

**CITY COUNCIL/FRANKLIN SCHOOL BOARD JOINT MEETING  
JULY 17, 2013 – FRANKLIN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Franklin City Hall. Mayor Merrifield introduced Mr. Don Jutton with Municipal Resources who will facilitate the joint meeting.

**Purpose:** Mr. Jutton stated the purpose of this joint meeting is to explore common ground and identify ways to improve and enhance the working relationship between the School Board and the City Council in the interest of positioning the City of Franklin to become increasingly more efficient, effective, competitive and sustainable while delivering the best quality educational and municipal services available in New Hampshire to the resident and taxpayers of Franklin in the next 25 years and beyond.

**In Attendance**

Mayor Merrifield, Councilor Starkweather, Councilor Giunta, Councilor Dzujna, Councilor Feener, Councilor Desrochers, Councilor Trudel, Councilor Clarenbach, Councilor Cournoyer, School Board Member Russo, School Board Chair Yonaitis, School Board Member Cogan, School Board Member Feener, School Board Member Heath and School Board Member Warner.

Mr. Jutton stated he would like to start under the topic of working towards a common vision for the community. Mr. Jutton stated he would like to go around the room and have each one tell him where they sit in the community and why you ran for office, what motivated you to run for office.

Councilor Scott Clarenbach, Ward III stated he actually served the City of Franklin for a number of years as the Fire Chief and retired in 2009; got involved in politics shortly thereafter as I stood at the podium and found out that as an individual citizen you didn't have much of a voice, you could be heard but there was little action that could be done from the pulpit. He stated he ran for office and was elected and then was just re-elected for a second term. Mr. Jutton asked and

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what motive you to turn and Councilor Clarenbach responded a louder voice for a community he has spent his entire life in.

Mayor Ken Merrifield stated he is a resident of Franklin and is serving a third term as Mayor. He stated he has also had the honor of serving as a City Councilor for 7 years and also a School Board member for 8 years and also a School Board Chairman and SAU18 School Board Chairman. He stated he has to go back about 20 years to figure out why he ran for office and at that time he had children in the Franklin School system. He stated he comes from the southern part of the State where there is a lot more property tax, a lot more population to support education activities than what he saw when he came to Franklin. He was concerned about the quality of his children's education so he requested and received an appointment from the City Council to the School Board. He stated he got more and more interested and actively involved in the community as a whole. He joined a number of different community groups and he stated as Mayor he likes to have input from a lot of different sectors in the community. He stated this helps him to guide the City Council in their decisions as policy decisions are made for the community. Originally he was concerned about the quality of education for his kids.

Councilor Glen Feener, Ward II and presently in his 7<sup>th</sup> term as a Councilor and sat briefly on the School Board back in the early 1990's. He stated his main reason to get involved way back then was to be a part of helping the City move forward. He stated he is very much pro business and trying to do anything to help business come into Franklin when it comes to regulations and legislation within the City to make it happen and also to be a voice for the taxpayers in the City of Franklin.

Councilor Charlie Cournoyer, Ward III and life-long resident of Franklin stated he believes in gravel roads, no street lights and a balanced budget. He stated he represents 11.1% of the community and he takes it very seriously. Mr. Jutton asked Councilor Cournoyer what motivated him to run and Councilor Cournoyer responded some issues about recycling and spending more and getting things

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going when it is premature, they didn't think it out. Mr. Jutton asks would you say cost control, cost containment and Councilor Cournoyer responded yes.

Councilor Giunta stated he is the newest member of the Council, Ward I and did not run for the office but was appointed by the Council to fill the big shoes of Councilor Bob Sharon. He stated he has run before and he had reasons when he ran then. He ran back in 1997 to sit on the School Board which he won. He ran in 1999 for Mayor and won in 2000 and ran a second term and was re-elected. My reason for running in the very beginning to change the perception of the City and all things that go around, come around and he stated he is back again to do exactly that, change the perception of the City. There are many more positive in the City of Franklin than there are negatives but we tend to always focus on the negatives and we don't accentuate the positives.

School Board Member Ed Cogan, Ward II stated he first ran for School Board after the closing of Rowell School which was somewhat controversial and he stated the reason he ran was because he did not know the direction the education system was taking and he wanted to be more informed and be able to help shape that; to help move the education system forward.

School Board Member Tam Feener, Ward II stated she was on the School Board before and now again. She also advised she use to be a Ward Clerk of Ward II for one year and now she has been Moderator of Ward II for two years for elections. She stated she was appointed to the School Board this time and then ran as a write in candidate and won. She advised the reason she is back on the School Board is she feels as if she can make a difference as she did when she was on the School Board before. Mr. Jutton asks School Board Feener what motivated her and she responded to help move the education in Franklin forward.

School Board Member Peter Heath, resident of Franklin for the majority of his life, in 1996 he was on the City Council, shortly after than on the School Board, had to resign because he moved out of State and now back on the School Board. He stated he has seen this City comes from real active to real slow and he would like

to see it pick back up. He wants to see industry come back. Concerning the School Board he commented he has had two of his children drop out of school because of not getting the care that they need. He has one in school now, he will graduate. He stated his interest is the students getting the proper education, proper care and the leadership that they need. He stated putting it all together he would have to say for him it would be being a voice for the community as to what is going on in the school system as well as working with the community to make it work.

School Board Member Al Warner, Ward III and has lived in Franklin almost 9 years. He stated after being here for awhile he received a call on Election Day and was advised there were two open seats on the School Board, Ward III so I wrote your name. He won the write in campaign and became a School Board member. He ran a second term with the hopes of accomplishing things. Mr. Jutton asks him if he ran because he felt a sense of duty and Mr. Warner responded he would say yes.

Councilor Paul Trudel, Ward III stated he has lived in Franklin 14 years and this is his first term on the Council and his main reason for running for office is he believes Franklin has a ton of potential. He stated he sat through several of the budget hearings prior to being elected and it was something he was very interested in and he wanted to be an active participant in bringing about change to help the City to continue to move forward.

Councilor George Dzujna, Ward I stated about 7 years ago he and his wife moved to Franklin and he got involved right away with many different organizations and boards to try to make a difference beautification wise in the City. He advised he thought long and hard before running for Council but wanted to make a contribution towards change and to develop a more positive attitude.

Councilor Ted Starkweather, Ward I stated he was asked to submit his name for an unfilled position on the Council and was appointed and since has been elected three times. He stated he would like to see the City of Franklin move forward.

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He stated he worked for the City for 24 years in the Fire Department and being on the Council he can see the other side of things. The big thing is everyone needs to work in one direction, pick the positive road and make the City look better and work in a positive manner.

Councilor Bob Desrochers, Ward II, has lived in Franklin all his life. He stated he attended quite a few Council meetings before he ran for Council and as a Councilor you represent the people. He wanted to be a voice for the people.

School Board Chair Ray Yonaitis, Ward II stated he moved to Franklin in 2003 and for the first year got a feel of the City and one thing that he felt was lacking is a lot of people complaining about what is going on but not taking focus and taking part in trying to correct it. There was an opening on the School Board and he decided to run to help with his kids' education and the education of the kids of the City of Franklin.

School Board Member Kathleen Russo, Ward I and currently the SAU Board Chair and sit on the Finance Committee and the Negotiation Committee. She stated she came to Franklin 7 years ago and fell in love with the community because there was so much to offer and there is an amazing level of volunteerism in the community. She advised she was appointed to the Board in 2009 and then was elected twice to the School Board. She stated her motivation is to improve education. She stated she believes education is the economic engine to the City.

Mr. Jutton commented that almost everything said so far has been positive so the question is how do we focus on the positive and deal with some of the negatives. He further stated it would seem that we need to focus on what needs to happen collectively. He stated he would now like to go back around and have everyone tell him what they feel is the number one challenge that this community faces, not the school and not the City.

Councilor Clarenbach commented that he thinks the problem that we have is that we are allowing the circumstances to identify who we are instead of setting a goal

and a vision of where we want to be. He stated we lack a goal, he stated there are lots of good things that occur in Franklin and those are highlighted in certain areas, be it school or City areas, but he stated he does feel we have a community wide goal of where it is we want to go and what we want to become. He commented there are 18 elected officials in this community and we are all equals and sometimes we seem not to see everyone as equals.

Mayor Merrifield stated this is not what he thinks is the number one problem but it will lead to it. This community has a total taxable value of around 560 million dollars. It is a very low number for example versus the number of students we have to educate, it is why Franklin receives virtually the largest amount of State aid from Concord of any community in the State (10<sup>th</sup> in the State). Because of that factor it is very, very hard to raise money in Franklin. The City raises in total approximately ten million dollars in property tax revenue. In order to raise one million dollars in Franklin which is enough to pave 2 miles of road which is 2 miles out of 62 miles of road to pave, we would have to under current conditions raise taxes on the typical taxpayer 10% to raise one million dollars. Mayor Merrifield then stated the number one problem/challenge is how do we increase the value of the City so there is more revenue.

Councilor Feener stated the biggest problem we have been facing is being able to raise enough tax revenue to be able to provide the citizens with enough services to run the City and the Schools.

Councilor Cournoyer commented that the City has a balanced budget and we are doing a good job with what little we have.

Councilor Giunta stated the biggest challenge is eliminating sides; it is not this group versus that group, it is we are all in the same City, we are all citizens of this City and how we act regardless of who it is, it is reflected the same way once it moves out of the City. So whether it is something going on in the City on the School Board on something going on with the City Council it is still reflective of this City. Until we can eliminate this side versus that side and realize we are both

working together then it will continue to be perceived as the City has problems. Capture a sense of unity.

School Board Member Ed Cogan stated he does not know what the number one challenge is but money is a big part of it. We can't fund education, we can't fund to pave roads; we can't fund to do anything basically. We do well with what we have which is our job, and of course we all wish we had more and to acknowledge Councilor Giunta's point, perception is a big part of it too. People perceive that there is money being hidden on different sides.

School Board Member Tam Feener stated she believes the biggest challenge is that we are not marketing the City. We are not getting the word out as to all the things Franklin has to offer. Better marketing will bring businesses and it will resolve a lot of issues.

School Board Member Peter Heath stated he has lots of face book friends all over the country and to have somebody from Arizona write to him and ask what is going on in Franklin. One reason he got on the Board is wasteful spending and stated he feels money is being spent unnecessarily. He stated he was not part of it but one example is the Superintendent of the Franklin Schools gets \$127,000 for four schools; the Superintendent in Manchester gets \$160,000 for 22 schools, there is something wrong with that picture.

School Board Member Al Warner stated money is an issue, perception is an issue, a lot of it boils down to a lot of the side things that come up and he stated what he has been thinking about for the past two days is leadership.

Councilor Paul Trudel stated one of the big challenges that we face is there is no common goal and a plan as to how we are going to get there. If you don't have a plan all the money in the world won't do us any good.

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Councilor George Dzujna commented being involved in a lot of volunteer efforts he has found that you are always hitting the same people. He stated we do need to raise the value (tax base) of this community.

Councilor Ted Starkweather stated perception is a big thing and we need to have a goal. You can't tell if you are successful until you reach the goal.

Councilor Bob Desrochers commented money is a big issue, goals, road paving and schools but the big problem facing Franklin as well as every other community in the State as far as money generates from Concord. Concord hasn't realized that people can't afford to pay anymore and you can't balance your budget by something cost shifting. The shifting of costs to the City and Towns can't afford it; it has taken away from our schools, etc. The biggest issue is the Federal and State Governments making demands on the Cities and Towns. Cost shifting/unfunded mandates.

School Board Chair Ray Yonaitis stated we are having to spend more of our dollars spending on what we have to keep things running instead of growing the City. He stated he has been on the Board for 10 years and each year budgets go down and costs are not going down, they are increasing. He stated he would like to see more teamwork.

School Board Member Russo stated she feels the biggest challenge for teamwork, for us and them to be eliminated and she stated a lot of times the us and them syndrome is due to a lack of honesty, lack of honor, lack of loyalty and lack of integrity. Those things are part of teamwork and needs to change.

Mr. Jutton commented money has been mentioned in a number different ways whether it is increase tax base or money. Other things mentioned are leadership, marketing, integrity, lack of team work, etc. and Mr. Jutton asked the group to come up with three or four buckets.



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1. Revenue
2. Leadership
3. Integrity
4. Marketing/Perception

Mr. Jutton asked concerning Revenue, what can be done about that? Councilor Clarenbach commented each we have less and less money and we are trying to do all the same things that we did the previous year. Reorganize.

Mayor Merrifield stated give the scale and the scope of the impact from the Northern Pass, we all should be out there supporting this project. He stated there is probably no other community in the State of New Hampshire that has experienced anything like what Franklin could have with this project. To increase your tax base with one project by 60%, you'll have revenue. Champion Northern Pass.

Councilor Feener stated you have to plan for that type of revenue to come in, you can't just say here it comes. So that would go back to goals and priorities, where does that money go. At a time when you have revenues that are tight like now one of the ways to look at getting that revenue to go further is to look at consolidation of service. Reorganize. Consolidate services between the City and the School and one of the easiest would be to look at financial reporting. The City could service the financial reporting of the school. Consolidation of services.

Councilor Trudel stated there is a need to prioritize, what are we legally bound to and what are the must haves, can have or should have and what can we live without. Look at the whole overall picture. Prioritize.

Councilor Giunta stated we can also fight meaning we have Representatives in the room, they vote on the budget, they can take the message forward from this City that you cannot continue to pass down costs the way that Concord has been doing. For instance how it can work is the State University System, they got one hundred million dollars restored to their budget this year and they will not raise

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tuition for two years. What a sad set of goals, how about graduating more science majors or other things. As a unified group, School Board, City Council bringing to our elected representatives by going to Concord and say you cannot continue to pass on costs like you have been doing, in fact you need to restore some money.

School Board Member Heath stated he thinks we need to promote the City more and try to get away from the negatives. Mr. Jutton ask how does that help revenue and Mr. Heath responded if you promote the City more you get more tax payers.

School Board Member Tam Feener stated be more aggressive for grants which would bring in additional revenue. Blue River (selling services).

Councilor Dzujna commented the thing about grants; we have department heads that already do a lot of grant writing. We got a grant to do our water treatment plant. One problem with grants they have to be refunded every year; got out and look for the grant every year. Councilor Dzujna commented he is shocked when he goes to these different meetings/hearings on the Northern Pass Project and how few people from Franklin are in attendance. We need to get people more involved as Franklin will benefit greatly from this project. Educate the community.

School Board Feener commented that along with educating the community and maybe there are grant writers in the community that might help.  
Leadership/Utilize community/volunteer skills.

School Board Member Warner stated it would be good to get together and set some priorities in terms of common vision/common goal. Community Engagement

Councilor Feener commented we are talking here about common goals, in order to establish common goals you have to have a willingness to come to the table and listen and talk about establishing common goals.

Councilor Starkweather commented in the 10 years he has been on the Council we have never had a joint meeting and he stated he feels it would benefit all parties if we could have a better understanding of what the other side is facing. Each month department heads sit down and talk about problems that are facing them. He stated he feels if the School Board to join in on that so the City Council would understand their problems and in turn they would understand the Council's problems. If both sides could understand each others' problems a little better, it would help a lot.

School Board Chair Yonaitis commented we have talked about Northern Pass, and he stated he can't wait for it to get here but we have to react before it does get here. When it does arrive it will affect what the school receives from the State and he is concerned if the school will lose monies. Mayor Merrifield advised under the previous school funding formula Franklin School District would have lost monies but there is no such thing as fiscal capacity disparity aid which would be the part that would be in jeopardy; that does not exist anymore under existing law so the school funding is not in jeopardy as a result of getting this revenue and that is all contingent on the Legislature not making changes. Mr. Yonaitis stated when you look at what is spent in this City per student; we are the last in the State. The next closest district is Manchester and they get \$1,200 more per student.

Councilor Desrochers commented everything is not about money. You can take two people, give each \$50 and one person will eat for a week with \$50 and the other one will eat for a day. It all depends what you do with the \$50. The City and School has to spend the funds on what is absolutely needed. One instance a few years ago the School wanted to spend \$100,000 for lights on the football field; great dream but Franklin can't afford that. He commented it might be a good thing to have a joint meeting at budget time to sit down and make decisions

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on the budget. It can't be us and them anymore, it must be the community and all of us represent the community.

Councilor Giunta stated he just heard two exactly opposite stories. He heard test scores were up, you have cut staff, tightening your belt, we are out of money unless we throw more money at it nothing is going to get better. Councilor Giunta commented there is no more money, we have a tax cap in this City; people are stretched out to the max.

School Board Member Feener commented we need to do more market of Franklin.

School Board Member Warner stated it is a poor job of marketing when we continue to bring up things that have happened in the past. In the past five minutes it has come up. He stated he has refrained from mentioning comments and things that have been done and said in the past and if we are really going to have true mutual respect and understanding in this room between the two bodies, drop it. He stated he does not want to hear about lights on the football field, he does not want to hear about decisions that were made two or three years ago, he stated he is not going to bring them up nor is he going to bring up comments that were made two or three years ago even though he has a list of them.

Mr. Jutton stated you can beat the past to death; perception is a reality when you are trying to market community.

Councilor Giunta commented one more thing on the revenue side would be public private partnerships are important for revenue; they are not gigantic on the budget but they can be a very positive story for communities. For instance Webster Valve, Vitex, Precision Castings they are worried about the quality of employee that they are going to have five years from now as well as today. Councilor Giunta stated he would think they would be very willing to come

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forward and help at the school if you wanted to sponsor a new Industrial Arts Center, one of those companies could possible pay for everything.

Mr. Jutton requested comments from everyone how is Franklin currently perceived by residents and taxpayers?

