

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
150 Prospect Avenue
November 11, 2024

Members Present: Douglas Baker, Mayor
Donna Fletcher, Deputy Mayor
James Johnson
Christian Marshall
Samuel Lyons
Ashley Smith
Todd Zahner

Members Excused: None

In Attendance: James Wetzel, City Manager
Harmony Motter, Deputy Manager
Brian Spaid, Esq., City Solicitor
T.J. Parks, Recording Secretary
Kevin Siragian, Franklin Police Chief
Amanda Power, Community Development
Cindi Power, City of Franklin
Alex Spaid, Dale, Woodard, Gent, McFate
Helen Fielding, The Derrick
Dan Paulo, Franklin Rotary
Don Owen, Franklin Rotary
Deb Eckelberger, Franklin Rotary
Kyle Peasley, Franklin Rotary
Joy Strain, McGill, Power, Bell

Mayor Baker reconvened the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA – Resolution No. 155

Mrs. Fletcher moved to adopt the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Lyons. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Resolution No. 156

Mr. Johnson motioned to approve the minutes of the FY-2024 CDBG Final Hearing of October 7, 2024, the regular City Council meeting of October 7, 2024, and the special City Council meeting of October 28, 2024. Mrs. Fletcher seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PAY THE BILLS – Resolution No. 157

Mr. Lyons moved to pay the bills as presented. Mrs. Fletcher seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

CITIZENS' INQUIRIES – None

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS – None

AUDIT PRESENTATION – MCGILL, POWER, BELL & ASSOCIATES

Ms. Strain, of McGill, Power, Bell & Associates, presented the City's financial summary as of December 31, 2023 and included 2022's audit summary for comparison. She indicated that the audit resulted in a clean opinion, indicating the City's financial statements were presented fairly and there were no significant deficiencies. The total General Fund revenues for 2023 were \$5,543,764, an increase of \$62,371 from 2022's revenues. Expenditures for 2023 totaled \$5,357,684, an increase of \$264,463 compared to the expenses incurred in 2022. For further information, refer to the attached financial summaries. There being no questions from Council, Ms. Strain was thanked for her presentation.

FRANKLIN ROTARY DOG PARK UPDATE – DR. DAN PAULO

Dr. Dan Paulo updated Council on the Franklin Rotary Club's efforts to raise funds for and establish a community dog park to be placed on City-owned property adjacent to the Professional Building at 150 Prospect Avenue. Franklin Rotary Club formed the Franklin Rotary Foundation, a 501c3 charity, to receive tax-deductible donations, which has received \$25,000 so far, but have not been successful with obtaining grants. The project is estimated to cost \$103,400. Dr. Paulo continued to discuss issues contacting a surveyor, but found a recorded site survey that was conducted in 2016 when the Family Services and Children's Aid Society boundary lines were drawn. He asked Council for a formal cooperative agreement since the proposed dog park is to be constructed on City property. Mr. Spaid said he would have an agreement drafted for Council's consideration for the January 2025 meeting.

FIRST READING – BILL NO. 7 – CABLE FRANCHISE AGREEMENT – Resolution No. 158

Mr. Spaid read Bill No. 7, "Cable Franchise Agreement," in its entirety into the record.

Mr. Lyons motioned and Mr. Johnson seconded to pass on First Reading Bill No. 7. The motion passed unanimously.

FIRST READING – BILL NO. 8 – 2025 BUDGET – Resolution No. 159

Mr. Spaid read Bill No. 8, "2025 Budget," in its entirety into the record.

Mr. Johnson motioned to pass on First Reading Bill No. 8. Mr. Marshall seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

FIRST READING – BILL NO. 9 – 2025 REAL ESTATE TAX – Resolution No. 160

Mr. Spaid read Bill No. 9, "2025 Real Estate Tax," in its entirety into the record.

Mr. Spaid advised that the ordinance reflects a 2 Mill increase.

Mr. Marshall motioned to pass on First Reading Bill No. 9. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion which passed 6-1, with Mr. Lyons voting in opposition.

FIRST READING – BILL NO. 10 – 2025 EARNED INCOME TAX – Resolution No. 161

Mr. Spaid read Bill No. 10, “2025 Earned Income Tax,” in its entirety into the record.

Mrs. Fletcher motioned to pass on First Reading Bill No. 10. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ESTABLISH DATE FOR BUDGET HEARING – Resolution No. 162

Mr. Wetzel suggested holding the 2025 Budget Hearing at 6:30 P.M. on December 2, 2024, prior to the City Council meeting.

Mr. Lyons motioned and Mr. Marshall seconded to hold the 2025 Budget Hearing at 6:30 P.M. on December 2, 2024, prior to the City Council meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL TO SUBMIT MAIN STREET MATTERS FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION – Resolution No. 162

Mr. Parks presented a request for Council’s approval to submit a grant application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development’s Main Street Matters program, in the amount of \$100,000, to fund façade improvements within the City. The proposed project includes the following areas:

- Liberty Street, between 15th and 8th Streets;
- Elk Street, between 14th and West Park Streets;
- 13th Street, between Franklin Avenue and Railroad Street;
- West Park Street, between Otter and Liberty Streets.

He went on to explain the various types of projects, such as painting, masonry pointing, signage, lighting, doors and windows, and design assistance. There were twenty-one (21) businesses and building owners that responded favorably towards the proposed project; they were made aware of the dollar-for-dollar match requirement.

Ms. Smith motioned to allow the submission of a Main Street Matters grant application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development in the amount of \$100,000 to carry out façade improvements to eligible businesses within the designated area described above and to designate Mayor Baker as the official to execute all documents. Mrs. Fletcher seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PARK AND PARADE ASSEMBLY REQUESTS – None

REPORTS

Manager –

- Bronder Technical Services has completed their work on the WWII/Korean War Memorial. They will continue next spring when they receive the granite.
- A bid was placed on a condemned property at 1047 Elm Street that was up for tax sale. Mr. Wetzel said the bidder is out of state and advised that the sale could be problematic,

as the City has seen with the sale of similar properties that are condemned and better off demolished.

- **Resolution No. 163** – Mr. Johnson motioned and Ms. Smith seconded to object to sale of the property located at 1047 Elm Street. The motion passed unanimously.
- The City received annual letter from the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership requesting money for the use of Light-Up Night trademark. Mr. Spaid will prepare his usual response stating that the City of Franklin was using the phrase prior to Pittsburgh trademarking it.
- Trails to Ales would like to make a three (3) to four (4) minute video to promote Franklin and asked if Council objected to using the phrase “Destination Franklin” in the video. Nobody from Council opposed.
- Mr. Wetzel clarified that the City was the award recipient of a \$600,000 grant through the Local Share Account program, not the General Authority as was originally stated. The grant is to help cover the costs of the 3rd Street dam remediation.
- Mr. Wetzel informed Council that City resident Tim Hefferman notified the Police Department of Neighborhood Electric Vehicle, similar to a golf cart and powered by electricity. The vehicle is allowed on municipally owned streets but is not typically allowed on state owned streets.
- Dave Gustas will prepare the appraisal for property located at 533 Third Street which the City obtained by means of Eminent Domain.
- Cheri Andres, who fell in front of City Hall, wrote a “Thank You” letter to the City, thanking the employee that assisted her when she fell and called the ambulance.
- PennDOT representatives requested to meet with City Council to briefly discuss the plans for the Liberty Street Betterment Project (Route 62 Betterment Project) before it goes into the final design stages. They would like to meet at 6 P.M. on December 2, 2024, prior to the regular City Council meeting.
- The City received notice from DEP that it was awarded \$163,698 towards the purchase of a new leaf vacuum. Since submitting the grant application, the cost of the proposed equipment increased approximately \$10,000. A 10% match is required.
- Mrs. Power requested to schedule a public meeting for December 2, 2024 at 7 P.M. prior to the regular City Council meeting to announce a budget modification needed to the FY-2024 CDBG grant application.
- Curb Market will need to relocate in 2025 when the General Authority’s A-108 project commences on 12th Street. The proposed location for is City Lot D.
- A “Special Exception” Zoning Hearing is scheduled for 11 A.M. on November 21, 2024 at FICDA to hear a request for a 2nd floor apartment at 1246 Liberty Street.
- Tri-County has an excess of old 95-gallon garbage carts that they are offering free of charge to residents. Interested residents should call Tri-County at 724-992-0273.
- Mr. Wetzel presented a request for a Special Council meeting on either Monday, November 25th or Tuesday November 26th for approval to submit two (2) Local Share Account grant applications to make ADA upgrades and add an emergency generator to City Hall, and to install a downtown camera system.
 - **Resolution No. 164** – Mr. Lyons motioned and Ms. Smith seconded to hold a Special City Council meeting on Monday, November 25, 2024 at 4 P.M. at 150 Prospect Avenue. The motion passed unanimously.

- Requested time in Executive Session for the purposes of negotiations.

Solicitor – Requested time in Executive Session for the purposes of negotiations and a tax appeal notice.

Mayor Appointments –

Resolution No. 165 – Mayor Baker motioned to appoint Alex Spaid to the Redevelopment Authority for the remainder of the term ending on July 31, 2026, and Jennifer Mays to the Redevelopment Authority for the remainder of the term ending on July 31, 2028. Mrs. Fletcher seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Baker – Nothing to report.

Mrs. Fletcher –

- Asked Council members to consider participating in the Light-Up Night parade
- Received a request for the City to consider offering City Lot C for a non-profit organization to man and collect money for parking during Applefest.

Mr. Johnson – Attended a very nice Veterans Day Luncheon and was happy to have been invited to an event at the Franklin High School. He expressed pride in his family's lineage of service history as well as his own.

Mr. Marshall –

- Thanked the Franklin Rotary Club for their efforts on moving the dog park forward
- Received positive feedback on the Witch Walk

Mr. Lyons – Appreciates the hard work that went into preparing the budget but cannot accept a tax increase.

Mrs. Smith – Enjoyed her first Municipal Leadership Summit in Scranton, PA and the networking opportunity.

Mr. Zahner – Nothing to report

EXECUTIVE SESSION - Resolution No. 166

Mrs. Fletcher motioned to enter into Executive Session at 8:06 P.M. for the purposes of negotiations and potential litigation. Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF PHOENIX FRANKLIN INDUSTRIAL INVESTORS TAX APPEAL AGREEMENT – Resolution No. 167

Mr. Marshall motioned and Mr. Lyons seconded to enter into agreement with Phoenix Franklin Industrial Investors LLC relative to a tax assessment appeal valuing all of their properties for a combined total appraised value of \$2.2 million. The motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS - None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:54 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T.J. Parks", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

T.J. Parks, Recording Secretary