

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
OF THE BOROUGH OF FRANKLIN  
HELD AT THE FRANKLIN MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
46 MAIN STREET, FRANKLIN, NJ  
JANUARY 11, 2022**

This meeting is being held through a virtual meeting platform called ZOOM. The public has been notified and instructed on how to join the meeting.

Mayor Sowden called the meeting to order and requested the Borough Clerk to call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the Governing Body were present: Mr. Formica, Mrs. Heath, Mr. Limon, Mr. Postas, Mr. Skellenger, Mr. Snyder (used the phone in link) and Mayor Sowden.

Absent: None

Mayor Sowden led the assembly in the flag salute.

Mayor Sowden stated "This meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et sequentes. It has been properly advertised by posting in Borough Hall and printed in the New Jersey Herald/Sunday New Jersey Herald on January 7, 2022, and posted on the Borough website, which adequate notice has been certified by the Clerk."

At this time Mayor Sowden asked for a moment of silence for past councilwoman Elizabeth (Betty) Allen.

**PRESENTATIONS**

There were no presentations.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Mr. Limon offered no report.

Mr. Postas offered no report.

Mr. Snyder offer no report.

Mr. Formica commented that we are on the County schedule to have the guiderail replaced by the pond this year.

Mr. Skellenger offered no report.

Mrs. Heath offered no report.

Clerk Tremont offered no report.

Mr. Ursin offered no report.

Administrator Bernath commented that the Borough was awarded a recreation grant of \$70,000 and that the Borough was also approved for reimbursement from FEMA for a snow storm that occurred in 2021 in the amount of \$37,663.81.

Mayor Sowden commented on the possibility of hiring an additional police officer and possibly another one in a few months and asked for thoughts from the council members. We received a report the other day from the Police Department in regards to the amount of overtime that is being spent due to the police department being short staffed. We have already done interviews about six months ago and the Chief has everything lined to expedite things as quick as possible.

Councilman Formica commented that after seeing the numbers with the overtime; he supports the hiring.

Councilman Postas commented that he agrees with Councilman Formica. When our overtime costs start costing more than a new officer then we really need to start looking into hiring more. We are down one officer now and within the next 18

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months two officers are coming up for retirement with that being said, if we are going to hire, we are not hiring above base pay.

Councilman Limon asked if this officer hiring would put us over the limit of officers we are authorized.

Councilwoman Heath asked how many police officers do we have right now and what step will the new officers start at.

Councilman Skellenger commented that he is in agreement with the hiring of one new officer.

Councilman Snyder commented that he does have some concerns with the number of officers we currently have. There should be a public safety meeting set up soon.

Councilwoman Heath commented that she supports the hiring of one new officer now knowing that there are 5 officers out.

After some further discussion, it was the general consensus of the Governing Body that the Police Chief move forward with one new hire.

Mayor Sowden commented that Brian VanDenBroek would like to bring a previous employee back to assist with snow removal at a rate of \$25.00 per hour on an as needed basis.

Administrator Bernath commented that there is a separate line for snow removal in the budget where this employee would be charged.

After some discussion, it was the general consensus of the Governing Body to place a resolution on the next agenda.

Mayor Sowden commented on the house fire that occurred on Nestor Street and has the Zoning Official working on issuing summonses. Mayor Sowden asked for a general consensus of the Governing Body on whether to raise it, knock it down and put a lien on the property.

Mr. Ursin explained the different options the Borough can take.

### **OPEN PUBLIC SESSION**

Mr. Postas made a motion to open the meeting to the public for anyone wishing to address the Governing Body. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger. All were in favor.

There being no one present who wished to address the Governing Body, Mrs. Heath made a motion to close the meeting to the public, seconded by Mr. Postas. All were in favor.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Sowden requested that all persons present review the consent agenda and offer any comments they may have at this time regarding the consent agenda.

