

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers, City Hall
April 6, 2026

Members Present: Douglas Baker, Mayor
Donna Fletcher, Deputy Mayor
James Johnson
Travis Young
Christian Marshall
Ashley Zaccari
Todd Zahner

Members Excused: None

In Attendance: James Wetzel, City Manager
Harmony Motter, City of Franklin
Cindi Power, City of Franklin
Aaron Campbell, Police Chief
Victor Suarez, Police Officer
Blayne Baker, Police Officer
James Shreffler, Events and Marketing Coordinator
T.J. Parks, Recording Secretary
Brian Spaid, Solicitor
Helen Fielding, The Derrick
Alex Spaid, Dale Woodard Gent McFate
Amber Kress, 339 Stonebruck
James Kress, 339 Stonebruck
Craig Dilley, 115 Buffalo Street
Michael Baker, 423 2nd Street
Wayne and Bridget Sottiaux, 956 Liberty Street
Theodore Dixon, 11 Miller Avenue
Jodi Lewis, Franklin Area Chamber
Allyson Vanderhoff, Explore Venango

Mayor Baker called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA – Resolution No. 35

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Resolution No. 36

Mr. Wetzel noted that the date for the meeting on the first page of the regular City Council minutes was incorrect.

Mr. Johnson motioned to approve the minutes of the Zoning Amendment Public Hearing and the regular City Council meeting of March 2, 2026 as amended. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PAY THE BILLS – Resolution No. 37

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

CITIZENS' INQUIRIES –

- James Kress, resident of Washington County, PA, was present to discuss frustration with the way he was treated by police officers during a medical emergency while visiting Franklin in February. Mr. Kress has since filed a lawsuit against the City. Mr. Spaid noted that since the matter is now in potential litigation, he advised that the issue will not be discussed in public session at this time.
- Michael Baker, resident of 423 2nd Street, and Craig Dilley, resident of 115 Buffalo Street, returned to Council regarding concerns about stormwater runoff which is causing property damage. Mr. Dilley then distributed a packet of documents for Council to review and requested that the last two (2) pages be included with the minutes. Since the matter and those pages address potential litigation, the City Solicitor directed that those pages shall not be included with or annexed to the minutes.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS – Resolution No. 38

Mr. Wetzel presented the following requests that came before HARB at their March 24, 2026 meeting:

- 1313 Liberty Street – Window
- 1137 Liberty Street – Sign
- 1190 Elk Street – Sign
- 1283 Liberty Street – Sign

Mr. Wetzel explained that there were not enough board members present at the beginning of the meeting to satisfy the quorum requirement but managed to meet quorum for the review of the last application. Therefore, the applications for 1313 Liberty Street, 1137 Liberty Street, and 1190 Elk Street did not come to Council with a recommendation.

Ms. Zaccari motioned and Mr. Young seconded to approve all requests as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

BALLFIELD AGREEMENTS – FRANKLIN LITTLE LEAGUE & FRANKLIN MEN'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE – Resolution No. 39

Mr. Wetzel presented the annual agreements between the City and the Franklin Little League, and the City and the Franklin Men's Softball League. No changes were made to the agreements from previous years.

Mrs. Fletcher motioned to accept the agreements with the Franklin Little League and the Franklin Men's Softball League as presented. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

APPROVAL – 2018 FORD F-250 WITH SNOWPLOW – GENERAL AUTHORITY – Resolution No. 40

Mr. Wetzel explained that the General Authority would like to trade in the Wasterwater Plant's 2018 Ford F-250 for a new vehicle when the Street Department expressed interest in purchasing it. The truck has approximately 13,000 miles and the plow has not been used very little. A dealership offered \$28,000 as trade-in value, which was below market value. The Authority offered it to the City for the same amount. Mr. Wetzel recommended Council approve the purchase using Liquid Fuels funds.

Mr. Johnson motioned and Mr. Marshall seconded to approve the purchase of the 2018 Ford F-250 from the General Authority using Liquid Fuels funds in the amount of \$28,000. The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION – 101 N. 13TH STREET TAX EXONERATION - FICDA – Resolution No. 41

Mr. Wetzel explained that FICDA purchased the former credit union building at the corner of Howard and 13th Streets. FICDA then filed an application for exemption from real estate taxes. A hearing was held on October 15, 2025 and the property was determined to qualify for tax-exempt status, but the exemption was not made until January 1, 2026. FICDA is seeking exoneration of the 2025 property taxes which had a face amount of \$2,901.29 and have not been paid.

Mr. Johnson motioned to approve the request for exoneration, provided that the County and the Franklin Area School District agree to the exoneration request as well. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PARK AND PARADE ASSEMBLY REQUESTS – Resolution No. 42

Mr. Wetzel introduced the following public assembly requests:

- April 3, 2026 • Downtown Sidewalks • Franklin Ministerial Association • Good Friday Crosswalk
- May 15, 2026 • Bandstand Park • Venango County Human Services • Mental Health Resource Fair
- May 17, 2026 • Bandstand Park • Living Streams Ministries • National Call to Prayer
- September 30 – October 4, 2026 • Bandstand and Fountain Parks, 12th Street, Liberty Street • Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce • Applefest

Mr. Johnson motioned to accept the public assembly requests as presented, seconded by Mr. Marshall. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Manager –

- Mr. Wetzel handed the floor to Mr. Shreffler who presented a recap of events sponsored by the Franklin Fine Arts Council (FFAC) in 2025. Mayor Baker and Mr. Marshall both commended his efforts and those of all involved in FFAC.
- Mr. Wetzel introduced the City's newest police officers Blayne Baker and Victor Suarez.
- Announced the City hired a new meter enforcer, Christopher Kovacs.
- CATA bus shelter has been moved from the back parking lot of 1212 Chestnut Street to City Lot B.
- The Façade Improvement Program is now open and accepting applications. Information is available on the City's website and asked that all questions and applications be directed to Mr. Parks.
- PennDOT awarded the Route 62 Betterment project to Lindy Paving. The project will start on April 7th. PennDOT has numerous restrictions as far as the time of day but some night work may be done to help reduce traffic interruptions. Lindy anticipates road closures on 15th Street starting in June. Mayor Baker will be speaking on April 9th at 1:30 P.M. to publicly discuss the project.
- Pennsylvania Municipal League will be having a Northwest District meeting on April 28th at 11:30 A.M. in Warren, PA. Mayor Baker, Mr. Wetzel, and Mr. Johnson will be attending.
- Asked Council if there is an evening that works better for them to tour the City's facilities, suggesting the third Monday of the month. Most were in favor of meeting during the day/lunch time. Mr. Wetzel said he would send out a doodle poll to determine what day and time works best for everyone.
- Requested time in Executive Session to discuss matters of negotiations and personnel.

Solicitor –

- Discussed best ways to approach numerous bits of misinformation circulating on social media regarding the Betterment Project.
- Referring to discussion from last month, the Planning and Zoning Commission was not in favor of allowing other businesses to put up advertising signage on another's property.
- Finished the petition to submit to the Liquor Control Board for the noise ordinance exemption.
- Received the amendments from the Franklin Rotary for the dog park agreement.
- The City's bike ordinance currently allows bikes on sidewalks. He asked Council if they would like to change the ordinance to disallow bikes on sidewalks once the bike lanes proposed in the Betterment Project are installed.
- After some research, Mr. Spaid found that the City can increase the personal income tax above 1.75% but for City residents only.
- Requested time in Executive Session to discuss matters of potential litigation.

Mayor Appointments – None

COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Baker – Nothing to report.

Mrs. Fletcher – Expressed frustration with the Betterment Project.

Mr. Johnson – Also received many comments and concerns regarding the Betterment Project.

Mr. Marshall –

- Reached out to PennDOT to let them know of the City's Rave Alert system and requested that they keep the City up to date on construction progress so the system can be used to keep residents informed.
- Suggested offering 2 hour free parking downtown during summer months in the hopes that it will ease some frustration with the Betterment Project.
- Asked if the City intends to participate in the ATV Access Trail. Mayor Baker noted that there are no connecting routes to Franklin without going on a PennDOT road.
- Requested time in Executive Session to discuss matters of personnel.

Mr. Young – Thanked Chief Campbell for introducing the new officers.

Ms. Zaccari –

- Asked when the Street Department will begin street sweeping. Mr. Wetzel noted that it has already started and will be posting schedules.
- Asked when SPIFIY day is. Mr. Wetzel responded in May but was not sure of the date.
- May 30th will be the County's hazardous materials and electronics recycling at the Venango County Airport.
- Announced various dates for the next Heart and Soul community discussion sessions with Franklin's being on April 29th at Trails to Ales II from 6 – 8 P.M.

Mr. Zahner – Nothing to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - Resolution No. 43

Mr. Johnson motioned to enter into Executive Session at 8:16 P.M. to discuss matters of negotiations, personnel and potential litigation. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The Executive Session ended at 9:10 P.M.

OTHER BUSINESS – Resolution No. 44

Ms. Zaccari motioned and Mr. Marshall seconded to approve the memorandum of Understanding between the City of Franklin and the City of Franklin Police Department as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.J. Parks', written in a cursive style.

T.J. Parks, Recording Secretary