

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 21, 2026**

Link to FranklinTV YouTube Recording: [1/21/2026 Town Council Meeting](#)

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Jane Callaway-Tripp, Ted Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco, Gene Grella, Caroline Griffith, Stephen Malloy, Max Morrongiello, Kenneth Ojukwu. Councilors absent: Michael LeBlanc. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney; Julie McCann, Operations Manager.

CALL TO ORDER: ► Chair Dellorco called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He called for a moment of silence. All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR: ► Chair Dellorco reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are welcome to attend public meetings in person. To view the live meeting remotely, citizens are encouraged to watch the live stream on the Franklin Town Hall TV YouTube channel or the live broadcast on Comcast Channel 9 and Verizon Channel 29. To listen to the meeting remotely citizens may call-in using the number on the agenda. To participate in the meeting remotely citizens may join a Zoom Webinar using the information provided on the agenda. Meetings are recorded and archived by Franklin TV on the Franklin Town Hall TV YouTube channel and shown on repeat on Comcast Channel 9 and Verizon Channel 29. Any participants who wish to speak during the webinar must enter their full name and email address when joining the webinar. All participants will be automatically muted upon joining the webinar. In order to speak, participants will need to select the “raise hand” function to request to be unmuted. All speakers will be required to state their full name and street address before commenting. This meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast channel 9 and Verizon Channel 29. This meeting may be recorded by others. ► He stated that Councilor LeBlanc is going to try to attend via Zoom.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Ms. Heather Zolnowski, 51 Anthony Road, said she has lived here for 17 years, has a child at Franklin High School and at Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS), and also worked at BFCCPS for many years. She said there was inaccurate information presented at the December 3 meeting regarding BFCCPS. She said BFCCPS has been a public school option for Franklin families for 31 years. She said a Town Council member asked if there was a cap on the number of students from Franklin who could attend charter schools, and the answer was no. She said charter school enrollment is capped in the state law and regulations which she reviewed. She said Franklin is at a 5.7 percent net school spending, well below the 9 percent cap. She said expansion of BFCCPS has not negatively impacted the Franklin Public Schools. She said they serve 14 towns in addition to Franklin. She reviewed the number of students from Franklin and said today only 300 students from Franklin attend which is 110 fewer than before regionalization and expansion. She reviewed charter school reimbursement. She said if the Town Council or Finance Committee would like a more detailed presentation on charter school funding or enrollment, she would be happy to provide that. She welcomed all to attend the school’s capstone presentations next week. ► Mr. Joe McGann, 120 Lewis Street, talked about the two vacant seats on the Zoning Board of Appeals. ► Chair Dellorco stated that Mr. McGann could not talk about that as it is on the agenda; he can speak then. ► Mr. Hellen explained that the town charter is clear. The town administrator nominates a member of a board or committee; the Town Council ratifies them. Mr. McGann’s nomination and application are not on the agenda tonight. It is not being considered and cannot be considered by the Town Council. The Town Council cannot amend or change the resolution tonight. It is a yay or nay up or down vote on the two candidates for ZBA tonight. ► Mr. McGann said he spoke with Mr. Hellen yesterday for about 45 minutes and none of this was mentioned. ► Mr. Hellen said that is not true. ► School Committee Vice Chair David Callaghan, 30 Plain Street, said budget season is coming up. He gave an update on School Committee meetings. He said they talked about innovation and what classes can be offered due to

financial realities. He explained they secured a grant for innovative career pathways. He said they had a great presentation from the office of teaching and learning and reviewed the presentation. He said they had a great update talking about the daycare center they want to create for Franklin teachers and explained they are looking to launch it this fall. ► Mr. Mark Minnichelli, 31 Longfellow Drive (via Zoom), said he has a concern to share. He said he was made aware of an email sent to a neighborhood-wide distribution by Councilor Grella. The email explains his intention to sue the Franklin ZBA over its recent approval of the 444 East Central Street project. He said Councilor Grella asked people to contribute to an account to fund the attorney being used for the lawsuit indicating \$25,000 needs to be raised by January 16. The email stated they would be suing to have the ZBA decision overturned. He said Councilor Grella has the right to sue the ZBA as a private citizen, but that does not make it right. He said this seems to violate the spirit of ethics rules. He said the lawsuit will cost the town to defend and be a distraction. He said his opinion is that a Town Council member should not challenging the validity of another town board. He said this action continues to drive a wedge in the community and not bring us together. He discussed conflict of interest, the lawsuit, and Town Council members involved with this voting on the new ZBA members. He said he thinks moving forward with the lawsuit is a bad idea.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ► *January 7, 2026.* ► **MOTION to Approve** the January 7, 2026 meeting minutes by **Ojukwu**. **SECOND** by **Morrongiello**. **No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.**

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: ► ***Proclamation - Scotty Smith Retirement.*** ► Chair Dellorco read aloud the proclamation recognizing Mr. Smith on his retirement from the DPW after 32 years of service. He congratulated Mr. Smith on his retirement.

Chair Dellorco called for a couple-minute recess.

APPOINTMENTS: ► ***Zoning Board of Appeals: Isabella Carter.*** ► Mr. Hellen reviewed his memo to the Town Council dated January 16, 2026, which was provided in the online meeting packet. He noted the applications and resumes of the two applicants. He explained ZBA member Archie Acevedo resigned on January 7. Ms. Carter's appointment would finish Mr. Acevedo's term expiring in 2026. He will then nominate Ms. Carter again in June to have a full three-year term. He explained Mr. Bruce Hunchard's term expired in June 2025, and due to the ongoing project, Mr. Hunchard continued after his term expiration. He nominated Ms. Williams to finish that term which will go through June 30, 2028. He discussed how difficult it is to obtain applicants for the ZBA. He explained how the ZBA has helped people in Franklin. He thanked Mr. Hunchard and Mr. Acevedo for their service on the ZBA for so many years. ► Ms. Isabella Carter said she wants to contribute to the community. She has been a volunteer coach. She explained that she would like to use her background and experience as an engineer for the ZBA. ► Councilor Malloy thanked Ms. Carter for doing this. He said as the ZBA is turning over, we as a Town Council need to explore adding more members to the ZBA to have more voices. He talked about 40Bs and the Town Council's desire not to promote those. He asked Ms. Carter for her thoughts on Safe Harbor and when it would be used. ► Ms. Carter said she would have to see all the factors and look at it on a case-by-case basis. ► Councilor Ojukwu said three people on the ZBA is tough as it is difficult to have conversations with other members of the committee. ► Councilor Griffith thanked Ms. Carter for her volunteering and said her resume was incredible. ► Ms. Carter elaborated on her resume. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said he and Ms. Carter are neighbors, and her resume is impressive. He said there is going to have to be some thick skin with this job. He wished her luck and thanked her for stepping up. ► Councilor Morrongiello thanked Ms. Carter for stepping up. He asked Mr. Hellen about the candidate pool. ► Mr. Hellen said these candidates are the most qualified. He said he values the fact that during a tumultuous time these two folks said we are going to step up to the plate. He said they both have thick skin, are bright, intelligent, have technical experience in the area, thoughtful, and want to have meetings in person. ► Councilor Morrongiello asked about recusal. ► Ms. Carter explained she works in consulting, and the firm she currently works for has some residential projects in house. If any of the projects are located in Franklin and need to go to the ZBA, she would recuse herself. ► Councilor Callaway-Tripp said Ms. Carter's resume was great. She noted that Ms. Carter said she has about four hours

a week available. She asked if something larger was going on, would Ms. Carter be able to do more. ► Ms. Carter said she would be able to make the time for that. ► Councilor Grella thanked Ms. Carter for stepping up. He said her resume is excellent. He noted he agrees with increasing the size of the ZBA. ► Chair Dellorco asked about the time commitment. He said her resume is outstanding, and she will be a great addition. ► Mr. Joseph Halligan, 1 Newell Drive, said he is a current ZBA associate member for one year and eight months. He explained his previous board experience including the Planning Board for 14 years and the Master Plan Committee. He feels that he has put his time in, and he could have moved up. He said he has the experience. He noted he has never missed a meeting in over 20 years of service to the town. He is dedicated. He said with all that he thought he could possibly move into a full-time position. He noted both he and the other ZBA alternate, Ms. Meghan Whitmore, and Ms. Ginelle Lang, full ZBA member, could take care of tomorrow night's ZBA meeting if the Town Council were to take this item under advisement. He explained he is always for the community. He said he feels he is a great candidate. He talked about a forum Hot Topics in Franklin. He said there is a person who is concerned about him being on the board because he is a property owner and wanted to know if there was a conflict. He said what is disturbing is that they have an individual who was a 20-year person on the Conservation Commission, supposedly a well-respected Franklin person Jeff Livingstone. He was quoted on this forum as saying, yes, it is a massive conflict. It is why Joe Halligan was not voted in two elections ago. This is the same guy who tried to put a Hooters in downtown Franklin, also doing backdoor handed deals. Mr. Halligan said he can survive this, but it is not correct. He noted social media and said this can be damaging to people's careers. He said he would appreciate the thought to consider him as a candidate as he is already an alternate on the ZBA. ► Mr. Joe Evans, 5 Tam O Shanter Road, said he has been following land use issues for a number of years. He asked how this played out. He said there are two alternates on the ZBA. He asked how were they not offered the opportunity to be appointed. ► Mr. Hellen said this has been a long couple of years. He said Ms. Whitmore has been on the board for almost a decade. He said he has talked with Ms. Whitmore in the past and last week and explained that she needs to participate more and has had some attendance issues in the past. He said he encouraged her that if she has situations in the future that she needs to miss meetings to reach out to Mr. Hellen. He discussed that as there are three voting members on the ZBA, all five of the members' voices are heard during the meetings. He said regarding Mr. Halligan, he should be hurt. The reality is that he had to recuse himself from the 444 East Central Street project and potentially has a lot of additional recusals through the community. And, the public sentiment in the past year or more is that they want fresh faces and new perspectives. He said he respects Mr. Halligan. He said now is not the right time as this is not what the community is seeking. He said people may say that they do not listen, but he listens. He said it is his judgment because of the trust issues with the ZBA, and he wants to show the public he is listening to them. He said Mr. Halligan and Ms. Whitmore can still be fully participating individuals as associate members. He said he did not think it was the right time to put Mr. Halligan forward to begin restoring the trust for the ZBA. ► Mr. Glenn Jones, 172 School Street, and former Town Council member and Master Plan Committee member, attested to Mr. Halligan's knowledge. He explained that it is always best to promote from within on a board and committee. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to ratify the appointment by the Town Administrator of Isabella Carter to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals with term to become effective January 21, 2026 and to expire on June 30, 2026 by **Malloy. SECOND** by **Grella. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.**

► **Zoning Board of Appeals: Jennifer Williams.** ► Mr. Hellen said his point is very clear. He would add Ms. Williams who served on the Planning Board for a full term and was on the Master Plan Committee. ► Ms. Williams reviewed she had wanted to be on the Planning Board because she cares deeply for the future of the town. She said she is a licensed architect. She noted her background. She reviewed her time on the Planning Board. She said she was an active participant on the Planning Board. She said she always tries to make the best decision based on the information provided. She said Monday nights were not going to work for her going forward. She then applied for the ZBA as it was on a different night. She wants to continue to have a positive impact on the town. She would be honored to continue to serve the town on the ZBA on a night that she has available. ► Councilor Malloy asked about Ms. Williams' thoughts on Safe Harbor. ► Ms. Williams said there may be times it is warranted but would not know until the circumstances are presented.

► Councilor Ojukwu said her resume is fantastic. ► Councilor Griffith said thank you for volunteering. She asked how comfortable Ms. Williams is to speak up with her thoughts even if it is not the way the group is thinking. ► Ms. Williams said she has deviated from popular opinion while on the Planning Board. She is going to make decisions on the best interest of the town and ultimately voting while considering all the factors. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said they received a lot of emails today and most were in favor of Ms. Williams. Some concerns raised were about Ms. Williams' husband's role on another committee. He asked how Ms. Williams would involve Mr. Halligan as another member of the group who does not have a vote. ► Ms. Williams reviewed how she would handle it if there were a conflict with the Design Review Commission. She noted Design Review Commission is a recommending board. ► Mr. Hellen explained that Design Review Commission reviews signs and makes recommendations to the Planning Board. ► Ms. Williams reviewed how Mr. Halligan as an associate member would provide comment and insight. ► Councilor Morrongiello asked how Ms. Williams would explain her decision if the residents oppose a project but the law requires approval. ► Ms. Williams said you try to address the residents concerns and try to over explain and educate as much as possible and do your best. ► Councilor Callaway-Tripp said she has had to put a lot of thought into this. She said her issue is that right now the Planning Board is being sued. We have spoken about the integrity of the town and committees. She finds it hard to appoint someone to ZBA when we have this open lawsuit, and the outcome of the lawsuit should be resolved before anyone involved in it is appointed to the ZBA. She feels it could hurt the integrity of the ZBA. She would be happy to appoint Ms. Williams to the ZBA when that was resolved. ► Ms. Williams said she is no longer a member of the Planning Board and is not involved in that lawsuit. She said it is not uncommon to have lawsuits against boards and committees. ► Councilor Callaway-Tripp said Ms. Williams' name is on the lawsuit, and that is her issue. ► Mr. Hellen pointed out there is no criteria in the bylaws saying why somebody could vote against a ratification or not. He said broader, the ZBA is being sued right now, and there is probably going to be more. He discussed do we have members who vote against projects because the residents are angry. He said he thinks for the ZBA in general, and concerns about development and new growth in town, that this is a moment for folks to think about including where do we want to go as a community. He said they have lawsuits everywhere, but how do we relate to residents who are concerned about development and do not want anything built in their backyards. We are dealing with a serious issue right now. We have a qualified ZBA candidate, but because her name is on a lawsuit for the Planning Board, Town Council members have noted concerns. He asked what is it that the community is looking for. ► Mr. Cerel explained there are multiple litigations pending at the moment involving the various land use boards. In all cases the members are named in representative capacities and not individually. He explained that if the case goes to court, Ms. Williams will not have to go to court. He said in her particular case, it is an appeal from a special permit granting authority's decision, and he explained the legal process. ► Mr. Hellen further explained the process for the lawsuit and that naming the members is just a legal formality. ► Councilor Callaway-Tripp said she has a hard time with this as her goal is to bring back integrity, and she has to see the lawsuit ended before Ms. Williams is on the ZBA. She is struggling with ratifying this appointment. ► Councilor Grella asked in Ms. Williams' opinion what has the town gotten right and what have they gotten wrong and how should the town move forward with development. ► Ms. Williams said she is excited about the Master Plan and the identified opportunities for smart growth and development to positively impact the fabric of Franklin and economic robustness. She said it has to be right for the neighborhood. ► Councilor Grella asked if she has an opinion about some of the recent developments. ► Ms. Williams explained there were some clear projects that were too dense or too large that she did not support while on the Planning Board and voted no on. ► Chair Dellorco said Ms. Williams' resume is very good. He would like to get the ZBA to a five-member board. ► Mr. Hellen said he wants to be clear with the vote tonight. If the motion is tabled or defeated or a tie, Mr. Hunchard's term continues until there is a replacement. He said tomorrow night there is a ZBA meeting with a public hearing. ► Mr. Cerel explained the charter has a continuity provision in it that basically says that even if someone's term expires, they continue to hold a position until replacement is either elected or appointed as applicable. ► Mr. Hellen further explained the reasoning why Mr. Hunchard remained on the ZBA even after his term expired on June 30, 2025. He explained how he selected the terms for each of the two candidates that they would be fulfilling as new members of the ZBA. He said both candidates are extremely qualified, and he asked the Town Council to ratify both of them. He noted that the

ZBA will nominate their own chair, vice chair, and clerk. ► Chair Dellorco said he believes Mr. Halligan was not treated correctly. ► Mr. Joe Evans, 5 Tam O Shanter Road, said it is important to add some color to the lawsuit noted by Councilor Callaway-Tripp. ► Mr. Cerel said it is inappropriate to discuss pending litigation in an open session. ► Mr. Evans said all he is going to say is on public record and is not confidential. He reviewed what the lawsuit is about and it regards senior housing. He noted two projects were similar in size and units and grade issues. The Summer Street project was loaded with abutters, and the Panther Way project had few abutters. He said for the Summer Street project, Ms. Williams said there was no critical need for senior housing in town. He said Ms. Williams also said we do not need this in our inventory. In the Panther Way project, there was never such a quote mentioned. He said so we do not need it on Summer Street, but we need it over here. He said that raises red flags. He said it smells. He said he has watched Planning Board meetings and attended them. When a favorite developer is in front of the board it is all smiles; when another developer gets in front of the board, they treat them differently. He said anyone can go back and watch the meetings. He said his point is not with the developers, they are both great; but it was done unfairly. He asked about a project on King Street that Ms. Williams' husband had done some work on. ► Ms. Williams said her husband did not do the project on King Street. She said each project Mr. Evans mentioned was in different zoning districts and different scales and different circumstances. ► Mr. Evans asked if Ms. Williams' husband ever engaged in that project paid or unpaid. ► Ms. Williams said her husband was approached by the developer early on, but did nothing with it, and the developer went with a different architect. ► Mr. Evans said he supports Mr. Halligan. ► Mr. Halligan explained that he is advocating for himself. He explained Mr. Hellen structured tonight's meeting very well regarding these candidates and votes. ► Mr. Joe McGann, 120 Lewis Street, asked if he could address his concerns with his application. ► Mr. Hellen said Mr. McGann applied on Monday. He called him on Tuesday, and they talked for about half an hour. He said unfortunately they did not hear the same things during the conversation. He said he has not met Mr. McGann before. He explained Ms. Carter and Ms. Williams were the first candidates in line. He said he nominates and the Town Council either ratifies or not. He said he would be happy to meet with Mr. McGann in the future. ► Mr. McGann asked why his application cannot be recognized. He said Mr. Hellen said he has a hard time getting applicants for the ZBA. He does not know why it cannot be heard. ► Mr. Hellen explained open meeting law and that he cannot just change an agenda once it is put out 48 hours in advance. He said they are looking for applicants, and he is glad Mr. McGann applied, but up until two weeks ago he had two candidates which are both bright and talented people. He explained the Town Council members can vote the way they want to vote. He said he is disappointed that people are reacting to one individual. He reiterated the process for nominations and ratification as outlined in the charter. ► Mr. McGann said he has no objection to the recommended applicants. He said regarding fairness, he should have had first shot. He said he previously sat on the Town Council. He has given back to the Town of Franklin. He said what Mr. Hellen said yesterday to him and tonight is totally different. ► Mr. Hellen reiterated the process and that the agenda was put out last Friday. ► Mr. McGann said he will not again apply for this position. He does not like the way things go in some of these meetings, and he does not like the way people are treated when they come before Mr. Hellen. He said Mr. Hellen works for us, and he gets paid well, and he should not treat people like that. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to ratify the appointment by the Town Administrator of Jennifer Williams to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals with term to become effective January 21, 2026 and to expire on June 30, 2028 by **Morrongiello. SECOND** by **Grella. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.**

PUBLIC HEARINGS - 6:00 PM: ► None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: ► None.

Chair Dellorco called for a short break.

PRESENTATIONS / DISCUSSIONS: ► **Town Infrastructure Overview - Brutus Cantoreggi, Director of Public Works.** ► Mr. Cantoreggi introduced Water and Sewer Superintendent Doug Martin, Asst. Water and Sewer Superintendent Jake Standley, Stormwater and Environmental Affairs Superintendent Derek Adams,

Director of GIS Kate Hinckley, Fleet Manager Jay Stearns, Town Engineer Michael Maglio, Highway and Grounds Superintendent Carlos Rebelo, Asst. Highway and Grounds Superintendent Tony Brunetta, Administration and Budget Manager Kathy Mooradd, and Asst. Administration and Budget Manager Roseanne Szczepanowski. He narrated the slideshow presentation regarding Infrastructure & Costs; all slides were provided in the online meeting packet. He discussed roadway conditions and said they did a study in 2012 and got a 77, basically a C, in the Road Structural Ratings (RSR). In 2025, they are at a 70.7. In 2019 they average about \$2.5 million/year for road improvements; they are now around \$1.7 million/year. He reviewed road improvement costs and previous funding sources. He said Chapter 90 funding for 2026 is \$1.7 million. He said they need to average \$3 million just to get our RSR back. He reviewed project costs. He said there are 126 miles of sidewalk: 76 asphalt and 50 concrete. He reviewed the sidewalk conditions, repair backlog, and the ADA Transition Plan which includes the need for improvement of 1,253 ramps to meet current standards for approximately \$10.8 million. He talked about the six train quiet zones. If they do not hit the horns, there needs to be road improvements and more signage for a cost of \$7.7 million. He discussed the Grounds operating budget of \$1.113 million. He reviewed parks and fields for all town and all schools and what it includes. He discussed the Central Motors operating budget is \$1.161 million. There are 218 registered vehicles and equipment that they take care of. He noted they are first responders, and they need a backup of supplies. He discussed Curbside Trash and Recycling with an operating budget of \$3.159 million with 9,780 curbside customers. He reviewed the extremely low recycling contamination rate. He talked about cart replacement and said the lifespan of a cart is about 10 years, and they are now at 15 years. He said they each cost \$70 for a total of \$1.4 million. He reviewed the Recycling Center with an operating budget of \$250,141. He noted it is \$35 for a sticker. He talked about the landfill. He said the landfill was never capped. He said they do own the land and will try to figure out the process to close it and do a recycle center. It will probably cost about \$6 million to \$10 million to close. He talked about the Drinking Water operating budget of \$8 million. He reviewed unfunded project costs for drinking water including the water main replacement/road improvement program renewal at \$12 million. He showed a map of downtown Franklin in 1888. He noted Franklin has the oldest water tank in the country. He reviewed the waterline/roadway 5-plus year improvement plan with an estimated cost of \$12 million. He said they have a plan for all these items; it is just the funding source. He noted the Beaver Street Interceptor at \$33 million and noted it is on schedule. The Sewer has an operating budget of \$4.549 million. He talked about fat, oil, and greases inside the pipes which build up and are not good. He reviewed the Stormwater operating budget of \$1.128 million. He noted the Phosphorus Control Plan (PCP), and the five-year cost of \$30 million to be in compliance. He explained the cost of \$60.30 per the average household and would have to go to \$350 to meet compliance. He explained that Franklin sued the EPA, and we won and got a lot of concessions. He talked about the GIS system and its importance. He showed a chart of all the town departments that use GIS. He talked about additional challenges including personnel and shortage of workers, global warming, and construction costs. He talked about the roadwork, parks and grounds, water and sewer projects, and other projects that have been done and improvements for the town. He reviewed planned and projected total infrastructure costs: funded is \$67.7 million, barely funded is \$64.35 million, and unfunded is \$85.7 million. He talked about State Revolving Funds (SRF) which is a state low-interest loan program which saves on projects. He said now most of the SRFs are going to PFAS. ► Mr. Martin said they do apply for those as well, but there is a backlog for need for infrastructure replacement. He discussed the old water tank. ► Mr. Cantoreggi reviewed the top five threats: roadways, waterlines, water tanks, stormwater, and landfill/Recycling Center. He said without continuing funding, the roadways will go downhill, and the road costs will continue to increase. He talked about how waterline breaks will occur without continuing the waterline replacement program. He reviewed the water tanks on Hillside were built in 1888 and 1928; they need to be replaced to prevent catastrophic failure. He reviewed that stormwater non-compliance could result in a Consent Decree and noted the cost. ► Town Council members asked questions, made comments, and thanked Mr. Cantoreggi for the presentation. ► In response to questions, Mr. Hellen said there is 14 percent levy that goes on unpaid bills for taxes and those things. We do not make much money on that interest. The collection rate is very high. He discussed the retained earnings and said it can ebb and flow. It is based on usage. He said they are incentivized to do the tiered system approach for rates based on usage. He said they are a ground water community. He said they used to pay off the water main program with cash every year and not borrow the

