

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
September 2, 2025**

THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, 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 Gufey and Council Members: David Culpepper, Joe Collins, Mike Lewis, Rita Salain and Robbie Tompa.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

3. ADOPTION OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2025 TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA

Mayor Horton noted that the proposed closed session (Item 12A) would not be necessary as documentation had not been received and put together in the form needed at this time. He asked if there were any other items for closed session, and hearing none, suggested removing this item from the agenda.

Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to adopt the Town Council Agenda for September 2, 2025 with the removal of 12A (closed session). The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA SEPTEMBER, 2 2025

- A.) Approval of the Town Council Minutes:
 - 1.) August 4, 2025 Regular Meeting
 - 2.) August 18, 2025 Special Called Meeting
- B.) Budget Amendment
- C.) Tax Releases
- D.) Refer Initial Zoning Application to Planning Board

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to approve the consent agenda for the September 2, 2025 meeting, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

5. PROCLAMATION/RECOGNITION

- A.) Proclamation – Constitution Week – September 17-23, 2025, present to Regen Lynn Deegen – Mayor Jack Horton
- B.) Jim Zilbauer, Water/Sewer Supervisor – 25 years of service – Nicole Bradley. Human Resources Director

6. PUBLIC SESSION

Devon Dupuis, Macon County Farmers Market, provided an update on the farmers market, which is being held in the Town Hall parking lot. She shared that compared to last year, the market has grown from 40

to over 80 vendors, from 36 to 55 vendor spaces per Saturday, and now features two musicians performing simultaneously instead of one. They also now offer both free balloon animals and free face painting for children. SNAP card usage has doubled over last year, and multiple vendors have reported a 100% increase in sales. Ms. Dupuis expressed appreciation for the partnership with the Town.

Morgan Stewart, representing the Downtown Merchants Association (formerly Streets of Franklin), expressed concern about safety issues on Main Street, particularly regarding speeding. He presented a petition signed by 25 Main Street businesses asking the town council to address the matter. He noted that pedestrians have experienced near misses due to drivers not heeding speed limits or signage, putting shoppers, tourists, residents, and business owners at risk. The merchants appreciate Chief Holland's collaboration but feel more action is needed. They are open to solutions like speed bumps, raised crosswalks, additional signage, or speed cameras. Mr. Stewart stated that while they understand NCDOT owns the road, they believe the road through downtown belongs to Franklin, not Raleigh, and if NCDOT is unwilling to cooperate, they would like to explore options for the town to take ownership of that section of road.

7. CALL FOR PUBLIC HEARING

- A.) Call for Public Hearing on Monday, October 6, 2025 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain public input regarding text amendments to Chapter 152 sections 152.162, 152.163 and 152.070 – Town Planner Justin Setser

Town Planner Justin Setser explained that Council had previously asked the Planning Board to consider text amendments to add public comments and an advertised public comment period for Planning Board rezoning hearings. He also noted other text changes from NCGS 160D that needed updating in Chapter 152 of the Town's UDO (Unified Development Ordinance). The Planning Board voted 7-0 to recommend these changes at their August meeting.

Mayor Horton asked how the public would access the proposed amendments before the hearing, and Mr. Setser indicated they would be available on the town website, at Town Hall, by mail upon request, and would also be included in the newspaper announcement.

Mr. Setser noted that these changes might extend the rezoning process by a month to accommodate the new public comment advertising period for Planning Board meetings.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to call for Public Hearing on Monday, October 6, 2025 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain input regarding the amendments to Chapter 152 sections – 152.162, 152.163 and 152.070, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote 6 – 0

8. NEW BUSINESS

- A.) Request approval of the Resolution Approve the Proposal from Webster Bank, NA to Enter into an Installment Financing Contract in the Amount not to exceed \$3,225,000.00 in order to finance the Clear Well and High Service Pump Station Project – Finance Director Sarah Bishop

Finance Director Sarah Bishop explained that the Town has been working to secure financing for the Clear Well project at the Water Treatment Plant. She presented a resolution to enter into an agreement with Webster Bank, which offered the best rate. The Town Council approved the contract last month, but this Resolution is needed to close the loan. Ms. Bishop noted that the

Town will go before the Local Government Commission (LGC) on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, to receive approval to take on the debt, with closing to follow shortly thereafter.

Council Member David Culpepper asked for clarification on the financing amount. Town Manager Amie Owens explained that this financing covers only about half of the project. The Town has applied for \$2.9 million in hazard mitigation funding (having made it to the second round of applications due October 9) and has also requested \$2 million from their federal representative.

Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the Resolution authorizing the financing contract with Webster Bank in the amount of \$3,225,000 for the clear well project and to authorize the establishment of a separate account to hold the loan proceeds, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote 6 – 0.

B.) Request approval of Capital Agreement between the Town of Franklin and the Franklin ABC Board- Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Amie Owens explained that the ABC Board provides funds to the Town quarterly as well as a final distribution after their annual audit. Historically, they have forwarded \$25,000 quarterly. The proposed agreement documents the mutual understanding that if unexpected circumstances arise or if capital investments are needed, the ABC Board would return to the Town Council to discuss any necessary changes to the allocation. The total distribution last year was \$158,000 (including the quarterly payments and the final distribution).

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the Capital Agreement between the Town of Franklin and the Franklin ABC Board, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote 6 – 0.

9. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

- A.) Human Resources – Nicole Bradley, Human Resources Director reported on the competition of the 2024-2025 Worker Compensation Audit, new electronic records retention policy, current vacancies, and attended the North Carolina Association of Municipal Clerks Conference.
- B.) Tax Collector/Events – Sabrina Scruggs, Tax Collector/ Events Coordinator sent out over 3,000 tax bills totaling \$3.2 million, with \$461,000 collected, gave an update on the July 4th festivities, final 2 Pickin' on the Square events and Pumpkin Fest.
- C.) Fire Department – Chief Ben Ormond gave an update on call volume, trainings, disaster relief grant from the Office of the state Fire Marshal, and the new fire apparatus.

10. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

- A.) Naming of property- Sunnyside Park- Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey
Vice Mayor Guffey presented a sponsorship request for naming what has been informally called the "Whitmire property" as "Sunnyside Park." He noted that while he initially had reservations about the name when he learned there are many Sunnyside Parks across the country, he was persuaded by those with greater knowledge of local history that this name honors the property's historical identity. He mentioned that while the Whitmire's were a longtime family associated with the property, they have been honored in other parts of the region.

Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to officially name the property Sunnyside Park, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote 6 – 0.

B.) Consideration of industrial infrastructure incentive- Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey

Vice Mayor Guffey discussed the possibility of adding an industrial infrastructure grant to the economic incentive package that was passed earlier in the year. This came after touring the Lander facility, which employs about 70 people and may have an opportunity to expand but needs infrastructure improvements, particularly water and sewer upgrades.

The proposed grant would include construction, upgrade, extension, or repair of water or sewer lines, with reimbursement up to \$15,000 of costs and up to \$500 for permitting fees, based on availability of funds.

Several council members expressed concerns about the proposal:

- Council Member Rita Salain suggested the grant should be a 50/50 match like the other Town façade incentive.
- Council Member David Culpepper questioned whether the grant would be available to all small businesses or just to Lander.
- Several members suggested the need to clearly define "industrial" to prevent misuse.

After discussion, Vice Mayor Guffey agreed to revise the proposal to include a 50/50 match requirement and a clearer definition of "industrial," working with the Town Manager and Town Attorney to ensure the incentive is fair, reasonable, and legal. The item will be brought back for consideration at a future meeting.

C.) Consideration of purchase of Speed Cushions – Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey

Vice Mayor Guffey proposed purchasing speed cushions to address speeding issues on town streets. He explained that the Police Department has been using temporary speed bumps, but these have been damaged due to vehicle speeds and the material they're made of. The proposed speed cushions would be more durable, allow emergency vehicles to pass without going over the bump, and could be moved to different problem areas as needed.

Town Manager Owens clarified that these would be installed on town-owned streets, not NCDOT roads, and would be placed based on traffic counts, incident reports, and citizen complaints. The cushions would be drilled into the street, making them secure but still movable when needed.

Council Member David Culpepper expressed concern about not being able to place these on Main Street, which he considered "ground zero" for speeding issues, and recalled that NCDOT had possibly indicated in a previous meeting that such measures might be allowed. Town Manager Owens will follow back up with NCDOT on this matter.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Stacy Guffey to approve the purchase of ten-speed cushions at the prescribed price, to be paid from the contingency fund, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote 6 – 0.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A.) Next Town Council Regular Meeting is Monday October 6, 2025
- B.) Pickin' on the Square-Saturday, September 13, and Saturday, September 27, 2025

12. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Mike Lewis made a motion, seconded by Council Member Mike Lewis to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6-0.

C. Jack Horton, Mayor

Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk