

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
May 4, 2026**

THE FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room located at 95 East Main Street Franklin, NC.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Mayor Mike Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present - Council Members: Joe Collins, Travis Higdon, Rita Salain, Robbie Tompa, and Jeff Berry.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to excuse Mayor Stacy Guffey from the May 4, 2026 meeting. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman Rita Salain.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MAY 4, 2026 TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA

Council Member Travis Higdon made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to approve the Town Council Agenda for May 4, 2026 as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA FOR MAY 4, 2026

- A.) Approval of the Minutes
 - 1. January 13, 2026 Special Called Meeting – Joint Meeting with ABC Board
 - 2. April 6, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
 - 3. April 20, 2026 Special Called Meeting Minutes
- B.) Budget Amendment

Council Member Robbie Tompa made a motion, seconded by Council Member Travis Higdon to approve the consent agenda for May 4, 2026 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

5. INTRODUCTIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PROCLAMATIONS

- A.) Jason Desjardins-Streets Maintenance Worker -introduction by Chris Waldroop, Streets Supervisor
- B.) Jon Maloney-Utility Maintenance Worker-introduction by Bill Deal, Public Works Director
- C.) Jake Corbin -Equipment Operator -C Distribution certification -presented by Bill Deal, Public Works Director
- D.) Rusty Cortopassi -Utility Maintenance Crew Leader -B Distribution certification -presented by Bill Deal, Public Works Director
- E.) Bill Deal -Public Works Director -A Surface Certification -presented by Amie Owens, Town Manager
- F.) Ryder Cortopassi -Meter Reader -Meter Reader Certification -presented by Sarah Bishop, Finance Director
- G.) Justin Norman -First Sgt Detective -FBI LEEDA Trilogy Certification -presented by Chief

Devin Holland

- H.) Municipal Clerk's Week -May 3 -9, 2026 -presented by Vice-Mayor Mike Lewis
- I.) National Police Week -Peace Officers Memorial Day-May 15-21, 2026-presented by Vice-Mayor Mike Lewis
- J.) Public Works Week -May 17 -23, 2026 -presented by Vice-Mayor Mike Lewis

6. PUBLIC SESSION

No one signed up to speak for public session.

7. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Council Member Travis Higdon thanked all participants in the previous Saturday's community cleanup event, giving special recognition to Streets Supervisor Chris Waldroop, Public Works Director Bill Deal, Police Chief Holland for providing blue light presence, and the Franklin High School track team. The event resulted in 72 bags of trash collected, 540 pounds of debris removed by 48 volunteers, including a couch. Council Member Higdon indicated a similar event is planned for October.

Council Member Rita Salain echoed appreciation for the cleanup effort and commented positively on the newly installed flowers in the town roundabouts.

Council Member Robbie Tompa thanked staff for the roundabout plantings and noted encouraging progress from the TDA subcommittee, which has been actively meeting and developing long-term plans in collaboration with downtown merchants.

Council Member Jeff Berry also thanked all volunteers and staff involved in the cleanup event.

Vice-Mayor Lewis expressed pride in the cleanup effort and informally read a birthday proclamation for his four-year-old grandson, Sutton Michael Tallent.

8. CALLS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

- A.) Call for Public Hearing on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 6:08 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain public input related to a Development Agreement between the Town of Franklin and Duke Energy-Town Attorney John Henning, Jr.

Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. provided an overview of the proposed development agreement with Duke Energy, authorized under Chapter 160D of North Carolina General Statutes. Under the agreement, Duke Energy would receive assurance that current zoning regulations on their property near Siler Road would remain in place, in exchange for granting the Town a pedestrian access easement connecting to the Greenway. Town Attorney Henning noted the Town has no current plans to change those regulations, characterizing the exchange as a favorable arrangement for the Town.

Lisa Leatherman of Duke Energy was present along with colleague David Kepnick and confirmed the agreement pertains solely to development regulation. She remarked on the significance of the Greenway to the community, noting that the Town once held the longest greenway west of Asheville.

Council Member Rita Salain made a motion, seconded by Council Member Travis Higdon to Call for a Public Hearing on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 6:08 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain public input related to a Development Agreement between the Town of Franklin and Duke Energy, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

- B.) Call for Public Hearing on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain public input related to a request for rezoning from Residential R-1 to Commercial C-2 for property PIN# 65941443604, located at 503 Dowdle Mountain Road-Town Planner Justin Setser

Town Planner Justin Setser presented a request from Tammy Nelson to rezone a parcel located off Dowdle Mountain Road from R-1 (Residential) to C-2 (Commercial). Town Planner Setser reported that the Planning Board reviewed the request at its last meeting, received comment from one neighboring property owner, took those concerns under advisement, and voted to recommend the rezoning to the Town Council.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to Call for a Public Hearing on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 6:05 p.m. or as closely thereafter to gain public input related a request for rezoning from Residential R-1 to Commercial C-2 for property located at 503 Dowdle Mountain Road as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- A.) Request appointments to Franklin Planning Board -Town Planner Justin Setser
- Aaron Garrett -Town Representative
 - Susie Ledford -Town Representative (incumbent)

Councilman Joe Collins motion, seconded by Council Member Travis Higdon to appoint Aaron Garrett and reappoint Susie Ledford to the Town of Franklin Planning Board as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6-0.

- B.) Request from Developer to refund tap fees for cancellation of project-Town Attorney John Henning, Jr. and Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Amie Owens reported that on April 8, 2026, the Town received a request from a developer seeking a refund of tap fees paid for a project on Cunningham Road that was cancelled due to economic constraints, with no infrastructure having been installed. Town Attorney Henning advised the Council that he found no legal obligation for the town to issue a refund, noting that once tap fees are received, funds are typically applied toward materials acquisition, some of which may already have been ordered given the lead times involved.

Council Member Collins expressed the view that the fees should be considered non-refundable absent any prior representation to the contrary, and questioned whether there was a basis to treat this request differently. Council Member Tompa acknowledged the difficulty of the situation but noted the significance of tap fees as a barrier to business entry and expressed interest in how peer municipalities handle similar requests. Town Attorney Henning indicated he is exploring options, including a potential policy allowing a

developer to retain and transfer taps for a defined period of time if they sell the property, thereby recouping value without requiring a cash refund from the town.

Council Member Salain moved to defer the matter to the June meeting to allow Town Attorney Henning and Town Manager Owens additional time to develop policy recommendations.

Council Member Rita Salain made a motion, seconded by Council Member Jeff Berry to take under advisement and defer the tap fee refund request to the June 1, 2026 Town Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

C.) Request Approval of Bid for Cartoogechaye Creek (Allman Drive) Boardwalk Project-Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Owens presented the bid results for the boardwalk project at Cartoogechaye Creek on town-owned property on Allman Drive, which will serve as an additional connector to the Greenway. Town Manager Owens explained that the project required additional planning time due to its adjacency to a wetland, necessitating a boardwalk design elevated above the wetland rather than a ground-level path. The State approved the submitted plans in February 2026. The Town issued the bid twice, receiving only two responses each time. The lowest responsible, responsive bid of \$207,800 was submitted by Backwoods Bridges LLC, DBA Bridge Builders, a local contractor. Town Manager Owens noted that funding is included in the upcoming fiscal year budget, with construction anticipated to begin July 1, 2026. Town Council approval of the bid was requested, with the formal contract to be brought back for approval at the June meeting. It was also noted that an on-site pond will be drained as part of the project, which the state confirmed will enhance the wetland and mitigate safety risks associated with an open water feature along a public walkway.

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to approve the bid award to Backwoods Bridges LLC, DBA Bridge Builders, in the amount of \$207,800 for the Cartoogechaye Creek Boardwalk Project, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

D.) Quarterly Street Closure Requests-Town Manager Amie Owens

1. lotla Street-5 p.m. until 9 p.m. for CPR/My House of Prayer -Prayer and Worship Gathering- Sunday, May 31, 2026
2. lotla Street-5 p.m. until 10 p.m. for Taste of Scotland Society Ceilidh and Rolling Closure from Town Hall to lotla Street 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. for Parade-Friday, June 19, 2026
3. Main Street -6 a.m. until 10 a.m. for Braveheart SK and Rob Roy Fun Run; other streets as rolling closures to be coordinated with Police and Sheriffs departments-Saturday, June 20, 2026
4. lotla Street, Phillips Street and Main Street-Varying times -80's Flashback Weekend-Friday, July 31 and Saturday, August 1, 2026
5. lotla Street-9 a.m. to 4 p.m. for Macon County Art Association Art Festival-Saturday, August 8, 2026
6. lotla Street-2 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. for the Come Together Festival-Friday, September 25, 2026

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Jeff Berry to all six (6) Street Closures, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

E.) Request approval of Resolution to Participate in NC Health Insurance Pool (NCHIP)- Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Owens reported that the Town's initial renewal rate from Blue Cross Blue Shield came in at a 46.4% increase, which she attributed in part to the Town's relatively small pool of 77 covered members. Through participation in the North Carolina Health Insurance Pool (NCHIP), a consortium of municipalities and counties with approximately 17,000 covered members, the town was able to negotiate the rate increase down to 22%. Town Manager Owens noted that neighboring jurisdictions including Macon County, Jackson County, and Swain County already participate in the pool. She acknowledged that participation requires changing insurance brokers from the locally used Wayah Insurance to Gallagher, the pool's assigned broker, and that Council approval of a resolution was required to authorize participation. Council members asked clarifying questions about the structure, and Town Manager Owens explained the pool operates on a level-funded basis with a reinsurance carrier backstop, and that favorable claims experience can result in credits returned the following year.

Council Member Robbie made a motion, seconded by Council Member Travis Higdon to approve the Resolution to Participate in the North Carolina Health Insurance Pool (NCHIP), as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

F.) Delivery of Proposed FY 2026/2027 Budget and Call for Public Hearing on Monday, June 1, 2025 at 6: 11 p.m. or as closely thereof as possible to allow for public input on the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget-Town Manager Amie Owens

Town Manager Owens announced the delivery of the proposed FY 2026–2027 budget to the Town Council. She noted the budget would be made available on the Town's website upon conclusion of the meeting, with a hard copy available at Town Hall. A budget work session is scheduled for May 18, 2026. A public hearing was requested for June 1, 2026, at 6:11 PM to allow for public input prior to adoption.

Council Member Joe Colins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Rita Salain to Call for a Public Hearing on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 6:11 p.m. or as closely thereafter to allow for public input on the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget, as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6 – 0.

10. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

A.) Public Works-Bill Deal, Public Works Director

Public Works Director Bill Deal reported that the water loop project on Siler Road is substantially complete, with a final walk-through scheduled for the following day. He also noted the natural gas generator capital project will be placed into service the same week, closing out that capital improvement item. Three fire hydrant replacements on Town Mountain remain on the schedule. He highlighted the proactive installation of 25 fire hydrant adapters on Main Street and Depot Street as part of the fire hydrant CIP, noting the adapters enable a quick quarter-turn connection that can reduce fire department hook-up time to approximately 30 seconds. He also reported that public works crews successfully installed conduit, sewer line, and 300 feet of water line at the Sunnyside playground site in preparation for the upcoming bathroom facility.

B.) Water Treatment-Kyle Pocquette, Water Treatment Plant Supervisor/ORC

Water Treatment Plant Supervisor Kyle Pocquette reported that the water loop on Siler Road is live and in service. Construction on the high service pump building is progressing, with pump cans complete and footer excavation underway. The plant repaired its generator fuel injection pump. He noted that the State issued an extreme drought designation, prompting voluntary water restrictions; usage decreased

by approximately 100,000 gallons. He reassured the Council that current water levels remain well within normal range and expressed appreciation for the public's cooperation.

C.) Wastewater Treatment-Jason Hopkins, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor/ORC

Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor Jason Hopkins reported that spring temperature fluctuations present operational challenges for the biological treatment process. He noted the plant has hosted school tours to encourage youth interest in the water/wastewater field, which he described as an aging profession in need of new talent. He announced an open position on the wastewater team and encouraged referrals. In his role as Pretreatment Coordinator, he reported increased activity monitoring grease trap compliance as the number of food trucks and restaurants in town continues to grow. The Town's Pretreatment Annual Report (PAR) has been accepted by the State.

D.) Streets-Chris Waldroop, Streets Supervisor

Streets Supervisor Waldroop reported that the roundabout plantings have been well received by the public and are performing well despite having been installed during a drought. Spring/summer banners have been installed on Main Street, with installation continuing outward from the town center. The gazebo tent on the square was installed in preparation for the opening of Pickin' on the Square on May 9. He provided a detailed update on the Sunnyside playground project, noting that playground surfacing has been completed and the security fence will remain in place to protect the ongoing bathroom construction. Trusses are scheduled to be installed the current week, and drainage work is also underway. In response to a question from Vice-Mayor Lewis about the roundabout plantings, Waldroop explained that the native plant selections — including dwarf Mountain Laurel, sumac, junipers, echinacea, and mountain phlox — were chosen for their mature size and compatibility with the space, and that the planting design reflects mature growth that will take time to fully realize.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A.) Next Town Council Meeting is Monday, June 1, 2026
- B.) Mayor, Vice Mayor, Councilmen Berry and Higdon and Town Manager attending City Vision 2026 in Raleigh- May 5-7, 2026
- C.) Special Called Meeting – Budget Discussion – Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room – notice will be posted
- D.) Pickin' on the Square- May 9, 2026 and May 23, 2026 – 6: p.m. on the Gazebo Square
- E.) Fallen Officers Memorial Service – Friday, May 15, 2026 at Noon at the Gazebo
- F.) Town Offices will be closed on Monday, May 26, 2026 for Memorial Day in accordance with the NC State Holiday Schedule
- G.) Town Council attending meeting regarding Main Street Transformation Work Shop – Friday, May 29, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. at Twenty -Eight Main Events – notice will be posted.

Town Manager Owens added that public input sessions for the Main Street Transformation project are scheduled for May 28–29, 2026, and encouraged broad public participation. She noted the Mayor would hand-deliver postcards to Main Street businesses, and materials would be available at Town Hall and the library.

Council Member Tompa noted that the Farmers Market, Artisan Market, and downtown merchants have been active on weekends, and encouraged residents to visit.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Joe Collins made a motion, seconded by Council Member Robbie Tompa to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. Vote: 6-0.

Michael Lewis, Vice-Mayor

Nicole Bradley, Town Clerk