money and not have to pay interest. Since the pandemic, things got off cycle. But we would like to get back into the rhythm of a five-year water main plan so residents can see what is coming in their neighborhood. After a water main project, there is a new road. ► Mr. Cantoreggi agreed that public works touches so much of the community. ► Mr. Martin said he can add a link to the water rate website, and there are so many ways to show the data. ► Mr. Cantoreggi responded to the suggestion of raising the Recycling Center fee from \$35 to \$50. He explained that the comingled recycling has saved the town money. He said the Recycling Center paid for itself last year. ► Mr. Adams explained they apply for a grant every year, and they get some funding. He said one issue is that now MassDEP is making you spend down your funding before you can apply the next year. He said in considering raising the fee, they do not have the buffer for the grant. He said they try to keep costs low. ► Mr. Hellen said he hopes through the budget process this year they can educate people that we want to do more work but do not have the money. ► Councilor Morrongiello stated that the Town Council has an obvious solution to factor water capital expenses into its rates, and it has been a conscious effort by the Town Council in the past not to fund those rates at the levels that are adequate to fund the DPW and asked this to be done. ► Mr. Cantoreggi responded to questions about fees, various expenses, conservation credit incentives, shredding services, picnic tables for the Town Common, and other items. ► Mr. Hellen said you can fund capital expenses through water and sewer rates. He said he thinks they have raised water and sewer rates a lot during the last several years. He said water rates will be going up in FY27. ► Mr. Cantoreggi responded to questions about the Town of Quincy. He said Franklin is dealing with phosphorus in the stormwater with the town's permit. He said he is on record and not going to raise the fees to \$350 to be in 100 percent compliance for the five-year plan. ► Mr. Hellen said we do not have a stormwater subcommittee. ► Mr. Adams, in response to questions, explained there are many different timelines for the work that needs to be done regarding the phosphorous plan. He said they are now at year eight. He talked about the funding. He said each year they are about \$4 million behind. He said every five years the EPA issues a new permit, and they are still waiting for the EPA's new rules and regulations. He talked about where the phosphorus comes from and how it gets into the catch basins. He explained the targets for removal of phosphorus. He said the EPA likes to see the detention basin. ► Mr. Cantoreggi said Town Council members could get a tour of the stormwater process and how it is done. ► Mr. Hellen explained that the state has to raise the excise tax in order to bring in more revenue to go toward roads. Today the excise tax collected is about \$6 million. He said the overwhelming majority of roadwork done in town is through Chapter 90 money, through the state allocation, and we have been aggressive going out for grants and definitely mitigation money during Planning Board decisions. He thinks \$1 million of cannabis money went to roads. He reviewed that the hotel tax was used for roads. He does not think the excise tax was exclusively dedicated to roads. He said in the upcoming budget model he thinks there is \$175,000 from the town tax money going to roads and sidewalks for maintenance and construction. ► Discussion commenced on residents not following the parking ban during snowstorms and issuing tickets. ► Mr. Hellen said they will send out as many robocalls as the Town Council wants, but you will get complaints. He said you do not want to lose people off the robocalls. He said people do not like robocalls. He said he will talk to the police chief about it. He noted there is a self-subscriber service also to get on the list. He said they can increase the fees for the parking ban; it can be a bylaw change. ► Mr. Cantoreggi said there should also be a language change regarding the parking ban. He responded to questions about federal money. ► Mr. Hellen said we qualify for very little with the infrastructure improvements. He said our infrastructure is better than most places in the country. ► Mr. Adams said the trash rate is \$92.07 per ton and recycling is less than that; the recycling fluctuates and follows a complex formula. ► Mr. Cantoreggi said we are required to recycle in Massachusetts. The more we recycle the less we have to pay. He said we have one of the highest recycling rates for communities in Massachusetts. He said he has a great team. ► Chair Dellorco said the DPW does a good job and thanked Mr. Cantoreggi for the presentation.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

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

- a. ***Resolution 26-06: Amendment to Cannabis Licensing Local Approval Process and Cannabis Social Equity Policy (Motion to Approve Resolution 26-06 - Majority Vote).*** ► **MOTION to Waive the**

reading by **Ojukwu. SECOND by Cormier-Leger. No discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.**
► MOTION to Approve Resolution 26-06: Amendment to Cannabis Licensing Local Approval Process and Cannabis Social Equity Policy by Dellorco. SECOND by Cormier-Leger. Discussion: ► Councilor Morrongiello asked if this would put us at legal liability with the state. ► Mr. Hellen explained no. It was submitted on Halloween, but they have not reviewed it yet. So, it is just being amended from what was heard at the last meeting. We will resubmit it and get feedback from them. He said there is no legal liability or jeopardy. He said this is all new, and no one knows what the goalpost is. He said if they have a problem with it, they will tell us. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.**

- b. Resolution 26-07: Gift Acceptance - Franklin Public Library (\$500) (Motion to Approve Resolution 26-07 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Cormier-Leger read aloud a memo from Mr. Hellen to the Town Council dated January 16, 2026: “The Library has received an extremely generous donation in the amount of \$500. This donation was made by Jeff Nutting in memory of Ken Norman. In Jeff’s words, “Ken was a wonderful person and true public servant who gave countless hours to our community. I will miss him.” This donation will be applied towards children’s programming at the Library, at the discretion of the Library Department. The Town extends our sincere appreciation to Jeff for this donation and shares his sentiments about Ken Norman, who was an exceptionally dedicated member of the Franklin community and a dear friend to many. Our deepest condolences are with the Norman family.”
 ► Councilor Cormier-Leger read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 26-07: Gift Acceptance - Franklin Public Library (\$500) by Grella. SECOND by Ojukwu. No discussion.**
 ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-1.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT: ► FY27 Budget Update and Timeline. ► Mr. Hellen thanked the fire, police, and DPW departments and veterans and volunteers for cleaning up the Common and organization the procession for Officer Stephen LaPorta last week; they did a great job. It was an incredible ceremony. He noted the budget hearings for the Town Council are May 20 and 21. He said as it is late, he is not going through his memo to the Town Council dated January 16, 2026, regarding the FY27 Budget Update & Timeline, which was provided in the online meeting packet. He said they set up a meeting with the School Committee chair. He said he gave all the dates to the School Committee and superintendent. He said at the Town Council’s March 18 meeting the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will attend, and the headmaster from the Charter School was also invited to attend the meeting. He asked if anyone had any questions on the timeline. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger asked if there were any plans to bring back the joint budget school committee meetings. ► Mr. Hellen said we could do them in March, but after the February 11 meeting, it takes his team four or five weeks to produce the documents, so it is hard. He is open to ideas. He discussed that about 10 to 20 people came to them last year, but we are missing thousands of people who are not attending. He said we have to figure out ways to reach people so they care about this stuff. He said the Finance Committee will go through every line item. He hopes people will attend those meetings. He said the chair could appoint four people, Finance Committee has people, and he assumes the School Committee has four people. ► Chair Dellorco said he appoints Councilor Malloy, Councilor Ojukwu, Councilor Cormier-Leger, and Councilor Grella. ► Mr. Hellen said he will check with the Finance Committee and School Committee. He said he does not know who appoints the chair; he will look at the charter. He said the 16 elected members will have to figure this out. The Finance Committee will do a review and give a recommendation. At some point, we need the Town Council and School Committee to lead the community and organize people to have them be interested in this. ► Chair Dellorco talked about how they got the word out about the Safe Coalition. ► Discussion commenced on how to get the word out about the budget to residents and voters. ► Mr. Hellen noted that healthcare will change everything when in late May they get the bill from the GIC and whether they saved money or not. He explained that his guess for this year is you would like to get this year by and possibly use one time money because he thinks the longer-term strategy is probably more important than looking at this year. ► Discussion commenced on getting through the next year and then then looking at the structural deficit for the town for the next few years, and getting the residents to participate and possibly give ideas, and the importance of communication with the people and getting them onboard. ► Mr. Hellen talked about how the Town Council and School Committee should

lead the community toward education on these issues. He said if the Town Council wants a third-party to come in to manage a five-year plan with the School Committee, February 4 is the time to decide that and make it a goal. He talked about some methods that other towns have used to work together. He discussed that the Master Plan did not seem to put a school plan in it which was a missed chance. He explained that people are saying they have no more to give no matter what for.

SUBCOMMITTEE & AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS: ► None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Malloy recognized the town for the funeral for Officer Stephen LaPorta. He suggested people watch the Finance Committee meeting from last week. ► Councilor Ojukwu agreed with Councilor Malloy's comments. He talked about the appointments the Town Council has had. He said we need to get answers to certain questions, but should not try to make the volunteers feel like they are put in front of a firing squad and should be respectful to the volunteers. ► Councilor Griffith said they should not grill the volunteers on if you would do what we want you to do, and we want diversity of perspectives. She said that regarding the ZBA conversation, Mr. Halligan made a comment that someone online was disparaging him and making inaccurate comments, and that could be damaging to someone's career. She said and then someone came to the microphone and made similar comments about one of the nominees. She said she is so struck by this. She said we need to be careful about the information we are taking in, and the information being shared, and putting a stop to that. She recognized Mr. Steve Sherlock for still being in attendance at tonight's meeting and making sure the community is staying informed, and she thanked him for all he does. ► Councilor Morrongiello said he put out a poll on goals for the upcoming meeting, and he wants people's feedback. He gave information on how to get to the poll online. ► Councilor Callaway-Tripp said she wants to look at putting something on the agenda to start the process of increasing the ZBA. She would like it on the November ballot. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said there was a call for artists and writers that went out from our Cultural Department. He said Cory Shea and the Cultural District and the Cultural Council are all working together on Franklin Welcomes the World because of the World Cup coming. There is a lot of information on the website. He gave a shout-out to the new Kojo Restaurant. He thanked people who emailed the Town Council about the ZBA item. He talked about the purpose of excise tax. He discussed that tonight they have a three-female-led ZBA. ► Councilor Grella confirmed the joint subcommittee was set up. He said people are watching meetings but maybe consuming it differently. He said there was a citizen's comment where he was mentioned by name. He said that there is a Massachusetts State Ethics Commission. He has consulted with them multiple times to make sure he is covering everything. ► Chair Dellorco gave condolences to the family of Mr. Michael Bertoni and said he will be missed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: ► None.

ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Grella. SECOND by Callaway-Tripp. No discussion. ► No Vote Taken.

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary