the collaboration between the Pantry and the schools. She said the backpacks are filled with items that will get a child through the weekend. She said they are doing what they can to help the families housed in Franklin. She said she gave kudos to the Town Administrator's office for bring together all the social services agencies in this area. ► Councilor Jones said that he hopes to organize something this spring to get funding for the Pantry. ► Ms. Powderly said that the need does not lessen over the whole year. She said that they serve predominately Franklin; it is about 85 percent Franklin residents. She said they have put a temporary hold on accepting new out-of-town clients, but they have existing out-of-town clients. She said they are trying to manage the demand, but they are predominately Franklin. She reviewed the capital campaign. She reviewed that they do not provide clothing. She explained there is an organization in Hopkinton that has a fairly large clothing operation. ► Mr. Hellen said that the Federated Church has been doing a good job on these issues for clothing and coats. ► Ms. Powderly discussed their home delivery program and noted that it is a

medically qualified program; food is provided on a weekly basis. She said they are always working with GATRA and other organizations. ► Chair Mercer thanked Ms. Powderly for giving this update. He thanked all the volunteers and said it was a great organization doing great things for the community.

► **Discussion: Homelessness Report - Amy Frigulietti, Deputy Town Administrator and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).** ► Ms. Amy Frigulietti, Deputy Town Administrator, said she was joined tonight by the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). She said as part of her role as deputy town administrator, she has been tasked with coordinating social services in Franklin and is working to understand the services offered to Franklin residents both through municipal departments and via non-profits and external community partners. She said that she hopes to identify where there may be overlap in services, where they can better coordinate and collaborate, and where there are gaps that need attention. She noted that about one month into her tenure they were presented with the migrant crisis. She said Franklin is fortunate to have a robust list of resources in the town. She narrated a slideshow presentation. She discussed the CIT is comprised of the Police, Fire, Council on Aging, Public Health, Town Administrator, and Veterans' Services, and she reviewed the names and roles of the team members. She reviewed definitions of homelessness as provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Social Security Administration, and the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities Regulation. She explained the increase in homelessness rates due to a combination of factors. She explained that 307 people were identified in the 2020 U.S. Census as homeless in Franklin; she explained how the homeless population was counted. She explained what they are actually experiencing in Franklin. She reviewed that in 2023, the Senior Center had approximately 28 homeless cases, Veterans' Services had approximately 5 homeless cases, Health Department had approximately 2 individuals, and Franklin Police had approximately 13 individuals. She said she hopes in the future there will be a tracking system that will ensure better accuracy. She reviewed that as of January 8, 2024, the Franklin Housing Authority had 114 local residents on their waiting list for one-bedroom apartments, 278 local residents are on the list for family housing, and one resident is on the list for congregate housing. She reviewed that in 2023, the Housing Authority had 25 vacancies of which 14 were filled with local residents or local veterans, eight were filled with emergency applicants, and three were in-house transfers. She said the waiting list for housing is very long. She said the statewide central housing list has nearly 200,000 people on it. She said there are over 15,000 people statewide on the Franklin waiting list for public housing, and the waiting list can be 12 years or more for seniors and disabled individuals. She explained the process for obtaining housing. She reviewed what they are doing to help including helping with applications, connecting individuals with external partners including but not limited to the Food Pantry, YMCA, and Random Smiles, and connecting people to local shelters and congregate housing. She explained further work they are doing to help, including but not limited to, the CIT, creation of Police Department Co-Response Team Program, County ARPA money to SAFE Coalition, Food Pantry, and YMCA, exemptions and discounts review, and scheduling a job fair. She thanked the Town Council for providing her with the opportunity to highlight all the work the Franklin community does to combat homelessness. She said the pandemic era federal resources and protections expiring has made us aware that this matter is not going away anytime soon. She said there is a bigger discussion to be had around housing and the housing crisis. ► Town Council members asked questions, made comments, thanked Ms. Frigulietti. ► In response to questions, Ms. Frigulietti reviewed the situation at the adult shelter in Milford. She said the shelter is open, but the hours are restricted; she said she is not sure about the red tape Councilor Cormier-Leger is talking about. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said the red tape he is talking about is that they have restricted hours, and they could not be a permanent solution for folks because they were kind of classified as a church and not as a shelter, so they could only open their doors for a certain amount of time. He said he was curious if that could be fixed. He asked where are the 300 or so folks that are local now. ► Ms. Frigulietti reviewed that 300 is the number that has been identified in the census. She said the Town departments have not identified that number. She said what they have seen in town is approximately 48 individuals. She said they work with the individuals and try to connect them with resources, shelters, help with applications, and more. She said that not everyone wants to accept the

housing, but they try to continue to work with them whatever the case may be. She reviewed that if a person knows of someone in need, they can email her, and she can bring the information to the CIT. She said for a wellness check, a person could call the police or fire departments or call her. ► In response to a question about finding housing for a domestic violence family, Ms. Kallie Montagano, Co-Response Program Manager with the Franklin Police Department, said that they do not work overnight, but the police department refers cases if they are not working, and they can follow up the next day. She said there are great domestic violence resources in the area. ► Ms. Sonja Wagner, Co-Response Clinician, reviewed an example of how the police department has handled a domestic violence situation. ► In response to a question about the 307 individuals reported, Ms. Frigulietti reiterated that the 307 is what was reported in the 2020 census, but that is not what they see regularly. She said they want to make people aware of the reported number, but this year they have seen approximately 48 people. ► Mr. Hellen said 307 people mentioned it on their census, but those could be folks who are incredibly transient and staying with family or friends and moving around. He said he wants to dispel that there are 300 people out in the woods, under bridges, behind stores, etc. He pointed out that of the 48 cases, some could be duplicative as the individual could have gone to the Senior Center and also contacted the fire department or Board of Health. He said the crisis intervention team is trying to hone in on exact cases with real people that we know of. ► Councilor Pellegrini said she wants to see those people living out on the streets being taken care of. She said we have got to take care of our own. She asked if that is something that the Co-Response Team could look into. ► Ms. Wagner explained that currently, they are hard-pressed to find a spot in a shelter for anyone which is why they speak about the hotel vouchers. ► Chief of Police Thomas Lynch explained that you can offer people all the services, but they can refuse those services if they want. He said there may currently be people who are living in the woods right now, but they have been contacted, and we know who they are, and we can go by and check on them, but we cannot tell them to leave if the land owner is okay with it; however, if the land owner does not want them there, then we have to do the best we can and move them along. He said there are not 48 or 307 in the woods right now; there are only a few. ► Councilor Dellorco reviewed a story of years ago regarding a homeless person in the woods and how he and former Town Councilor Andrew Bissanti tried to help them, but they did not want help. He said that the state should help out more as well. ► Mr. Hellen noted the organization chart at the beginning of the presentation and noted the capital request this year to help support the work of CIT. He said it is really for hotel vouchers; he said a little funding would support them and provided an example of a case where this would help. He said they would like to get a website up with all this information as they grow as an internal working group, and it would also help with the contacts and a more streamlined process for the group. ► Ms. Frigulietti said the Health Department website has some homeless resources on it. She said they will be getting the resources up on the website. In response to a question, she confirmed that for a senior or a person with a disability, it could take as long as 12 years or longer to secure housing. ► In response to a question, Ms. Montagano reviewed the police department's statistics for people they work with and that the ages vary. She said she had a couple in their early 20s, and they also have older people; there is no specific age group. ► Veterans Services Officer Shannon Nisbett reviewed some housing information and eviction information regarding veterans. ► Mr. Max Morrongiello, 127 Central Park Terrace, stated that in Boxboro they have a rental assistance program funded through the Community Preservation Act. He asked if we could have a rental voucher like Boxboro does. ► Mr. Hellen explained the hotel voucher system and noted the capital request which was made this year and said just like everything with CPA, we will look into the rental assistance idea, but the catch is that when Boxboro does it, their population is about 5,000 people, so they have income eligibility guidelines and a mature program. He said you have to be able to spread the money around carefully. ► Mr. Morrongiello said the Department of Mental health has a set aside program and a rental voucher for people either DDS or DMH eligible. He said that he wants to make sure all the residents know that if there are all these different sources of help you can get that it can be very confusing, but calling the number 211 there is a whole directory of resources you can get which is a service of the United Way. ► Chair Mercer thanked the CIT team for all the work they have done and will do.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

Note: Two-Thirds Vote requires six votes; Majority Vote requires majority of members present and voting.

- a. **Resolution 24-05: Termination of the Massachusetts Statewide Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund, as well as Dedication of Revenues Thereto, as Authorized by G.L. Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2023 (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-05 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 24-05: Termination of the Massachusetts Statewide Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund, as well as Dedication of Revenues Thereto, as Authorized by G.L. Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2023 by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that this is purely an administrative item. He reviewed that the only reason for this legislation is due to altering guidance from the state's Department of Revenue guidance that came out in December 2023. This is administrative legislation and does not affect any revenue streams. The Deputy Town Administrator will begin to work with community stakeholders throughout 2024 to develop a strategic plan for the opioid settlement distribution as outlined in the Town Council/Town Administrator goals. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► **Migrant Housing Update.** ► Mr. Hellen provided a migrant housing update. He said the chiefs still report no emergencies and no public safety issues. He said all the groups that were just heard from are still providing supplies. He said that operationally things at the hotel seem to be going well. He noted that there was a work authorization clinic. He said they pushed the governor's office to get a tally, and about 80 folks at the hotel have either received their work authorization permit to the federal government or are within weeks of obtaining that. He noted that through the Board of Health a job fair has been set up for those folks to try to help them secure employment and help get on their feet.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee. None.**
- b. **Economic Development Subcommittee. None.**
- c. **Budget Subcommittee. None.**
- d. **Master Plan Update Committee.** ► Councilor Jones said the committee met on January 10 and they reviewed a survey that closed on January 3; the next step is at their next meeting on January 24 where they will be reviewing the second and final draft of the inventory and assessment report.
- e. **Davis-Thayer Building Reuse Advisory Committee. None.**
- f. **Police Station Building Committee. None.**
- g. **GATRA Advisory Board.** ► Councilor Frongillo said a new small town, Halifax, joined the GATRA region.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said that he would like to look at, if possible, some sort of a crosswalk over at Oak Street Elementary School between the high school where they come out onto Oak; he said several people have said their kid runs across the street the get to Pine Knoll and also to connect over to Maple Street, and there is no crosswalk there. He said also if it would be possible for a traffic cop or blinking light or something as when the high school gets out, the buses come out all at the same time, and they do not adhere to the stop signs, they just go. ► Councilor Frongillo said the flag discussion just to make sure that we are proactive, and the main crux was can we recognize Pride month, and if there is an update on the Arts & Culture director position. ► Councilor Dellorco asked if Lucas could get in here to give an update on how the migrants are handling the schools.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Sheridan thanked the presenters for their information and their presentation. ► Councilor Frongillo said office hours are tomorrow, and they are open to anyone; they are held at the Senior Center on every third Thursday from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM. He said the SAFE Coalition

is doing a Rainbow Connection which is a six-week workshop for LGBTQ teens which starts next week. He said more information is available at the SAFE Coalition. ► Councilor Hamblen thanked FISH and the CIT for all they do for the community. She said there is a winter Farmers Market this Saturday at Fairmount Fruit Farm from 10 AM to 2 PM as well as other activities which she reviewed. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said thank you to tonight's presenters and the people who are helping. He said to residents that if you have concerns about programs being done in the Town, about the snow plows, buildings, about a committee, do not go to Facebook, go to the Town's website, look the information up, contact one of us, contact somebody at the Town, and you will get all the answers you want. He said that speculating on Facebook on All about Franklin does not help anybody, it causes a lot of misinformation, it causes a lot of frustration. He said the volunteers who run that page get literally get hundreds of requests a day that could be answered simply by referring somebody to the Town website. He said so please, that is his PSA for today, just go to the Town's website or contact one of us, and we will get you all the information you will need. ► Councilor Chandler said that he was following up on Ms. Sue Cass's mentioning of Mr. Gennarino D'Onofrio, chair of the dog park, and said they should get him in here for a thank you. He said there was a big pothole on Washington Street, and he wanted DPW Director Brutus Cantoreggi to be notified. ► Councilor Pellegrini said she thanked everyone who was here tonight for the presentation. ► Councilor Jones said thank you to DPW and other staff for their work around the clock dealing with the snow and ice. ► Councilor Dellorco noted that the SAFE Coalition has another item on their plate regarding some of the young kids are online gambling; he said some of them have fake phones, and he explained how it is happening. ► Chair Mercer gave a shout-out to public safety staff and DPW for their work on the storms. He thanked all the presenters for their information and all the volunteers for the work they do. He congratulated FISH of Franklin on their 50th anniversary.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Dellorco. SECOND by Jones. No discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary