

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION UPDATE
MAY 29, 2026**

THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL held a special called meeting on Friday, May, 29, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in the Twenty-Eight Main Events, 28 East Main Street Franklin, NC.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Stacy Guffey called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following members present:

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis, Council Members Joe Collins, Rita Salain, Robbie Tompa and Jeff Berry.

Council Member Travis Higdon was absent.

Council Member Rita Salain made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to excuse Council Member Travis Higdon from the May 29, 2026 meeting. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5-0.

2. MCADAMS AND TOOLE DESIGN MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOP UPDATE

Kristy Carter, McAdams, explained that the consulting team had been moving quickly through the project and had not had sufficient opportunity to engage directly with all Town Council members. The session was structured to first allow Council members to share their perspectives around the table, then transition to reviewing work displayed around the room. She invited Council members to share their priorities and vision for the Main Street transformation.

Council Member Jeff Berry identified pedestrian safety as his top concern, citing the difficulty of crossing from one side of the street to the other and the ongoing challenge of speeding traffic, noting that some measures were already in place to address it. He also emphasized ease of access for the general public.

Council Member Robbie Tompa expressed strong interest in reviving second-story residential living downtown, connecting it to the Town's housing crisis and the potential for building owners to invest in their own properties. He noted the walkability of areas like Clayton, GA, noting the appeal of knowing where to park, what shops to expect, and having a welcoming space for families. He also noted the need for traffic control and an inviting space for families.

Council Member Rita Salain emphasized the importance of accessibility for the senior population, and she also noted that parking was a significant concern. She expressed a desire for a clean, attractive downtown and echoed Councilman Tompa's support for upper-floor residential uses. She noted that long-term parking by individuals who are not patronizing businesses was a problem that needed to be addressed.

Mayor Guffey remarked on the surprisingly strong turnout and positive energy at the previous evening's public open house, noting that attendees brought their own plans and ideas. Town Manager Amie Owens added that even vacationers who happened to see signage participated. Kristy Carter also noted that many participants expressed gratitude for being included in an open process.

Trade-Off Discussion

Ms. Carter introduced a second discussion item focused on trade-offs. She asked Council Members to identify what they would be willing to give up to achieve their stated vision.

Mayor Guffey offered to give up a travel lane in exchange for wider sidewalks and outdoor dining space.

Vice Mayor Lewis asked about the cell phone mobility data that was previously discussed during day one of the workshop. Sarah Johnson, Toole Design, explained that the data—aggregated from cell phone trips—showed that a significant share of vehicles traveling through Main Street were through-traffic, with trips originating and ending well outside the downtown core. She noted that some through-traffic may be attributable to GPS routing, limited river crossings, or personal preference, but that the data clearly indicated a meaningful portion of Main Street traffic had no intent to stop downtown.

Council Member Salain stated she would be willing to give up free parking and Council Member Collins noted that he has long advocated for converting Main Street back to two-way traffic. Council Member Tompa expressed willingness to give up a travel lane in favor of wider sidewalks, citing personal experience navigating the existing sidewalks with a stroller. Council Member Berry agreed with reducing to one lane of traffic, stating it would improve sidewalk width, pedestrian and senior safety, traffic calming, and allow for the addition of street trees.

Workshop Findings and Design Work

Kristy Carter and Sarah Johnson walked the Council Members through materials displayed around the room, summarizing themes gathered over the previous day's public engagement sessions.

Theresa Buckwalter, McAdams, presented conceptual framework work at multiple scales. At the gateway scale, she described exploring non-vehicular connections, particularly for cyclists, e-bike users, and Appalachian Trail thru-hikers, linking the greenway, the Cherokee mound cultural gateway, the new Sunnyside Park, and the downtown core via Iotla Street. She identified the corner of Iotla and Main as a potential "town square" focal point. At the core scale, she highlighted existing green space near Town Hall, the significance of county-owned corner properties, and the importance of engaging the county as a partner. She also described an emerging framework for a cultural and historic trail experience embedded in the built environment, referencing women's history markers as one example. The framework also addressed the potential for expanding the active downtown footprint east and west, improving alley connectivity from rear parking areas to Main Street storefronts, and accommodating outdoor retail and dining.

Sarah Johnson presented a series of cross-sectional street design options, all of which featured parallel parking rather than the existing angled parking. She explained that a crash analysis from NCDOT showed the majority of Main Street collisions were related to vehicles backing out of angled spaces or large trucks blocking travel lanes. NCDOT policy now favors parallel parking, and converting to parallel parking would also reclaim two to three feet of roadway width. Johnson noted that existing sidewalks range from approximately seven to eight and a half feet, narrowing to as little as four feet in some locations, with benches, sandwich boards, and other street furniture further reducing usable walking space.

The design options presented included: a balanced section with parallel parking on both sides, providing approximately eight and a half feet of pedestrian space and six feet of amenity zone on each side; options with parking on one side only, freeing up space on the north side for a wider sidewalk of ten to twelve feet with additional landscape buffer to address the grade change; and a south-side option with staggered trees creating a plaza effect. Ms. Johnson noted that a one-lane option was still being developed, and that while it would yield the most pedestrian space, it raises questions about emergency vehicle access, traffic flow, and NCDOT acceptability for a state-maintained road.

Ms. Carter was candid that there is no known precedent for NCDOT approving a one-lane configuration on a state road, calling it "a hard fight," while acknowledging it was not off the table. She noted that the business community, based on what was heard during the workshops, would likely prefer a two-way conversion over a one-lane configuration, as two-way streets are generally better for business than one-way streets.

Ian Lockwood, Toole Design, presented a concept for a flush, curbless street design. He reframed the discussion around two core principles: flexibility and access. He noted that the existing one-way configuration was a product of 1970s traffic engineering designed to move vehicles through town quickly, not to support commerce or place-making. A two-way, curbless street would restore access from both directions, eliminate the need for curb cuts and ramps for accessibility would allow the flex zone (currently occupied by angled parking) to serve as a loading zone in the morning, standard parking during the day, and outdoor dining in the evening, simply by rolling out planters. He emphasized that this model removes the need to make permanent decisions about parking versus dining, allowing the street to adapt to market conditions, business mix, and time of day. Mr. Lockwood also presented a concept for a unified square integrating the Town's four small existing squares, suggesting the coherent space would have value greater than the sum of its parts. He proposed a roundabout to reduce queuing and signal infrastructure that would otherwise displace parking. He noted that the 20-foot paving area in the flush street concept was only marginally wider than what a one-lane street would require for emergency clearance.

Discussion of Next Steps and NCDOT Strategy

Mayor Guffey asked whether there were examples of NCDOT converting a two-lane one-way road to two-way operations, and whether a two-way Main Street would necessitate parallel changes to Palmer Street. Kristy Carter confirmed that the next formal NCDOT checkpoint is in June, and that the team would use the workshop outcomes to develop a concept to bring to that meeting. She acknowledged that a full one-way to two-way conversion involves signal changes, circulation modeling around the river crossings, and Palmer Street, making it a longer-term infrastructure project requiring dedicated funding and study.

Council Member Salain noted that NCDOT's engagement and openness to these ideas represented a significant achievement, and that bringing them along through data and analysis would be the key to advancing more substantive changes.

Vice Mayor Lewis asked whether converting to two-way traffic might discourage some of the heavy through-traffic currently using Main Street as a throughway, suggesting that a narrower effective corridor might redirect large vehicles. Kristy Carter agreed that signal timing and Palmer Street improvements could be used as traffic engineering tools to direct through-traffic away from Main Street while preserving the network for local access.

Kristy Carter concluded the discussion by framing the project as a set of levers, some involving significant cost, some politically difficult, and some requiring sustained effort with NCDOT, but noted that short-term wins could and should be pursued in parallel with the longer-term vision. She reminded the Council Members that formal decisions would be required and encouraged members to remain for the afternoon pin-up session, at which the full public would be invited to review refined concepts.

3. ADJOURN

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Jeff Berry to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 a.m. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 5-0.

Stacy J. Guffey, Vice Mayor

Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk