

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 2, 2024**

**THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL** held a regular meeting on Monday, January 2, 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, Council Members, Joe Collins, David Culpepper, Rita Salain, Robbie Tompa, and Mike Lewis.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**3. ADOPTION OF THE JANUARY 2, 2024 TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA**

*Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to adopt the Town Council Agenda for January 2, 2024 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Vote: 6 – 0.*

**4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA FOR JANUARY 2, 2024**

- A.) Approval of December 4, 2023 Town Council Minutes
- B.) GASB 73 and GASB 75 provider change
- C.) Budget Amendments

*Council Member Rita Salain made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to approve the consent agenda for January 2, 2024 as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.*

**5. INTRODUCTION/RECOGNITIONS**

- ~~A.) Sergeant Garret Hovis – promotion by Chief Devin Holland~~
- B.) Rusty Cortopassi, Equipment Operator- promotion by Bill Deal, Public Works Director

**6. PUBLIC HEARING**

- A.) Public Hearing to receive public input on the proposed Social District

**Mayor Jack Horton opened the Public Hearing on the Proposed Downtown Social District at 6:05 p.m.**

Narelle Kirkland passed out a letter in opposition of the proposed downtown social district (See attached Exhibit A).

Morgan Stewart, resident/Stewart Communications owner, spoke in favor of the proposed social district. He conducted a survey with questions about the proposed social district with local businesses on and around Main Street. He provided the results of the survey (See attached Exhibit B).

Lee Cloer spoke in favor of the proposed social district. He feels that it will contribute to the Town's tourism. He spoke with other Towns who already have a Downtown Social District and shared what he learned from those Towns.

Roger Schweitzer is in favor of the proposed Social District. His concern is the definition of festival and what kind of festivals will happen and will they be rowdy. He also has concern about who will pay for certain things, like port-o-johns for the events.

Bob Scott, resident/former Mayor, thanked Town Council for holding the Public Hearing. He spoke against the proposed Downtown Social District and submitted a copy of the letter he read (See attached Exhibit C).

Connie Stiles, town resident, spoke in favor of the proposed Downtown Social District. She has had a positive experience in visiting other Towns with Social Districts. She researched the other Towns and none of them have had any upticks in issues with police. She feels this is a tool to encourage the revitalization of Downtown Franklin

Betsy Baste, property owner/former business owner, spoke in favor of the proposed Social District for even though she doesn't drink. She is in favor of the Social District because of the economic development it could bring to Downtown.

Sandy Heaton, town resident, lives within two blocks of Main Street and supports the proposed Downtown Social District.

Scott Baste spoke in favor of the proposed Downtown Social District and hopes the merchants embrace and take advantage on it.

Amanda Harrold, Clayton GA Councilwoman, was asked by local businesses to speak. The City of Clayton GA holds specific events in which alcohol is permitted and they have not had any issues at these events. Clayton City events focus on promoting local businesses. She did suggest a tip-toe strategy. She also noted the bars and restaurants are responsible for the alcohol they serve.

Graham Norris, Lazy Hiker, spoke in favor of the proposed Social District. He stated that the liability falls on the business owner and they should serve responsibly and individuals should drink responsibly.

Adam Kimsey supports the proposed Social District as a former bar owner and citizen. He owned a bar downtown for 9 years and said that 99% of his customers were never a problem.

Katherine Williamson spoke against the proposed Social District. She stated that Franklin is a wholesome town and that alcohol belongs in a restaurant. She is pro-business, but feels the Town is old fashioned and should stay that way.

Angela Faye Martin, Alarka Expeditions, spoke in favor of the proposed Social District. She does love the thought of selling this idea to her clients as an option to stay in Franklin.

**Mayor Jack Horton closed the Public Hearing on the Proposed Downtown Social District at 6:47 p.m.**

Town Manager Owens and Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. discussed the next steps of the Social District Ordinance if approved.

Council Member Culpepper would like to see the alley ways and behind Outdoor 76 included in the Social District map. He said he doesn't want to be a prop town. He wants to be a town that has young people that live here and help businesses survive. He feels the Social District is a step in the right direction and is another tool in the Town's toolbox.

Council Member Joe Collins said he wasn't sure if the Town had enough mechanisms to pull it all together, but there is a willingness to try. The Board can always take another look at it and say it's not for us.

Council Member Salain said she felt the Board had enough public input to make a decision.

Vice Mayor Guffey said he appreciated people speaking out on the Social District. He feels that Franklin is a special place and if later on down the road the Social District isn't a right fit Town Council will discuss again. He hopes it will spur more business development.

Town Manager Owens commented that prior to submitting all the information to the State of NC, everything will be brought back to Town Council for their review and approval.

Mayor Horton stated that he was not in favor of the Social District and would only get to vote if there was tie.

Vice Mayor Guffey commented that the Town's culture is changing daily and we have to move forward. He asked Town Manager Owens to explain the approval process for events.

Town Manager Owens said that individuals who wish to hold an event downtown come and meet with her. They go over the needs of the event; street closure or use of the gazebo and then it is brought back to Town Council for approval. The street closure application can be modified to ask if an event sponsor would you like to suspend the Social District during their event.

***Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member David Culpepper to adopt the Social District Ordinance and map of the Social District and also to start the process of registration of the Social District with the State of North Carolina. The motion carried. Vote: 6-0.***

## **7. CALL FOR PUBLIC HEARING**

Town Planner Justin Setser stated that the Planning Board has reviewed the Second Street/Cherry Street proposed rezoning for four (4) months and has recommended the request for rezoning to be sent to Town Council. The original rezoning request was for 13 parcels and now the proposed rezoning includes 22 parcels from R-2 to R-1.

***Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to set the public hearing for Monday, February 5, 2024 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter as possible to consider public input on potential rezonings for Second Street and Cherry Street identified as PZC8 as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote 6 – 0.***

## 8. PUBLIC SESSION

Narelle Kirkland would like to see the Town of Franklin and Macon County work together to purchase property in Scenic Ridge, owned by Phil Drake, for residents to be able to use and see the beauty of Franklin/Macon County.

## 9. OLD BUSINESS

- A.) Proposed Lease with the Rathskeller-Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. and Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Owens said that at the November 6, 2023 Town Council instructed Town Attorney, John Henning, Jr. to draw up a lease agreement for town-owned property on Stewart Street. Attorney Henning discussed the draft lease agreement.

***Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member David Culpepper to approve the lease agreement for town-owned property on Stewart Street as presented. Vote: 6-0.***

## 10. NEW BUSINESS

- A.) Request approval of street closure -Big Bear Lane - beginning 3:00 p.m. March 22, 2024 to 5:00 p.m. March 23, 2024 for the unveiling of the Sowing the Seeds of the Future sculpture and celebration -Town Manager, Amie Owens

The Women's History Trail Committee has requested the closure of Big Bear Lane beginning on Friday, March 22 at 3:00 p.m. until Saturday, March 23 at 5:00 p.m. for the Sowing of the Seeds of the Future sculpture unveiling and celebration.

***Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the street closure of Big Bear Lane as presented. Vote: 6-0.***

- B.) Request approval of vendor for firefighting apparatus based on bids received through RFP -Town Manager, Amie Owens

Town Manager Owens said that the initial RFP for the firefighting apparatus opened on October 27, 2023 and only two (2) vendors responded. The RFP was reposted on October 30, 2023 and closed December 1, 2023. There were three (3) vendors to respond. The Franklin Fire and Rescue Truck Committee reviewed the submitted proposals and only one (1) of the three (3) vendors met all the requirements of the RFP. The Melton Fire Group is the vendor that met all the requirements of the RFP. Town Manager Owens stated that a vendor would need to be approved before financing can be obtained.

Council Member Collins asked if this was a necessary step to whether or not the Town contributes any funds towards the purchase of a fire truck. Town Manager Owens said that it is necessary and that it will take at least 2.5 years before a fire apparatus is received.

Council Member Mike Lewis asked Fire Chief Ben Ormond if he was satisfied with the vendor and if he thought there would be an issue obtaining parts. Chief Ormond said he was satisfied and didn't see any issues on parts in the future.

Council Member Culpepper wants to see the Fire Department get a new fire truck, but he still has issues with the town residents funding the additional amount when the Franklin Fire district is so

large (outside Town limits). He doesn't want the town taxpayers solely responsible when Franklin Fire and Rescue services a larger district. He also stated the fire district tax rate is not enough to cover the necessities and that needs to be made clear to the Macon County Commissioners.

Council Member Collins agreed with Council Member Culpepper and doesn't want to set a precedence of subsidization to Franklin Fire and Rescue.

Town Manager Owens commented that this vote is just to select a vendor to be able to move forward with contract negotiations, etc. However, in the near future Town Council will need to decide if they are going to appropriate additional funds for the down payment of the fire truck.

Additional discussion was held in regards to Town Council making a request to the Macon County Commissioners to increase the district fire tax.

Town Manager Owens commented that in her experience other towns and in surrounding municipalities, since the fire district tax is not enough to sustain the fire department, the general fund usually supplements employees or capital projects.

Vice Mayor Guffey commented that he doesn't want the \$200,000 to stand in the way of the purchase of a new fire truck and worried that the price of the fire truck will continue to increase.

***Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to approve Melton Fire Group as the vendor of choice as presented. Vote: 6-0.***

- C.) Adoption of the 2024 Budget Calendar-Town Manager Amie Owens  
The 2024 Budget Calendar was presented by Town Manager Owens.

***Council Member Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the 2024 Budget Calendar as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6-0.***

## **11. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES**

- A.) Finance - Sarah Bishop, Finance Director gave a quarterly update from the Finance Department: W-2, 1099 and 1095 forms will be sent out by the end of January, the Town's written response to the audit finding was accepted by the Local Government Commission (LGC), and budget planning for 2024-2025 will start soon.
- B.) Planning/IT - Justin Setser, Town Planner gave a quarterly update from the Planning/IT Departments: building permits, minimum housing projects, downtown WiFi, Crawford Branch greenway, and parking on Main Street.
- C.) Police - Chief Devin Holland gave a quarterly report from the Police Department: staffing/calls, property checks, Safe Kids of Macon County, and medication take-backs.

## **12. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL**

Vice Mayor Guffey would like to support the police department to help them address speeding in Downtown.

Councilman Collins said the Public Hearing on the Social District was special and handled well.

Councilman Lewis spoke about his respect for former Alderman Verlin Curtis.

Councilman Culpepper would like to save the trees on Main Street. He would like for Conditional Zoning to only apply to up-zoning.

Councilwoman Salain was glad to see the skatepark completed in 2023. She also said the Warming Station needs more volunteers.

Mayor Horton said Town Council received a thank you note from the family of Verlin Curtis. He mentioned the upcoming annual retreat and board member assignments. Mayor Horton showed his appreciation for their willingness to serve and thanked the Board.

### **13. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- A.) Next Town Council Meeting is Monday, February 5, 2024
- B.) Town Offices will be closed on Monday, January 15, 2024 in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observance per the NC State Holiday Scheule
- C.) Special Called Town Council Meeting – Annual Retreat- Friday, January 26 and Saturday, January 27, 2024

### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

***Council Member David Culpepper made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 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