

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers, City Hall
July 7, 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
Cindi Power, City of Franklin
Kevin Saragian, Police Chief
T.J. Parks, Recording Secretary
Amanda Power, City of Franklin
Brian Spaid, Solicitor
Helen Fielding, The Derrick
Alex Spaid, Dale Woodard Gent McFate
Brady Slagle, City of Franklin
Bev Hart, 1333 Elk Street
Joseph Belick, Oil Region Rising
Barbara Matthews, 1239 Liberty Street
James Shreffler, FFAC
Sharlene Coxson and Richard Wheeler, 515 Sugarcreek Drive
Stephanie Felmlee, 313 13th Street
Irene McCabe, 1256 Elk Street
Tracy and Tom Jamieson, 1445 Elk Street
Helen Fielding, The Derrick
Melissa Ditzenberger and Dave Ballard, 233 Overlook Drive
Devin Zerbe, FFAC Intern
Ken Bryan, Venango County Commissioner
Julie Lane, St. Pete
Jayme Felmlee, Speak Up Venango
Jessica Roess, Betty's Circle
Jennifer Taylor, 1526 Buffalo Street
Jodie Lewis, Franklin Chamber
Josh Jolley, Franklin Chamber
Matt Beith, representing Bronson Smith and Chris VanWinkle

Mayor Baker called the meeting to order at 7:06 P.M.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA – Resolution No. 76

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Resolution No. 77

Mr. Marshall motioned to approve the minutes of the regular City Council meeting of June 2, 2025, as presented. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PAY THE BILLS – Resolution No. 78

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

CITIZENS' INQUIRIES –

- Irene McCabe, resident of 1526 Elk Street, attended the “No Kings” rally that was held on June 14 at the corner of Liberty and 12th Streets. As the event arose out of protest to actions by the federal government and was not pre-planned, a Parade and Public Assembly Permit request did not come to Council for approval prior to the protest. Mr. Spaid advised that in these instances, a Parade and Public Assembly Permit does not need to be issued. Mayor Baker advised calling the police department at least 24 hours prior to the event.
- Sharlene Coxson, owner of the Purple Goose bar on Grant Street, feels it is unfair to exclude the fraternal clubs from the potential games of chance tax that the City is considering imposing. She asked Council to consider taxing everyone fairly.
- Bev Hart, Elk Street resident, asked if there has been an update on the former Franklin Club since it is under new ownership. She and her husband have been taking care of grass and weeds on the back side of the property because the new owners are not keeping up with it.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS – Resolution Nos. 79 and 80

The following request came before HARB at its June 24, 2025 meeting:

- 1324 Buffalo Street – Paint
- 1009 Elk Street – Roof, Steps, Windows
- 1445 Elk Street – Windows
- 852 Liberty Street – Porch Roof

Mr. Wetzel indicated the request for 852 Liberty Street was tabled for next month's HARB meeting, as the applicant did not have enough information.

Resolution No. 79 – Mr. Johnson motioned and Mr. Lyons seconded to approve the requests for 1324 Buffalo Street, 1009 Elk Street, and 1445 Elk Street as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 80 – Mr. Johnson motioned and Mrs. Fletcher seconded to deny the request for 852 Liberty Street. The motion passed unanimously.

ZONING MAP CHANGE REQUEST – 206 8TH STREET – Resolution No. 81

Mr. Matt Beith, of Beith Associates, spoke on behalf of Mr. Bronson Smith and Ms. Chris Van Winkle, who live in Wexford, PA and have a seasonal home on Riverside Drive. They are in the process of purchasing the former Gulf gas station at 206 8th Street, right at the entrance to Riverfront Park from 8th Street. They would like to demolish the existing structure and rebuild a new structure of similar styling and placement on the site, which will then be a place that serves locally sourced food and beverages, including breakfast, as well as merchandise promoting Franklin’s outdoor recreation opportunities and history.

The property is currently zoned R-2 Medium Density Residential, which does not permit commercial use. In order to accommodate the business, Mr. Smith and Ms. Van Winkle are requesting to convert the zoning to C-1 Commercial Business District.

Mr. Spaid advised that Council motion to defer the matter to the Planning and Zoning Commission for further review and recommendation. If the Planning and Zoning Commission is in favor of the request, then Mr. Spaid will prepare an ordinance for First Reading at the August meeting. A public hearing will then be held in September, followed by Second Reading of the ordinance, pending no adverse comments.

Ms. Zaccari motioned to defer the request to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Marshall seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ATV ACCESS & TRAIL PROJECT PRESENTATION – KEN BRYAN

Venango County Commissioner, Ken Bryan, presented the Oil Region Alliance ATV Association’s initiative to bring legal access for all-terrain vehicles (ATV) into Venango County. He reported that 18 municipalities have expressed support, as well as support from PennDOT, DCNR, and Pennsylvania State Police. Individual participants will pay an annual \$50 fee, \$20 of which will go back to the municipality, \$8 will go to the County to cover administrative expenses, and the remaining \$22 will be used for signage, clean-up, road repair, etc. The County will oversee the insurance requirements of each individual member. Mr. Bryan went on to discuss the revenue benefits. Dave Ballard confirmed Mr. Bryan’s claims of positive economic impact, having seen the successful ATV programs in other communities.

Mayor Baker asked if there is a written proposal to review. Mr. Bryan responded that there is an ordinance template which Mr. Spaid is currently reviewing. Participating municipalities can make adjustments to the ordinance that best fit their community’s needs. Bev Hart expressed concerns over safety and exhausting the City’s police department.

Mr. Spaid offered to provide a copy of the ordinance template to Council members for review. He added that PennDOT-regulated streets, such as Liberty Street, must receive PennDOT approval before allowing ATV access. Mayor Baker said he would like to provide a town hall meeting to gather public feedback.

FAÇADE PROGRAM PRESENTATION

Mr. Parks introduced the City’s new Façade Improvement Program, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). The City was awarded \$50,000 to fund façade improvements for business/property owners in the following areas:

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

The reimbursable grant program requires dollar-for-dollar match. Business/property owners can receive up to \$5,000 in grant funds per storefront; project costs cannot exceed \$23,000. Mr. Parks went on to discuss eligible projects, required documentation, and the project review process by the program Review Committee and the City's Historic and Architectural Review Board for properties located within the Historic District.

Mr. Marshall asked if we have heard from interested business/property owners. Mr. Parks responded that the grant application to DCED required the City to demonstrate a need for funding. Many businesses within the project area were solicited for feedback and responded with a need for roughly \$200,000 worth of projects.

APPROVAL – CDBG CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN – Resolution No. 82

Mrs. Power presented the City's Citizen Participation Plan, which is required for compliant participation in the CDBG program. The plan establishes the process to offer residents opportunities to express their thoughts and to respond to proposals and questions by means of public hearings, of which two (2) are required annually. The plan must be adopted every five (5) years.

Mr. Lyons motioned and Mr. Johnson seconded to adopt the CDBG Citizen Participation as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL – MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE & WOMEN BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (MBE/WBE) PLAN – Resolution No. 83

Mrs. Power presented the City's Minority Business Enterprise and Women Business Enterprise Plan, which is required for compliant participation in the CDBG program. The plan requires grantees make a good faith effort to ensure the minority and women owned businesses have opportunities to participate in CDBG funded projects.

Ms. Zaccari motioned to adopt the Minority Business Enterprise and Women Business Enterprise Plan as presented. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

FINAL READING – BILL NO. 2 – OPEN CONTAINER (SIP N' SHOP) AMENDMENT – Resolution No. 84

Mr. Spaid read Bill No. 2, "Open Container Amendment", into the record.

Mr. Marshall motioned and Mr. Johnson seconded to approve on Final Reading Bill No. 2. The motion passed unanimously.

FINAL READING – BILL NO. 3 – TRAFFIC CODE AMENDMENT – ELK STREET – Resolution No. 85

Mr. Spaid read Bill No. 3, "Traffic Code Amendment – Elk Street", into the record.

Mr. Marshall motioned and Mr. Lyons seconded to approve on Final Reading Bill. No. 3. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL – 11TH STREET PLAYGROUND FENCE REPLACEMENT BID RESULTS – Resolution No. 86

Mr. Parks presented the two (2) bids that were opened on July 1st for the 11th Street Playground Fence Replacement project, which were as follows:

- TIP Construction, Inc. from Erie, PA - \$58,000.00
- Pro Max Fence Systems from Reading, PA \$76,295.00

The project includes the demolition and removal of the existing chain-link fence and replace with decorative, galvanized stainless steel fencing. \$49,000 of FY-2020 CDBG funds have been allocated for the project; the remaining \$9,000 will be paid out of the Professional Building account.

Mr. Johnson motioned to award the contract to TIP Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$58,000 as presented. Ms. Zaccari seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL – 1986 PIERCE DASH BID RESULTS – Resolution 86

Mr. Wetzel presented the Municibid results received for the 1986 Pierce Dash fire engine. The highest bidder was John Columbia from Brownsville, PA in the amount of \$3,600.

Mr. Johnson motioned and Mr. Lyons seconded to accept the bid from John Columbia in the amount of \$3,600. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL BANK LOAN INTEREST RATE – FIRE TRUCK – Resolution No. 87

Mrs. Motter presented the results of the Request for Proposal which were opened on July 7th (see attached memo for breakdown). She advised that Council accept the proposal received from First National Bank, which includes a Municipal Lease with ten (10)-year fixed interest rate of 4.90%, and the option to pay off the principal balance at the end of the ten (10)-year period or refinance the remaining principal into a loan or another lease. No Local Government Unit Debt Act (LGUDA) filing is required, keeping the fees at a low cost of \$650.

Mr. Johnson motioned to accept First National Bank's proposal for a Municipal Lease at 4.90% ten (10)-year fixed interest rate, with a pay-off or refinancing option at a cost of \$650. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

APPROVAL – CLARK HILL PROPOSAL – FIRE TRUCK LOAN DOCUMENTS –

Because of the previous motion to accept the proposal from First National Bank for a 10-year, fixed rate municipal lease, the City will not need to execute an agreement with Clark Hill.

APPROVAL – RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF REAL ESTATE – GURAS PROPERTIES – Resolution No. 88

Mr. Spaid presented a resolution to authorize the purchase of two (2) parcels of land from the estate of David L. Guras, Sr. for a total of \$1,500. The parcels, located in Frenchcreek Township, are identified as Parcel ID Nos. 11,021.-003..-000 and 11,021.-004..-000.

Mrs. Fletcher motioned to accept the resolution as presented. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PARK AND PARADE ASSEMBLY REQUESTS – Resolution No. 89

Mr. Wetzel introduced the following public assembly requests:

- July 19, 2025 • Sidewalk near Courthouse • Jayme Felmlee • Speak Up – The Inmate Project
- September 14, 2025 • Bandstand Park • Atlantic Avenue United Brethren Church • Church in the Park
- October 4, 2025 • Liberty Street from 3rd to 13th Street • Franklin YMCA • Applefest 5k Race for Any Pace/Kids Fun Run

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

REPORTS

Manager –

- Russell Standard completed seal coating in the Miller Park areas on July 1st.
- Received a letter from Charter Communications, alerting of a price increase on or around July 15th, stating that package costs are increasing by \$5 per month.
- The Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce responded to last month's discussion of allowing non-profits to offer paid parking in the City's lots during Applefest and would also like to participate. Mr. Wetzel offered the following two (2) options:
 - Non-Profit organizations would be assigned a parking lot for designated day(s). They would be asked to keep track of the number of vehicles parking. The only fee would be to help offset the cost of signage.
 - The Chamber proposed a split of 70% proceeds going to the Chamber and the remaining 30% to the City. The Chamber would provide their own signage, staff with volunteers of their choice, and provide flyers to be handed out to participants.
 - **Resolution No. 90** – Ms. Zaccari motioned and Mr. Marshall seconded to proceed with the proposal from the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce to offer paid parking during Applefest in City parking lots and give 30% of the proceeds to the City. Mrs. Fletcher, Mr. Zahner and Mr. Lyons voted in opposition. The motion carried 4-3.
- Presented a handicap parking request from Tania Shadle, resident at 1409 Otter Street. Council agreed to accept the request. Mr. Spaid to prepare the ordinance.

- Presented a handicap parking request from Tim Daniels, resident at 1129 Chestnut Street. There is already a handicap parking spot in place at this location. The law requires a 22 foot space; the ordinance identifies a 23 foot space, but the current space between signage is 29 feet. Mr. Daniels is requesting an additional five (5) feet for a total parking space measuring 34 feet. Council collectively agreed to deny the request. Mr. Spaid said he would look into changing the ordinance to allow for these types of requests to be an internal decision rather than coming before Council.
- Following discussion with Mr. Ballard regarding the dumpsters in Lot C. There are five (5) dumpsters along the back side of the buildings. They are emptied more than once weekly. Mr. Wetzel suggested removing two (2) parking spaces at the lot entrance, fencing the area in, condensing the five (5) dumpsters down to two (2) large ones, and keeping the dumpsters in the fenced area. There was also discussion about leasing the area to the businesses that utilize the dumpsters based on the cost of metered parking for the two (2) spots. Mrs. Fletcher asked about snow removal. Mr. Wetzel responded that the plows do pile snow in that location. Ms. Zaccari asked if there would be more sun exposure in the parking lot versus where the dumpsters are currently located. Mr. Wetzel said it's about the same since the buildings don't have any type of an overhang. Council agreed to explore this option further.
- There is a proposal from the League of Cities to raise the Local Services Tax from \$52 per year up to \$156 per year. Send letters of support to Senators James and Hutchinson? Council agreed.
- Friday, August 1, 2025 from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Miller-Sibley pavilion.
- Requested time in Executive Session for matters of negotiations and personnel.

Solicitor – Requested time in Executive Session for matters of negotiations and personnel.

Mayor Appointments – Resolution No. 91

Mayor Baker motioned to reappoint C. Robert Bowen and Reinaldo Santiago to serve on the Commission to Remember Our Heros for additional three (3) year terms, each to expire on July 12, 2028. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Baker – Extended compliments to all involved in creating a successful July 4th celebration.

Mrs. Fletcher –

- Offered condolences on the passing of Helen Cummings
- Thanked the public works departments for their speedy cleanup efforts following Penny Carnival.
- Asked Chief Saragian if there have been any issues with the new cell phone legislation. He answered no.

Mr. Johnson –

- Enjoyed the 4th of July parade.
- Congratulated to Helen Fielding for her journalism award
- Continuing to receive complaints about speeding on Buffalo Street. There are no stop signs between 7th and 10th Streets. Asked if stop signs could be added.
 - Mr. Wetzel responded that stop signs cannot be used as traffic calming devices. The mobile speed sign is currently in the 500 block of Buffalo, showing that the average speed is 23 mph. Discussed engaging with PennDOT to conduct a study to warrant stop signs or installing permanent speed detection signs. Mr. Spaid advised urging state legislators to allow the use of local radar. In the meantime, Mr. Wetzel advised moving the mobile speed sign to collect data.

Mr. Marshall –

- Sheriff Foy asked if a temporary speed hump could be installed at the crosswalk behind the courthouse. The County would be interested in funding part of it once they know what the cost would be. Mr. Wetzel said they typically run a little over \$1,000 for the first ten (10) feet, then \$500 for each five (5) feet after.
- Discussed offering 737 Elk Street to be used as a cooling station for people without air conditioning with Commissioner Abromovich. Other locations as well.
- Received complaint from KB Pizza that they were not given notice before hydrants were being flushed and impacted their ability to make dough.

Mr. Lyons – Nothing to report.

Ms. Zaccari –

- Venango Chamber created a new community calendar
- Trails II is hosting a fundraising event for the Rotary Club dog park
- Pedestrian safety story time at Franklin Library on July 21st at 11 A.M.
- Thanked all involved with 4th of July festivities
- Looking into funding sources for murals.
- Excited for the ADA upgrades at the 11th Street Playground
- Asked if there has been any further discussion with CATA regarding the bus stop on Buffalo Street. Mr. Wetzel said there has not been.
- FLEX picnic at Fountain Park on August 1st.

Mr. Zahner – Nothing to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - Resolution No. 92

Mrs. Fletcher motioned to enter into Executive Session at 8:59 P.M. to discuss matters of negotiations and personnel. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The Executive Session ended at 9:17 P.M.

OTHER BUSINESS – None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 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