Councilor Cournoyer responded highly taxed. Councilor Giunta average, typical City government. School Board member Cogan cheap housing. School Board Member Feener stated mill town. School Board Member Heath low income. School Board Member Warner stated a fixer upper. Councilor Trudel cash strapped. Councilor Dzujna stated people have said to him they see a diamond in the rough but its awful tough to drive down Central Street. Ugly, seedy, rundown. Councilor Desrochers economically depressed. School Board Chair Yonaitis starter home community. School Board Russo stated some people in Ward I have shared with her is they are tired in the in-fighting. Dysfunctional. Councilor Clarenbach stated headed in the wrong direction. Mayor Merrifield responded beautiful, people who live here love this community. Councilor Feener stated affordable.

Mr. Jutton asked 5 years from now how do you want people in Franklin to see Franklin. What words do you want them to use to describe Franklin?

Councilor Cournoyer responded safe. Councilor Feener stated City on the move. Councilor Desrochers stated vibrant. Councilor Clarenbach headed in the right direction. School Board Member Russo school district in the top ten in the State and one of the best places to live in New Hampshire. School Board Chair Yonaitis stated My Hometown. Councilor Starkweather commented No Bad News. Councilor Trudel Great Place to Move To. Councilor Dzujna stated that everyone has pride in the City. Councilor Trudel stated exceeds expectations. School Board Member Cogan stated welcoming. School Board Member Heath stated a community for all ages. School Board Member Feener stated we love it here. School Board Member Warner stated a great place to raise a family. Councilor Giunta responded tremendous value.

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Mr. Jutton asked how do you think the rest of the State of New Hampshire perceives Franklin.

Councilor Cournoyer responded struggling like every other community. Councilor Trudel responded envious. Councilor Feener commented they don't realize what Franklin has until you tell them. They are unaware. Mayor Merrifield stated he feels many people judge Franklin from the two blocks they drive through on their way to somewhere else. Tired Downtown. Councilor Clarenbach commented struggling mill town, old and tired. School Board Russo commented three years ago there was a perception underperforming education and City. Councilor Desrochers responded people see Franklin as a City with a lot of problems. Councilor Starkweather commented they have had a negativity view of Franklin over the years. Councilor Dzujna commented when he first moved here he saw a bumper sticker that said Tilton at least it is not Franklin. School Board Member Warner responded Run Down. School Board Member Heath stated he thinks the surrounding areas see that Franklin is not what it used to be. City is improving. School Board Member Feener stated she has to go back to envy as young people come to use the City's parks, come to use the lake, they are envious of the City's automated trash/recycling program. School Board Member Cogan responded run down and beat down. Councilor Giunta responded struggling.

Mr. Jutton next question to the group was how they rate the relationship between the City Council and the School Board on a scale of 1 – 5 with 5 being the high.

Councilor Clarenbach responded 2. Mayor Merrifield responded 3, because there are 9 members on each board and some troubles between some members. He stated he thinks that this group by enlarge has a pretty good relationship. Councilor Cournoyer rated 2.5. Councilor Giunta stated being new he does not know how the relationship has been but he gave a perceived rating of 1. School Board Cogan gave it a 3 stating there is always going to be people that don't get along. School Board Member Feener stated 3. School Board Member Heath responded 3. School Board Member Warner stated he does not know how it

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could be anything above a 2. Councilor Trudel responded 2. Councilor Dzujna stated 2. Councilor Starkweather responded 2. Councilor Desrochers responded 1. School Board Member Russo stated 1. School Board Chair Yonaitis responded 2.

Mr. Jutton asked what will it take to get to a 5 and stay there.

Councilor Feener responded respectful and honest communication. Stay out of the press if you don't like something. Councilor Cournoyer stated more new blood. Mayor Merrifield commented better understanding of appropriate roles. Councilor Clarenbach stated that we are all equally elected by the people. Councilor Giunta commented more meetings like this, face to face. School Board Member Cogan stated mutual respect. School Board Member Feener stated she agrees with Councilor Giunta concerning more face to face meetings but wanted to ad from the meetings there would be results. School Board Member Heath stated allowing people in the community to be heard. School Board Member Warner responded working to develop a vision with community input. Developing a vision that everyone as well as the community share. Councilor Trudel commented no hidden agendas. Councilor Dzujna responded tolerance and respect for each other. Councilor Desrochers stated talk to each other, don't go to the press, face book or any public forum. School Board Chair Yonaitis stated respect each other. School Board Member Russo stated principles before personalities.

Mr. Jutton stated what if you met once a month and talked about community problems.

Mr. Jutton advised that he will translate this meeting into a report and provide the staff with some direction in terms how to translate that into an action plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue E. May

