

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
Second Budget Hearing
June 11, 2015**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Thursday, June 11, 2015 at the Franklin Municipal Building, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, Massachusetts. Councilors present: Andrew Bissanti, Robert Dellorco, Brett Feldman, Matt Kelly, Thomas Mercer, Peter Padula, Judith Pond Pfeffer, Robert Vallee, Steve Williams. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jeffrey Nutting, Town Administrator; Maxine Kinhart, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Vallee called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chairman Vallee announced the meeting would be recorded by *Franklin TV* and available for viewing on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. This meeting may also be recorded by others and available on *Franklin Matters*.

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None.

APPOINTMENTS: None.

HEARINGS: FY 2016 Budget Hearing – 2nd Reading. ► Chairman Vallee stated that the Budget Line Items would not be read and Items on Hold: Police, Fire, Schools and DPW, would be discussed.

► Hold Item 210: Police. Chairman Vallee read statistics of surroundings towns of similar size and questioned why the Town has fewer police officers today (45) than in 1995 (54) and asked for assurance that the Town of Franklin was well protected. Chief of Police Stephan Semerjian stated that there were never more than 50 police officers in the Town. He stated when he hires more people he wants to make sure they can be sustained and does not have to do layoffs. Also, must consider long-term OPEB costs. There are currently two men in the academy. Mr. Nutting stated the number of incidents and arrests have decreased. Although there are five less officers than fifteen years ago, technology and training have made a difference; there are fewer calls for service than five years ago. Chief Semerjian stated that we have a good community, people are in compliance, and the officers are doing a great job. Chairman Vallee expressed concern that as the largest community in Norfolk County with the greatest miles of roads there are only three or four police officers covering the night shift. Chief Semerjian said that at night the minimum staff is three patrolmen and one sergeant. He assured the Council that the Town is well protected and the statistics reflect this. Mr. Nutting stated the Town is looking at the statistics and moving forward slow and steady to make sure that once a police officer is added, they do not have to be let go. Mr. Padula clarified that Chief Semerjian is not currently asking for more people and questioned if two police officers dedicated to the drug issue is enough. In response to the drug problem, Chief Semerjian stated there is no place for these people to go. Police can arrest them, but not curing them and cannot provide the help they need. In addition, there are families dealing with this issue every day but they do not want the police involved as they do not want their child to have a record. Chief Semerjian remarked that there must be another remedy. After police make arrest and case goes to court, response is to get them treatment—but there is no treatment. Mr. Bissanti mentioned the recent deaths of young people from opiates in the Town and asked what can be done about the drug dealers. If the department does not need more help, can we put more officers into the drug enforcement area? Chief Semerjian responded that all police members are all doing their jobs. Mr. Nutting stated that he has talked to detectives and

they are frustrated; people get arrested, get deported and then return to area under different name within a short time. It is a vicious cycle. This is what the new coalition is going to do. Mr. Bissanti would like to keep pressure on the drug issue. Chief Semerjian said there is a culture of people that do not want to give out information due to the fear factor of retaliation, so it is difficult to get information on the next level. Mr. Dellorco said the officers are doing a great job and agreed that the dealers are very good at not being caught. Chief Semerjian stated that the 45 police officers include the two recruits that will graduate from the academy in October. Ms. Pfeffer stated there are no statistics directly indicating the number of arrests for drug abuse. She clarified that the Council is offering the department another policeman and Chief Semerjian is turning it down. Chief Semerjian reiterated that he wants to make sure that if he takes on another person he will not have to let them go in the future. Mr. Kelly noted that when a person gets arrested for heroin they often have the option of taking the arrest or going to rehab which makes number of arrests decrease. He also expressed concern about cybercrimes and bullying. Mr. Padula commended all police officers for doing a great job. Mr. Bissanti asked if it would be best to hire new people from Franklin. Chief Semerjian stated that a potential hire must be looked at in all aspects, not just because they are from Franklin. Mr. Nutting stated eight Franklin citizens were offered interviews and seven declined. The eighth person had no background experience and was in retail sales. Mr. Nutting stated an associate's degree in criminal justice is required as well as police experience such as dispatcher, military police, or special police officer.

► Hold Item 220: Fire. Chairman Vallee stated concern regarding additional calls for those from assisted living facilities, such as for falls. Fire Chief Gary McCarraher stated that there is currently a higher call rate for the facility on King Street because of new staff. Until staff gets into routine and accustomed to their clients, the department expects a higher call rate. Chief McCarraher stated they addressed the role of staff and the role of the emergency services with the facility members and this minimized the number of calls. The department will continue to work with them. If a call is received, department is obligated to respond. Department does not do routine transports, they do emergency transports. Although revenue is generated from ambulance calls, less money is taken in than it costs. Chief McCarraher discussed need for third ambulance and stated it is based upon calls coming in simultaneously. Currently, department can handle two simultaneous calls. Statistically, it looks like three or more simultaneous calls will be a daily event. Mutual aid calls have increased. Chief McCarraher has spoken with Town Administrator to fully staff third ambulance in a few years, but currently it is not in the Town Administrator's recommendations. A third ambulance would need eight people at approximately \$75,000 per person for a cost of \$600,000 to \$700,000. The average on-scene time for an ambulance is 5 minutes 35 seconds, while the average time for a mutual aid ambulance is 12 minutes 34 seconds. The current call volume in the department has surpassed all of last year. Chief McCarraher stated here are two challenges in the fire department: 1. Staffing—twice a day they are out of resources; and, 2. Fitness and wellness for employees—high level of line-of-duty injuries. Mr. Kelly recommended looking at Town growth and would like to have both Police and Fire to the EDC for discussions.

► Hold on Item 300: Town Schools. Ms. Pfeffer asked for confirmation regarding the number of teachers. Superintendent of Schools Maureen Sabolinski stated there was a reduction of five teachers. These teachers were reassigned or retired and those positions will not be refilled due to declining enrollment. But, five new teachers for middle and high school will be added. Chairman Vallee noted that Franklin does not make the list of the 50 top high schools in the State and asked where we were failing. Ms. Sabolinski stated that this is likely due to per pupil expenditures and class size. Franklin's per pupil expenditure is \$11,000 and the State average is \$14,000.

► Hold on Item 440: DPW. Chairman Vallee questioned why Town was below number of DPW staff compared to other towns. Deputy Director Deacon Perrotta was in attendance to respond to questions. Mr. Nutting stated the Town is about 15 people below because we do not have the budget to support the people needed in the department. The Town contracts out for road paving and snow plowing. In bad

times, jobs get cut. Every department is giving great service but there are only so many dollars available. The Town lived off Chapter 70 for fifteen years—it increased about \$1 million per year. Those days are gone; state aid is decreasing. Other towns may have a higher tax base; Franklin has a lower tax base and residents say no to tax increases. Budget is based on the available means. Chairman Vallee stated everyone is doing a lot for a little money. Mr. Kelly commended DPW for getting through difficult snow season. Mr. Bissanti commended all departments based on tax rate.

MOTION to Close Hearing by Mercer. SECOND by Pfeffer. No discussion. VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: None.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS: None.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

1. Resolution 15-37: Adoption of the FY 2016 Budget. Ms. Pfeffer read the resolution. **MOTION to Move Resolution 15-37 by Mercer. SECOND by Kelly. No Discussion: VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: None.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURN: MOTION by Padula to Adjourn. SECOND by Mercer . VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary