

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
May 1, 2024**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Brian Chandler, Theodore Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini, Patrick Sheridan. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Amy Frigulietti, Deputy Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney.

**CALL TO ORDER:** ► Chair Mercer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Mercer called for a moment of silence. All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** ► Chair Mercer reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are welcome to attend public meetings in person. To view the live meeting remotely, citizens are encouraged to watch the live stream on the Franklin Town Hall TV YouTube channel or the live broadcast on Comcast channel 9 and Verizon channel 29. Meetings are also archived by Franklin TV on the Franklin Town Hall TV YouTube channel and shown on repeat on Comcast channel 9 and Verizon channel 29 for those who miss the live meeting. To participate in the meeting remotely, citizens are able to join a Zoom webinar using the information provided. Any participants who wish to speak during the webinar must enter their full name and email address when joining the webinar. All participants will be automatically muted upon joining the webinar. In order to speak, participants, who have entered full name and email address, will need to select the “raise hand” function to request to be unmuted. All speakers will be required to state their full name and street address before commenting. ► He announced upcoming Town-sponsored community events. Town Council office hours will be held on May 16 from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM at the Senior Center. The Franklin Disability Commission will hold the Disability Expo on Saturday, May 4 from 11 AM to 2 PM. Franklin Porchfest will be held in Franklin’s Cultural District on Saturday, June 1 from 12 PM to 6 PM with a rain date of June 2. The Strawberry Stroll will take place on Friday, June 7 from 4 PM to 8 PM in downtown Franklin with a rain date of Saturday, June 8.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** ► Ms. Jane Callaway-Tripp, 607 Maple Street, discussed the issues raised during the Sub-Budget Committee meeting. She asked why the Deputy Town Administrator and Director of Public Works were receiving a \$20,000 raise. Instead of addressing her questions, Mr. Hellen defended his decision to hire the DTA which was not actually being questioned, and failed to justify the salary increase for someone with less than one year of employment. Regarding the DPW Director, Mr. Hellen did not respond to the actual question. Instead, he chose to defend his decision to reinstate the director and used the opportunity to personally attack her. It was inappropriate for Mr. Hellen to disclose that I was requesting public records and suggest a meeting in response to my inquiries. This only added to my concerns especially regarding the hostile tone he adopted during the public forum. She reviewed that at the April 10 meeting, Mr. Hellen criticized residents for treating the session like a reality show and discouraged questioning rumors that they may have heard. His comments and demeanor on April 10 and 21 were unprofessional and inappropriate. She said the Town attorney’s memorandum from October 29, 2021, on conducting public hearings clearly states the need to refrain from irrelevant and inappropriate comments. Mr. Hellen violated this directive by discussing my public records request during the budget meeting and by his general conduct on the April 10 session. A more appropriate response would have been to clarify the reasons for the salary increase for the deputy town administrator and then address her concerns about the DPW director’s salary accurately and professionally. She noted an error in her figures which she has corrected. Mr. Hellen’s response was unnecessary and disrespectful especially to a taxpaying resident. Instead of an apology, she is requesting the Town Council enforce accountability. If no action is taken, it sends a message that disrespect to residents is one-hundred percent acceptable. She urged the Town Council to step up and make accountability mean something. ► Mr. Frank Edward Falvey, 920 Pond Street, said that when there is a ballot question for the State, it has been their policy to send out a pamphlet providing the legal question, summarizing it, and giving

