

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers, City Hall
May 5, 2025

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

Members Excused: None

In Attendance: James Wetzel, City Manager
Harmony Motter, Deputy Manager
Kevin Saragian, Police Chief
Andrew Eckel, Fire Chief
Dan Metz, Franklin Fire Dept.
Dan Wetzel, Franklin Fire Dept.
Mike Cook, Franklin Fire Dept.
Dan Anderson, Franklin Fire Dept.
Amanda Power, City of Franklin
Cindi Power, Recording Secretary
Brian Spaid, Solicitor
Helen Fielding, The Derrick.
Jim Fair, Franklin Moose
Steve Vidovich, Franklin Moose
Frank E. Hummel, Franklin Eagles
Nichole Gaertner, Franklin VFW
Matthew Gaertner, Franklin VFW
Brad Lena, Franklin Elks
Jacob Lena, Franklin VFW
Jodi Lewis, Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce
Josh Jolley, Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce
Bev Hart, 1333 Elk Street

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

ADOPTION OF AGENDA – Resolution No. 47

Mr. Wetzel asked to remove No. 12 (Approval of City-FICDA Management Agreement) from the agenda. Mr. Johnson moved to adopt the agenda as amended, seconded by Mr. Marshall. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Resolution No. 48

Mr. Marshall motioned to approve the minutes of the regular City Council meeting of April 7, 2025, as presented. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

PAY THE BILLS – Resolution No. 49

Mr. Johnson moved to pay the bills as presented. Mr. Marshall seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

CITIZENS' INQUIRIES

Nichole Gaertner, representing the Franklin VFW, asked Council to consider making service clubs exempt from paying a Mechanical Amusement Devices tax to the City if Council should approve such an ordinance. She noted that non-profit clubs such as the VFW, the Eagles, Moose and Elks, are required to donate 60% of the proceeds they collect with the machines. She said if these clubs were required to pay a tax to operate the machines, they would not give the City any additional money.

Steve Vidovich represented the Franklin Moose lodge in saying he agreed with Ms. Gaertner, pointing out that his service group has given thousands of dollars to the community via food pantries, the Salvation Army, school districts and more.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS – Resolution No. 50

The following request came before HARB at its April 22, 2025 meeting:

- 1259 Liberty Street – Sign

Ms. Zaccari motioned and Mr. Johnson seconded to approve the request as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL – SEAL COAT BID AWARD – Resolution No. 51

The City participated with several other municipalities through the Oil Region COG to bid out seal coating projects that would include portions of Sibley Avenue, 16th Street, Plumer Avenue, Old Mercer Road and Elk Street. There also were five optional streets listed for seal coating based on the outcome of the bids, which came back fair, Mr. Wetzel said. Optional work would be done on portions of 15th Street, Liberty Street, Fountain Lane, Wiley Avenue and Park Way, with the additional cost of \$14,632.85. The total cost of \$47,639.58 would be paid for with Liquid Fuels funds. Mrs. Fletcher motioned to approve the optional work, which will be done by Russell Standard. Mr. Lyons seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL – 11TH STREET PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS BID AWARD – Resolution No. 52

Community Development received only one bid for the FY-2021 and 2022 CDBG project and received approval from DCED to move forward despite the solitary bidder. The project includes removing existing playground equipment and replacing it with inclusive and 100% ADA-compliant equipment, removing existing pea gravel and replacing it with a poured-in-place rubber surface that is easier for people in wheelchairs to use, and replacing basketball hoops. Mr. Johnson motioned to award the bid to Snider Recreation in the amount of \$235,000. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Amanda Power noted that a separate bid will be put out for fencing around the playground.

APPROVAL – 13TH STREET LIGHT POLES ENGINEERING SERVICES – Resolution No. 53

Bids were received for engineering services needed to replace 10 decorative light poles on 13th Street between Elk and Buffalo streets. The project, including the cost of engineering services, is funded by CDBG Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023. The work includes completing and submitting the Highway Occupancy Permit and Highway Lighting Plan, as well as inspecting the project, completing the design plans and utility coordination. Mr. Johnson motioned to award the bid to LSSE Civil Engineers in the amount of \$24,600. Mr. Marshall seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

FIRE TRUCK REPAIR UPDATE & RESCIND PRIOR RESOLUTION – Resolution No. 54

Mr. Wetzel said plans to ratify a resolution made at the April meeting of City Council regarding emergency repairs needed for a City fire truck have been tabled so Council can consider other options due to the high cost of the repairs and the logistics of longevity and functionality of the 17-year-old truck. He asked Chief Eckel to report on what other options may be available. Chief Eckel has made arrangements with other area fire departments to borrow engines to keep the Franklin department in operation while Engine 34 is out of service. He is currently borrowing an engine from Rocky Grove Fire Department, which serves as the “second out” truck, and a 2002 pumper truck from Cherrytree Township Fire Department, which was removed from their service and is available for sale. Chief Eckel would like to purchase this engine to help the Franklin department get by until the new engine comes in 3-4 years. The Franklin department would need to also purchase another engine, and Chief Eckel believes a demonstration model costing up to \$700,000 would be the best option. He will continue to look for the best demo model that would be the most practical option and provide pricing information to Council for their consideration. Mrs. Motter said the City’s reserves can be used to purchase the new truck, and she suggested that a large downpayment be applied to the purchase to reduce the annual payments. The remainder of the cost for the new truck would need to be financed since the reserves fund will be depleted. Mrs. Fletcher motioned to rescind Resolution #46 that authorized the appropriation of City personnel to execute a contract with Glick Fire Equipment Co. for emergency repairs to the 2008 Pierce Velocity fire engine. Mr. Lyons seconded this motion, and it passed unanimously.

PARK AND PARADE ASSEMBLY REQUESTS – Resolution No. 55

Mr. Wetzel introduced the following public assembly requests:

- May 18, 2025 • Bandstand Park • Atlantic Avenue United Brethren Church • Church Service
- May 29-August 28, 2025 • Bandstand Park • Thursday Night Concert Series • FFAC
- June 25-July 4, 2025 • Fountain, Bandstand and Riverfront Parks, Liberty Street • 4th of July Festivities Week • FFAC
- June 25, July 2, July 9, July 16, July 23 (rain date July 30), 2025 • Bandstand Park • Taste of Talent • FFAC
- August 2-3, 2025 • Bandstand Park • Taste of Talent Finals • FFAC
- August 16, 2025 • Riverfront Park • Rock In River Festival • FFAC
- September 20, 2025 • Bandstand Park • Venango County Celebrates Recovery • Venango County Human Services
- October 1-5, 2025 • Downtown Parks and Streets • Applefest • Franklin Area Chamber

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

MILLER-SIBLEY POOL

Corbin Henry of the Franklin YMCA reported that the Miller-Sibley Pool will open for the season on Saturday, June 7. The last day of the season will be Friday, August 15. He said there are no major changes planned for the program this summer. Some minor fee adjustments have been made.

REPORTS

Manager –

- Asked Council to sign a Landowner Letter of Commitment that supports the General Authority’s application for a Watershed Restoration & Protection Program grant to use for the Third Street Dam project.
 - **Resolution 56** – Mr. Johnson motioned to provide the Letter of Commitment. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
- Reported the Franklin Gardeners Association will buy brackets and hanging baskets with watering reservoirs to decorate the downtown light poles.
- Said repairs would be made at downtown traffic lights that were out due to contractors hitting wires while working on the A-108 project.
- Noted service line warranty letters would be mailed to City residents late in May or early in June. He said this program started in 2020 and the company has sold 180 plans to 94 customers and 12 claims have been filed.
- Said the Police Department received grant money to replace flooring and lockers. This work has already begun.
- Reminded residents that SPIFIY Day is Wednesday, May 7.

- Has been working with the Police Chief to address encampments that are popping up on City properties. Mr. Spaid will check into writing a new ordinance that would prohibit these encampments.
- Asked Mr. Spaid if the Rotary Dog Park agreement was provided to the Rotary Club. Mr. Spaid said he needs to make a few more changes to the agreement.
- Said the Franklin Retail Association has provided a plan to allow non-profit groups raise funds by managing City parking lots during Applefest. He asked Council if they are interested in his pursuing this option with the Retail Association, and they agreed.
- Asked Council if they were still interested in pursuing another way to proceed with a fencing request made by residents at 612 Sibley Avenue, and they affirmed this.
- Announced that City Hall will open to the public at 8 a.m. Wednesday, May 7.
- Asked for time in Executive Session to discuss negotiations and potential litigation.

Solicitor –

- Said he has not yet begun to work on the Mechanical Amusement Devices ordinance.
- Plans to have the new Elk Street ordinance ready for the next Council meeting.
- Requested time in Executive Session to talk about land negotiations and the Joy Manufacturing tax appeal agreement.

Mayor Appointments – None

COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Baker – None

Mrs. Fletcher –

- Said she has heard good reports regarding the contractors on the A-108 project being accommodating to citizens and cleaning up the work areas.
- Said she has many ideas about the Rotary Dog Park agreement.
- Asked if a garbage can corral could be used in the City parking lot behind Trails To Ales to keep smelly garbage away from pedestrian traffic in the area.

Mr. Johnson –

- Traveled to St. Mary's today with Mayor Baker and City Manager Wetzel for a Pennsylvania Municipal League meeting.
- Presented a signed petition to the City Manager regarding a request for a speed hump in the 700 block of Buffalo Street.

Mr. Marshall –

- Has received requests from retailers to allow lids on Sip & Shop cups. This will require Mr. Spaid to amend the ordinance, which does not permit lids.
- Thanked the Franklin Retail Association for posting weekly maps showing where the A-108 construction work will be done.

- Said the County Sheriff has requested a speed hump be installed before the crosswalk on Elk Street behind the courthouse. Mr. Marshall said he would want the county to pay for half of the cost if the City would consider installing the speed hump.
- Asked if there were any issues with the Farmers Market, which started for the season on Saturday, May 3, at its temporary location in Parking Lot D. He said he heard some vendors would like to move back to the 12th Street Island once construction work is completed in that area, but there was some concern about people becoming frustrated with moving the market back and forth when the PennDOT Betterment Project begins next year.

Mr. Lyons – None

Ms. Zaccari –

- Went to a local elementary school today to celebrate America 250, the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.
- Excited about SPIFIY Day and seeing the community working together to beautify the City.
- Is impressed by the work being done to upgrade the City's sewer lines, and noted that the temporary inconveniences will pay off for decades to come.

Mr. Zahner –

- Attended a community event where young people interacted with federal and state leaders.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - Resolution No. 57

Mrs. Fletcher motioned to enter into Executive Session at 8:28 p.m. to discuss matters of potential litigation, land negotiations and the Joy Manufacturing tax appeal agreement. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The Executive Session ended at 8:58 p.m.

- **Resolution 58** – A motion was made by Mr. Johnson to enter into an agreement with Joy Manufacturing to settle the tax appeals on four parcels. The four parcels will have a total appraised value of \$5 million. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zaccari and it passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mr. Lyons motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mrs. Fletcher. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindi Power

Cindi Power, Recording Secretary