both a proponent and opponent writeup. He said he would like the Town of Franklin to do something similar regardless of what the ballot question is. He said he would guess that half the people may not even know about a special election. He said from democracy, and being an open town, we need to inform all citizens of what the question is and give information about it and send it to them. As well, misinformation is often more believable than correct information, so we need to provide a space to answer questions, but most importantly, we need to send information out to the voters. He said that some seniors in Franklin in their homes have been over-assessed by \$500. ► Mr. Mark Minnichelli, 31 Longfellow Drive, said he spoke during the last meeting regarding the sustainability coordinator position. He said this position was originally in the budget but was removed because of the \$120,000 per year cost. He said several people have done some research on what this position has been able to do in other towns. He said he found examples that this position can bring in four to eight times the cost. He is pulling together information and wants to set up meetings with the administration. It should help us reduce the gap between what we have and what we need. ► Mr. Sean Slater, 88 Hill Avenue, said tomorrow is National Prayer Day in America. He wanted to speak about the ballot question and questioned if it should be rushed to a June election. ► Chair Mercer said this is an agenda item and it cannot be spoken about during Citizens Comments, but he can speak about it later. ► Mr. Stephen Malloy, 19 Russett Hill Road, asked about the migrant facility. He said he has looked at the Town's website, and it looks like information has not been updated since October. He said he also read in the paper that the occupancy may exceed the occupancy limits, and he would like information. ► Mr. Daniel Ballinger, 18 Charles Drive, said he is a volunteer for the town and had to take the ethics course. It is pretty clear on what you can do and not do. As such, he would like to know why the DPW Director still has a job. And, if the Town Administrator is not up to the task of letting him go, then you should let the townspeople know so we can find someone else to do your job. He asked what someone has to do to get fired in Franklin. He said this is setting a bad precedent. You are either honest or you are not. ► Mr. Stephen Pezzella, 5 Downingwood Drive, explained that 25 years ago, Franklin was an affordable town. He thanked the Franklin school staff during those years for the education of his children. He is concerned that the financial costs are getting out of control. He noted those on fixed incomes are not able to keep up with inflation costs. He reviewed the taxes and fees that have increased including excise taxes, food, gas, and home heating. He noted the number of migrants in the country and in Massachusetts and that they receive many benefits that are at the taxpayers' expenses. He said bill 698 was brought up in the MA legislature and voted down which would have allowed homeless veterans to get priority housing. He said his point is they are sending billions of dollars to other countries, but we need to take care of our homeless population. ► Ms. Jacqueline Maciel, 95 Elm Street, said there were 139 votes of all Democrat against that bill. She said our representative voted no. She said she wanted to discuss the lack of transparency. She said the Memorandum of Understanding was not easy to find and was disguised in item 9a as the Override Pledge to Citizens of Franklin. She reviewed that the School Committee's agendas are not transparent to a citizen; it is very difficult to understand, and there are no links to anything. She said there is too much secrecy going on in town. She discussed how the school superintendent said that it was a coincidence that the school renovation was coming up at the same time as the override. She noted that there are no coincidences. ► Mr. Colin Cass, 146 Longhill Road, said there used to be two caution lights in front of Keller Sullivan School, and the northbound one is gone. ► Ms. Meaghan Benson, 19 Winthrop Drive (via Zoom), commented about the redistricting plan. She said she emailed the Town Council chair, Finance Committee chair, Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, and School Superintendent Giguere this past Saturday. She read aloud her email about redistricting and information on a social media page that the committee chairs require the redistricting plan be put forth now or they would not agree to put the override on the ballot. She said she heard back from the Town Administrator and Superintendent with no direct response to this. She did not hear back from the Town Council or Finance Committee. She said her question still stands. She said this rumor is still around town. She asked to have it on record the question that are the chairs of the Town Council and Finance Committee or anybody else requiring the redistricting plan be put forth now or else they would not agree to put the much-needed Town override on the ballot. ► Mr. Kyle Thompson, 8 Mercer Lane (via Zoom), discussed the Franklin public school budget. He said recently Franklin has been compared to Bellingham regarding per public expenditure. He said the MA Department of Education calculates per student expenditures based on many line items that are not in the public school budget. For example, Franklin does not include building maintenance, groundskeeping staff and costs,

upgrades, utilities, and so forth, but Bellingham does. So, it would be good to include those in the public school budgets as school expenditures rather than town expenditures, and why that is. ► Ms. Frigulietti said there is one more person on Zoom, but they did not include their full name. ► Chair Mercer said they would move on to Proclamations, and if the person updates their Zoom information, they can speak after.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None.**

**PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS:** ► *Proclamation: Chris Stearns, Franklin TV.* ► Councilor Jones recognized Mr. Chris Stearns for his 20 years of dedicated service to Franklin TV. He read aloud the proclamation. ► Mr. Stearns said he appreciates the recognition.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS (continued):** ► Mr. Vikash Sharma, 13 Hancock Road (via Zoom), asked about the school redistricting. He said the vote for this in two weeks is a really short time, and he does not understand the details even at the four-hour meeting which he attended. There were no details and facts, just a rosy PowerPoint presentation. He said give us facts and the grounds for the change. He said we need more time to process this; two weeks is not enough time to understand.

**PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS (continued):** ► *Police Department – Introduction - Mental Health Clinician Caroline Ferris.* ► Chief of Police Thomas Lynch reviewed the money from the Department of Mental Health for this jail diversion program. The need for more than one person for this program was recognized, so they created the co-response program which they received money from the Department of Mental Health, as the Town needs more mental health clinicians. He said with the hire of Ms. Ferris, they now have three clinicians and can cover weekends and nights. He reviewed Ms. Ferris's background, education, and experience.

**APPOINTMENTS:** ► *Conservation Commission - Nicole Chiamonte.* ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to ratify the appointment by the Town Administrator of Nicole Chiamonte to serve as a Member of the Conservation Commission, with a term to expire on June 30, 2025, by **Jones**. **SECOND** by **Dellorco**. **Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said they are excited to have Ms. Chiamonte join the Conservation Commission. ► Councilor Jones said thank you for volunteering. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS - 7:00 PM: None.**

**LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.**

**PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS:** ► *Presentation: FY23 Financial Audit - Scott McIntire, Partner, Marcum LLP.* ► Mr. Hellen said that regarding transparency, they are proud of their financial records, and the budget and financial audits are provided on the Town's website. ► Mr. McIntire (via Zoom) reviewed the Town of Franklin, Massachusetts Financial Statements and Required Supplementary Information for the Year Ended June 30, 2023 (With Independent Auditors' Report Thereon) stamped Draft 4/26/24, provided in the meeting packet. He reviewed the audit process and how it went. He said with the 2023 audit, it went really well, and the books and records were in good working order. He said there were no disagreements on how to apply general accounting principles. He said he has to mention two required communications of which one deals with accounting estimates in the financial statements of which some of the largest are the net pension liability and net OPEB liability. He said the last of the required disclosures is any non-audit services that they provide. He said in Franklin, like they do in other towns, they assist the community in converting the fund basis general ledgers to the full accrual basis of accounting, the government-wide financial statements which is very common. He reviewed the slideshow of the financial document. He reviewed the audit of the financial statements. He said there were no differences from this report than there have been in the past. He reviewed the Independent Auditor's letter provided in the beginning of the packet. He said they did not find any material weaknesses or deficiencies in the Town's internal control structures. He said the audit is planned to

go final very soon. He reviewed the Statement of Net Position which is the asset side of the equation, a long-term perspective view. He said the Net Pension Liability has an account balance of \$44.6 million and net OPEB which really means retiree health care with a liability of about \$60.4 million. He said there is a wealth of information in the footnotes. He said the Net Pension Liability has gone up from about \$28 million in the prior year due to market returns are down. He reviewed the short-term perspective financial statements. He noted General Grants Fund is similar to last year and is calculated as a major fund. It is listed as unearned revenue with an account balance of about \$5 million which is the ARPA money. He said this money is earned when you spend it over the next couple of years. He said the General Fund total fund balance is \$29.2 million and the Unassigned Fund Balance is \$17.2 million which is up about \$2 million from the prior year. He said the Unassigned Fund Balance represents about 12 percent of fiscal year 2023 expenditures. He categorized it as a solid balance. He said this was a quick walk through of the audit. He said the audit went very well, and the books and records were in good working order. ► Town Council members thanked Mr. McIntire for the presentation, asked questions, and made comments. ► Councilor Frongillo clarified that when Mr. McIntire says we have a healthy budget, he is talking about that we know where the money is that we spent and the ability to pay back liabilities and debt. He said Mr. McIntire is not talking about how good the roads and schools are and the quality of services we want. ► Councilor Jones said the audit shows how well the town's money has been managed and taken care of. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger asked how many towns that Mr. McIntire audits are not doing as well. He noted the AAA bond rating. ► Mr. McIntire said he does not keep those statistics. ► Councilor Dellorco asked for an explanation about OPEB. ► Mr. McIntire reviewed the reduction in the liability. ► Chair Mercer thanked Mr. McIntire and the entire Finance Department for doing such a good job.

#### **LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:**

**Note:** Two-Thirds Vote requires six votes; Majority Vote requires majority of members present and voting.

- a. Resolution 24-19: Override Pledge to the Citizens of Franklin (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-19 - Majority Vote).* ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 24-19: Override Pledge to the Citizens of Franklin by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Chair Mercer said they are going to go through every item on the MOU. He asked Town Administrator Jamie Hellen and Superintendent of Schools Lucas Giguere to go through the MOU. ► Mr. Hellen noted the Town's budget webpage. He said there is much detailed information available. He narrated his slideshow presentation. He reviewed A One-Slide Override Proposal Specifics slide. There are three resolutions. 1. A pledge to the citizens of Franklin on a framework for spending the funds. 2. Declaration of a Special Election June 11, 2024. 3. Sets a ballot question for a \$6.8 million override for FY25. Details on the slide included a \$6.8 million override based on the FY24 Tax Rate and home value is \$552.82 annually. Assumption is \$650,337 average single-family value. FY24 Tax Rate is \$11.79. The FY25 allotment scheduled is Account 300 FPS (Franklin Public Schools) = \$6.3 million; Account 192 PP&B (facilities) = \$500,000. The FY26 allotment scheduled is Account 300 FPS (Franklin Public Schools) = \$4.08 million; Various Municipal = \$2.72 million. He said all of this information will be online. He said it would be presumptuous to ask the assessor to project what the tax rate is going to be this December. FY25 tax will also include the 2.5 percent. He reviewed the Pledge to the Citizens of Franklin, #1 slide. We are using a similar model the Town of Norwood used in 2019 on a similar override for their community. There is a link to the Norwood documents. He noted other towns that have done overrides. He said they have been collaborating with the School Administration over the last several weeks. He explained that a pledge is not a legal requirement. He reviewed the importance of having a framework for the funds. Final decisions must be made tonight if a June 11 election is expected. If approved tonight, he anticipates two weeks of staff work to prepare a FAQ, flyer, website, and a spreadsheet of where the money is spent in FY25. He discussed the second slide titled An Override Pledge to the Citizens of Franklin, #2 which reviewed each section of the MOU. The MOU dated April 26, 2024 and stamped Draft is provided in the meeting packet. He discussed why the \$6.8 million number and noted it is a compromise figure based on professional input, public feedback, and statewide historical context. He said it will accomplish to rebuild the foundation of the school operational budget and to allow them to

strategically plan for the future, and restores Public Property and Buildings (PPB) expenses capacity after the last two years of dreaded high inflation. He reviewed that the Town will pay for the election which is estimated at \$30,000 by cobbling together small surplus accounts; it is a manageable number. He explained that override funds will be made to last at least five years. He explained that the Town will not seek reimbursement of one-time monies reallocated to assist in balancing the FY25 budget. He reviewed the Why \$6.3 Million for FPS in FY25 slide which listed the allocation of funds. ► Mr. Giguere walked through where the \$6.3 million will go. He said that as Mr. Hellen said, the total \$6.8 million includes the \$500,000 for facilities line. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed the slide Why \$500,000 for PPB Expenses in FY25 which showed the allocation of the \$500,000. He reviewed FY20 through FY24 and FY25 proposed expense history for Account 192 Expense History. He reviewed the pandemic and inflation factors. He explained An Override Pledge to the Citizens of Franklin, #3 slide which outlined the allocation of funds in FY26 through FY30. He noted the importance of the framework for allocation. He discussed the 60/40 percent split with 60 percent for FPS and 40 percent reserved for discretionary spending to allow for flexibility in order to navigate the competing cost drivers in town and will be subject to appropriation as part of future deliberation during the annual budget process. He discussed in detail the Why 40% as outlined on a slide. He explained that of the 40 percent discretionary, the schools will likely see a good share of it in the form of municipal accounts which he outlined. He reviewed an example of a model with the estimated breakdown of the 40 percent which included money for facilities, debt and interest, public works, and various such as collective bargaining and reoccurring School and Town capital. He said the 60/40 split is still One Franklin. He reviewed the An Override Pledge to the Citizens of Franklin, #4 slide. He reviewed the Franklin School Committee agrees to vote on the School Comprehensive Plan May 14, 2024, and close the Parmenter Elementary School effective July 1, 2025. The future use of the Parmenter site will be for the purpose of building a new Police Station as well as for future municipal and/or school purposes, including a potential new school in the future. He said the current Police Station was built in the 1990s. The Town and Schools agree to have a unified goal of protecting the Town's AAA Bond rating. Section 9 commits to the required utility increases in water, trash removal, and stormwater. This agreement will be reviewed by the parties if substantial changes are made to state funding, unfunded mandates, or unforeseen events. ► Mr. Giguere said as they move forward and look to plan, the decisions around how we organize the schools are done in the best interest of kids and putting kids in the most up-to-date facilities that we have in town; it puts kids in the right spaces. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed the School Comprehensive Facilities Plan slide. He reviewed that the redistricting should not be a complete shock. Combined, financially, this multi-pronged, holistic approach is exactly what many have advocated for. People seeking bold change and action? This is your moment to shine. He said it is the hardest thing a local official has to do is redistricting. ► Mr. Giguere said what he has learned a calendar year later, is how do we set ourselves up for the least amount of disruption regarding redistricting. The redistricting and override set us up in the best way. ► Mr. Hellen reviewed his professional view of What Actions Do We Need to Do as A Community right Now slide. The Town Council needs to approve the three resolutions, set the special election for June 11, set the ballot question at \$6.8 million, get educational materials together for the public, and the community can begin its debate 41 days from now. He reviewed upcoming committee meetings and hearings on the topic. If approved on June 11, on June 16, the Town Council can reconsider the FY25 budget based on the override results. He said eventually at some point, in 2025 they need to think seriously about establishing a School Building Committee. He said learning the MSBA will take volunteers years to learn. He said through the rest of the decade, he wants to get together younger members of the community with school-age children in 2030 and beyond to get on the committee and learn the rules. He explained the Why Is This So Important slide. He said this is a once-in-a-lifetime, generational, historic opportunity to enact a set of policy decisions that rebuilds the entire foundation of the Franklin Public School budget and, thus, the entire town budget. He said he is burnt out as this has been talked about for eight years. The time has come to let the citizens speak on an override. He noted the School Committee last requested an override in 2010. The costs of inaction are reeling their ugly head. If we continue to delay these decisions, the financial projections will continue to darken. He reviewed that he appreciates the public feedback, and he has not been able to get back to everyone yet, but he will get back to

everyone. He said he is here to be a leader for the community. ► Mr. Giguere said in this moment in time they are trying to be as decisive as possible, and the recommendations put forward are the best for school, students, and staff. He hopes the Town Council will vote for an override. ► Chair Mercer said he watched all of last night's School Committee meeting, and he thought the presentation was great. He said he has received emails about why the municipal department heads were not given an opportunity to speak last Wednesday as they were there. He said he wanted to give them an opportunity to speak.

► Library Director Felicia Oti said the library serves as a point of primary access for information. She said it is budgeted for in FY25 at 0.78 percent of the budget. She said the library budget does not have room for any cuts. They have to meet regulations and requirements set by the state and the appropriation requirement the municipality must provide is how the library budget is prepared; so, they cannot make any cuts or the library will be disqualified from even applying for a waiver. She said they have been great stewards of the money given for the library. She explained that certification matters. She said they get access to grants, but if they are disqualified, they will get disqualified from current grants. She said if they are cut, it takes a lot of time to build back up, and good people will be lost. She said she supports the 60/40 percent split. She explained the stress of inflation they have to deal with. ► Ms. Caleigh Keating, Youth Services Librarian, explained the relationship the library has fostered with the schools over the last seven and one-half years that she has been here. She explained the field trips they have hosted, book tastings for each grade, read aloud, book talks, library book drives, literacy specialists, summer reading, and other items on their jam-packed calendar. She reviewed some upcoming events at the library. ► Fire Chief James McLaughlin said he was here to support the override. He said all departments in town have their challenges. He said the ambulance for them is important. He said this makes sense, and it is fair. He said he has great respect for Mr. Giguere. He said if the override does not pass, they are not going to be able to keep up with the needs of the community; he said he is talking about the third ambulance specifically. He said there will be repercussions from a public safety standpoint if it does not pass. He said they have a great bond with the School Department. ► DPW Director Brutus Cantoreggi said school redistricting and the override are tough discussions. He said the public works budget is only 35 percent salary and 65 percent expenses. He said this year's budget for FY25 was requested as level funded, but it was already cut \$300,000 including but not limited to road maintenance, sidewalks, and tree removal. He said of his budget about 18 percent goes directly to the schools because he takes care of all the facilities outside. He noted inflation. He said they have to make the fields safe to play, parking lot maintenance, potholes in parking lots, trash pickup at the fields and sporting events which is all labor and all costs. He explained without the money, the first thing that goes is the roads such as crack seal and maintenance. He said other things on the highway side are sidewalks, guardrails, and signs. He said they mow a lot of grass for all the fields and clean up the trash. He said they might have to close or not mow fields. He talked about fencing that needs to be repaired. He talked about spring and fall cleanup for the fields and parks. He talked about staffing reductions and equipment maintenance for everything in town. Cutting trees and roadside mowing costs money. Other items such as the recycling center hours, the dog park, holiday decorations, and street lights will need to be decisions that have to be made. He said his department collaborates tremendously with the schools. ► Chief of Police Thomas Lynch congratulated Mr. Giguere for what they were able to do to come up with their facilities plan. He said he is 100 percent behind it. He said the 60/40 split in the pledge is good. He said 2.5 percent each year has not been sustainable. He said there needs to be an override to get us out of this cycle. He said with the Parmenter School closing, there has been a lot of misconception about if the Town Council goes for an override, then you have to close the school. He said that is 100 percent not the case. He said there were studies done many years ago about closing three schools and everyone knew this day was coming. As far as the Police Department, it took eight years to get us where we are today. He said the call for service volume is going through the roof. He said morale is high and police are not ordered to go to work at this time. If the override does not pass and the school does not close and the redistricting done, there will end up being cuts in police. He discussed the police resource officers who work at the schools. He said he likes the word collaboration. ► Town Council members thanked the presenters, asked questions, and made comments. ► Councilor Frongillo said what he has heard today is a no brainer. You cannot have low taxes and a high quality of services. He said we cannot maintain level services with the amount of money

that we have. Every service is going to feel this if we fall short in contributing the amount of money we need to fund our services. He said we have an agreement in place with the schools that they are shoring up their budget. What has been laid out in front of us is a new tax rate of 12.64 percent to provide level services. He said a no vote will lead to worsening services, lowering of property values, and increased fees. He said he is prepared to give voters a choice tonight, and he strongly supports the override.

► Councilor Hamblen said she repeats what Councilor Frongillo said. She thanked Mr. Hellen and Mr. Giguere for their presentations. She thanked all the department heads for being here and that we are all collaborating. She said there have been a lot of emails and letters and they are reading through them all.

► Councilor Dellorco said he agrees we need the money. He said the \$552 per year increase for the override, just so people know, that does not include Tri-County and that will hit in a few years, and the interceptors are separate and will be a 10 percent hike in sewer rates, and he knows they need a police station, so they will have to come back to the citizens for a debt exclusion on that too. So, we may have a low tax rate, but we also have a lot of fees. He wants to make sure people know. He said we need all this to keep service the way it is. He said regarding the School Committee meeting last night, he does not like being bullied and being called names; come up to him and say it to him. ► Councilor Pellegrini said she agrees with all that has been said. She said people are asking how in a few weeks it went down from \$10 million to \$6.8 million. She asked what if the pledge does not get signed by the FinCom and the School Department. ► Mr. Hellen said such a pledge has worked for other towns, but at the end of the day, the School Department has their own autonomy and legal authority. He said the Town Council oversees the town budget for all departments including the School Department. He said he feels passionate that if the community looks to a June 11 date, it is a short timeframe and there can be a lot of debate. There is no legal repercussion for not doing it. ► Councilor Pellegrini said she feels if someone goes into the voting booth, it does not explain what is going on; there needs to be an explanation. She said June 11 is so soon and asked why do we have to rush into this. She noted that if she votes no on the ballot date, that does not mean she does not want to have the election go to the voters. ► Mr. Hellen said if this is approved tonight, one of the first things we will work on is what does this mean and we will put out a card or pamphlet about what a yes vote and a no vote means. He said he believes giving people more certainty with where the money will be spent is better. ► Mr. Giguere said June 11 allows us to have the money for the fiscal year. June 15 is the date that you would have to lay off staff. He said he recognized the timing is short, but the timing is critical. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said people have to decide what am I willing to take away from my kids because of money. He said he also recognizes the other side; he has retired family on fixed incomes. He said those are tough discussions, but that is how the whole system works. We have to sit with our parents and say, you no longer need the big house that we have moved out of. We need to talk about what is next as a family, and I think somewhere along the lines some of those discussions are not happening because I am hearing from a lot of people that they want to die in their homes that they have lived in forever, and I do not know that this is necessarily possible because expenses keep going up, and it is very difficult for us to do what we need to do for the town without critically looking at that. He said the June 15 date for pink slips at the schools is at the forefront of his mind as to why they need the June 11 date. He said we are in this sort of provincial New England place and everyone wants the best and this is no Alabama where they have a county system that everything is sort of shared. We have municipalities that want the best, but then we do not want to pay. If you want phenomenal services, those things cost money. He said he supports the June 11 date. He said he understands the 60/40 in the MOU. ► Councilor Chandler said the need for the Police Station has nothing to do with the Parmenter School closing. He said the pledge was great and explains it to everyone. He said last night there were things said about the municipal group that were out of line. He said if we vote for the June 11 date, we only have five weeks so we have to get the information out there. He said this is not a slam dunk; he said not everybody is going to vote for this. ► Councilor Sheridan said he was all sold. He said when you lose young teachers that you have just trained, they will get hired by some other town right away. ► Councilor Jones echoed Councilor Frongillo's points. He provided an analogy of his own home that if he had fixed something earlier, it would not have cost as much as it will now cost to fix. He said the town has a choice to make if we are going to make the investment today or let it slide and have to pay more to fix it later. He is in support of the 60/40 and in support of the override. He

said we have had this conversation before. He said he is a taxpayer, too. He said this is a no brainer.

► Chair Mercer said the other Town Council members have said everything eloquently. He talked about collaboration and supports the June 11 date. He noted it is short time, but it started along time ago. He said the covid money ended and now we are back to where we were.

**Citizen Comments:** ► Audience member said the numbers make sense, but he is concerned about the short turnaround time. He said there were 16 weeks with 30-35 people working on the budget which will get approved at the end of May, but then giving the people 10 days before this vote to figure it out and vote. This is absurd on every level. A reasonable approach would be to give people on both sides ample time to argue for or against and have the vote in November. ► Mr. A. Kruza, 375A Oak Street, said he is amazed that all the Town Council members work for zero money. He said the problem with the presentation is that the entire information was not provided. He asked what the money listed for the salaries is going to be used for. The numbers were skewed which he finds objectionable. He said he has been in the town 47 years and paying taxes. He said his taxes would be raised from \$9,500 to \$13,000. That is a \$3,000 increase; that is 33 percent increase. He said he cannot afford that. ► Mr. Giguere discussed the number of people and schools and children, steps and lanes, and contractual obligations as to where the money part is from. He said he is a taxpayer also. ► Mr. Hellen said he is sure there are lots of estimates out there, and there will be an override calculator out there. ► Mr. McCarthy, Oak Street, said last week at the meeting he heard there was only one tax rate for residential and commercial. He said the City of Boston has a different rate for residential and commercial, and they are now in a commercial real estate collapse in Boston. He said to the idea of shifting the burden to commercial, tread carefully. He said if you try to run this too fast, many people will be suspicious. He said go for November. ► Ms. Jane Callaway-Tripp, 607 Maple Street, asked about slide #4, number 1 and number 2, and does that say in 2030 you could potentially be rebuilding new schools if the number of children registering for school increases. If you think you will be rebuilding schools in six years, it seems not okay to be closing schools down now. ► Mr. Hellen said when you close a school, the MSBA requires a 10-year window before you can apply for a new school. He pointed out the demographic study put out shows declining enrollment through 2029. He said he is skeptical the numbers will climb back up. He said town demographics need to be monitored. He said by 2030, the town must be in a position as to when a new school would be on the block. He said he would not anticipate a new school until well after 2030. ► Mr. Giguere reviewed the timeline for any new school building project and how the MSBA works. ► Ms. Jane Callaway-Tripp said she is not against the schools, but is against things that she is seeing. She said she has spent hours reviewing the fiscal year reports and budget information online. She said it may not break the budget to give some people raises, but it is protocol that if you are asking us to trust everyone who is spending our money, and it is not just two salaries, she can point out at least two more that are getting \$14,000 raises and she has not even looked at the School Department. That is not right. The salaries over \$100,000 are getting \$14,000 raises and the person making \$50,000 is getting a \$1,000 raise. This is not okay. It is also the ones over \$90,000 that are getting these big raises and it is not okay. ► Mr. Ken Ojukwu, 73 South Street, said to recap, the superintendent and town administrator shared what they think will make sense. He noted the department heads that came out and supported the override and the risk it imposes if we do not do it. He said they explained the MOU. He said the key questions are the timing for June or November. He said if we do not do it in June, the risk to towns and schools is significant. He noted the bus and athletic fees that would go up. He said how we inform the people is critical. ► Mr. Scott Geer, 529 Maple Street, said there is a lot of emotion on this decision. He said for families this is an incredibly important decision. He said it sounds like it is being rushed for such an important decision. He explained that he heard if the override is passed, for FY25 it brings us to service level plus and then 60/40 for the remaining years, what position does this put us in for the schools. ► Mr. Bob Dutch, School Business Administrator, spoke about the 60/40 and why he supports it. He said right now the schools represent 53 percent of the budget and another 18 percent that fits in that brings us to about 68 percent of the town's budget. He said that answers the per pupil expenditure. He said that is only the things the school district spends money on. However, the net school spending includes the full number of anything that supports the schools. He explained the 60/40 and how much they get every year. He explained that this would give



them 5 percent for five years. He said this allows them to be truly stabilized and can plan to create beneficial programming for students. He said they are supportive of the 60/40 split. ► Mr. Max Morrongiello, 127 Central Park Terrace, said they have many months to the national election. The election cycle is too long. He said they should get the facts out and make a decision and five weeks is enough time. ► Mr. Dutch responded to June as an issue. He noted the pink slips and laying people off, and there is a cost associated with not doing it in June. He talked about the process of rehiring which is an expense. He said they could lay off the employees and pay the unemployment or gamble and keep them on in hopes the override passes. If it does not, and we need to cut \$4.5 million out of the budget, but we have already paid the people for half the year, that would mean we need to cut \$9 million, and that would not be a good budget. ► Mr. Stephen Malloy, 19 Russett Hill Road, said it is about timing. He said all the Town Council members seem in favor of it. He asked to think about it as the average person. He said it seems like there has been a lot of collaboration, but they are trying to pass it in five weeks. The optics are horrible. He said June is way too early; it seems contrived. He said in November there is a national election, so there will be more turnout; in June there will be lower turnout, and he does not think that is an accident. ► Ms. Celia Courtright, 213 Peck Street, said she wanted to speak on the date of the election. She said it is critical to know what classes high schoolers are going to take and if they have to lay off teachers, they do not know what classes they are going to take. She said if they push this to November, you have to know at the start of the school year if the classes will exist. This is a driving decision on having the election in June. ► Mr. Stephen Pezzella, 5 Downingwood Drive, thanked the fire and police departments for keeping us safe. He said he would be in favor of putting this off also. He said it is too short of a window to make the decision. He said he takes issue with Councilor Cormier-Leger's statement. He said as long as he can still think, his children do not sit him down and tell him where he is going to live tomorrow. He asked Councilor Cormier-Leger to reconsider his position if that is one of his arguments or points. ► Ms. Carol Oneil, 11 Colt Road, said that as a senior citizen, there are concerns. She remembers fighting for things for her children. She said she is not hearing from people that they do not care because they do not have children in school; however, she is hearing moneywise. She said she will never use financial concerns to abdicate her responsibility for the next generation of kids, so she is voting for the override. ► Mr. Mark Minnichelli, 31 Longfellow Drive, thanked the boards who put in countless hours. He said he supports the override and the June date. He said he thinks people who say they can wait are not listening to what the impacts are. He said waiting a few months will probably not substantially change people's vote. ► Ms. Jacqueline Maciel, 95 Elm Street, said she has advice for the superintendent. She said as a teacher, she got pink slipped on April 15; maybe they need to do something better in the contract. She said Councilor Cormier-Leger talked about sports being cut and a bus bill of \$1,100. She said currently the cost is \$360 which calculates to \$1 per day each way which is a bargain. She said she sees many parents pulling kids out of school to go skiing. She said she does not want to spend more tax dollars on the schools. She said if people's taxes go up \$500 this year, then the next year it will go up 2.5 percent on that and on and on. She said the contract they signed is nice, but what happens after five years; where does the money come from. ► Mr. Hellen said a five-year window seems possible, and it is hard to look out past 2030. ► Ms. Jacqueline Maciel, 95 Elm Street, said Councilor Cormier-Leger's threat to take away sports and clubs has been used by school systems for decades. ► Mr. Giguere said he does not make threats. He said he suggested they would need to self-fund athletics. He said they do not go in front of Town Council until May 24, so they could not do the April 15 date for pink slips. The contracts align with the budget process. He said he does not appreciate her tone or her assumptions and assertions. ► Mr. Jeff Nutting, 2 Magnolia Drive, said this is a community, not a school, override. He said if this is not funded, it is going to hit them first, then police and fire. He said \$500 is not a lot of money when you want an ambulance at your front door. He said it took nine years to get off the waiver system in the library. It is time to pay the \$500 and make the community strong. ► Ms. Laura Minnichelli, 98 Brook Street, said her vision of the town is to have all these services funded. She said people are not going to want to work here if we lay off teachers. She said that is why we need a June vote. ► Ms. Meaghan Benson (via Zoom) said she has three kids in elementary school and knows they need money. She mentioned the risk of putting the vote forth in June. She said rushing the process will just lead to people feeling blindsided and deceived and that can lead to

anger. If the override were to pass in June this way, another one or any debt exclusions would not pass for a very long time. She said there might be administrators in town thinking that the redistricting now was a good idea, but that is not the case. She has spoken with many parents who were in favor of an override, but will now not vote for one. The idea that you have decided to take away neighborhood schools and ask for more money at the same time is not going over well. She said she does not think June is the right time to do this. She said there is a right way and wrong way for the schools to get money. ► Ms. Patty Dolan, 35 Townline Road (via Zoom), thanked Mr. Hellen and Mr. Giguere for the work they put in putting the plans together. She said the school plan is bold, but she has confidence in Mr. Giguere. She urged community members to vote for the override. ► Ms. Roberta Trahan, 1 Green Street (via Zoom), said we are at the top of the cliff and falling over. She said there is time for everyone to understand what is going on. She said anyone who does not understand by now will be voting no whether it is June or November. She said everyone has all the information they need. ► Ms. Jenna Cohen, 14 Elm Street, said she echoed what Councilor Frongillo said, and we have to be bold and do our part as citizens to educate ourselves with information. ► **Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- b. **Resolution 24-20: Setting Date of Proposition 2 ½ Override Ballot (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-20 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 24-20: Setting Date of Proposition 2 ½ Override Ballot, for June 11, 2024, by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. No discussion, ► VOTE: Yes-8, No-1, Absent-0.** (Councilor Pellegri voted No.)
- c. **Resolution 24-21: Proposition 2 ½ Override Ballot Question (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-21 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 24-21: Proposition 2 ½ Override Ballot Question by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Councilor Pellegri questioned that all information would be sent out to voters. ► Mr. Hellen said they were doing a pamphlet with what a yes or no vote means. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

Chair Mercer stated that it is very late. He would like to move these Legislation for Action items to a future meeting on June 5, with the exception of the gifts.

- d. **Resolution 24-22: Adoption of Fiscal Policies (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-22 - Majority Vote).** Item not taken.
- e. **Zoning Bylaw Amendment 24-906: Changes to §185-3. Definitions, Mixed Use Development Definition - Referral to the Planning Board (Motion to Refer Zoning Bylaw Amendment 24-906 to the Planning Board - Majority Vote).** Item not taken.
- f. **Zoning Bylaw Amendment 24-907: Changes to §185-21 Parking, Loading and Driveway Requirements, Elimination of Minimum Parking Requirements in Downtown Commercial Zoning District - Referral to the Planning Board (Motion to Refer Zoning Bylaw Amendment 24-907 to the Planning Board - Majority Vote).** Item not taken.
- g. **Zoning Bylaw Amendment 24-908: §185 Attachment 7. Part VI, Addition of Mixed Use Development to Use Regulation Schedule - Referral to the Planning Board (Motion to Refer Zoning Bylaw Amendment 24-908 to the Planning Board - Majority Vote).** Item not taken.
- h. **Resolution 24-23: Acceptance of Gift - Town of Franklin (\$300,000) (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-23 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 24-23: Acceptance of Gift - Town of Franklin (\$300,000), to be applied to the cost of a playground to be installed at King Street Memorial Park, donated by the Where Angels Fly Foundation and the Venables Family, by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Ryan Jette said they are accepting a donation of \$300,000 from Where Angels Fly Foundation that is partnering with the Venables Family, to honor the life of Jersey Mike's Subs' Brian Venables, to build a state of the art, ADA accessible

playground at Memorial Park. ► Councilor Dellorco thanked the donors. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- i. Resolution 24-24: Acceptance of Gift of Trees - Town of Franklin (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-24 - Majority Vote).* ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 24-24: Acceptance of Gift of Trees - Town of Franklin, 100 trees donated by TruGreen, by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen thanked all for the donation. ► Ms. Frigulietti, said they did a small ceremony of accepting the trees with the DPW. She said they were grateful to Representative Roy and TruGreen. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- j. Resolution 24-25: Acceptance of Gift - Conservation Commission (\$50) (Motion to Approve Resolution 24-25 - Majority Vote).* ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 24-25: Acceptance of Gift - Conservation Commission (\$50), from the Ecological Landscape Alliance, by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Chair Mercer thanked the donors. ► Councilor Frongillo said that is someone who went out of their way to contribute to the local community with a little extra money. They are incredibly grateful to all donors. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

Chair Mercer said they would adjourn now.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:** Item not taken.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:** Item not taken.

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee.**
- b. **Economic Development Subcommittee.**
- c. **Budget Subcommittee.**
- d. **Master Plan Update Committee.**
- e. **Davis-Thayer Building Reuse Advisory Committee.**
- f. **Police Station Building Committee.**
- g. **GATRA Advisory Board.**

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:** Item not taken.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:** Item not taken.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None.

**ADJOURN:** ► **MOTION to Adjourn** by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Jones. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

**Meeting adjourned at 11:16 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi  
Recording Secretary