### **CORRESPONDENCE** (ACCEPTANCE FOR FILING ONLY OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. Township of Sparta adopted Ordinance 21-19 amending Chapter 18 entitled "Zoning" to modify and update section 15-4.5i regarding standby generators.
2. Resignation Letter dated December 13, 2021, from Rachel Heath, Franklin Borough Board of Health Secretary to Aimee Zschack, Franklin Borough BOH Chair and BOH Members.
3. Letter dated December 16, 2021, from Timothy Day, Comptroller, Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority to Mayor Sowden Re: Actual Annual charge FY2021, quarterly estimated charge FY2022 and SCMUA Sewage Treatment Services.
4. Sussex County Board of Taxation, 2021 Abstract of Ratables.

### **REPORTS** (ACCEPTANCE FOR FILING OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. None filed.

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**APPLICATIONS** (APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. None filed.

**RESOLUTIONS** (APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. Resolution #2022-16  
Approval to adopt resolution 2022- to approve a coin toss fundraiser for the Wallkill Valley First Aid Squad for the year 2022, on May 15<sup>th</sup>, June 12<sup>th</sup>, July 24<sup>th</sup>, August 21<sup>st</sup>, September 18<sup>th</sup> and October 15<sup>th</sup>.
2. Resolution #2022-17  
Approval to adopt resolution 2022- authorizing participation in the Federal 1033 program effective January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.
3. Payment of bills for the meeting of January 11, 2022.

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to approve the consent agenda of January 11, 2022 with the removal of PO# 34584. Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Mr. Postas made a motion to approve PO# 34584. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Formica

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business for tonight's portion of the meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Limon made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes and executive session meeting minutes for December 14, 2021. (Absent: Formica, Skellenger and Zydon) Seconded by Mr. Postas.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Limon, Postas, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Formica, Heath, Skellenger

Mr. Limon made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes for December 23, 2021. (Absent: Zydon) Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Heath

Mr. Postas made a motion to approve the organization meeting minutes for January 4, 2022. (Absent: None) Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Discussion on Equalized Valuations

At this time there was a discussion on the 2021 equalized valuations as determined by the Director of the Division of Taxation.

Mr. Scott Holzauer, Franklin Borough Tax Assessor, explained the change in ratio. There was a full revaluation of Franklin Borough back in 2010 and in 2014 a reassessment was done. Division of Taxation conducts a sales study every year using the sales the assessor reviews to determine whether or not they are considered usable. The sales study that resulted in the ratio that we are going to talk about now was conducted on July 1, 2020 and concluded in June 30, 2021. Mr. Holzauer explained the functions of ratios. Franklin Borough's ratio has changed causing us to have to add to our percentage responsible to be paid. Franklin Borough's ratio change would cost the average residential property owner \$58 tax increase. We would be paying more to

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the Regional School tax due to the ratio change. Mr. Holzauer recommends that the municipality conduct a reassessment and a decision should be made in the next few months. Mr. Holzauer contacted the company that we used before for the revaluation/reassessment for a proposal for a reassessment; \$90,000 for the first year of the reassessment program, \$25,000 for years two through five. In the first year 100% of the homes will be reassessed and in years two through five 25% of the homes will be reassessed. Tax appeals are a concern for the future.

Mr. Ursin commented that its critical to address this issue and put this as an agenda item with the proposal to be acted on in about a month.

### Congregate Nutrition Program Shared Services Agreement

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to approve the Shared Service Agreement between the County of Sussex and the Borough of Franklin for the Franklin Congregate Nutrition Programs from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022 in the amount of \$27,700.00. Seconded by Mr. Postas.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

### Resolution #2022-14

Mr. Postas made a motion to adopt resolution 2022-14 authorizing the Tax Collector to refund tax sale deposits to six bidders via ACH credit who participated in the electronic tax sale on December 14, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

### Resolution #2022-15

Mr. Postas made a motion to adopt resolution 2022-15 2021 budget transfers in the total amount of \$9,500.00. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

### DPW Salary Step Increase

Mr. Formica made a motion to approve a DPW salary step increase for Ray Smith to Grade Step 10 \$29.38/hr., as per the DPW contract, effective January 16, 2022 as recommended by Brian VanDenBroek, DPW Director. Seconded by Mr. Limon.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

### Discussion on Senior Center

At this time there was a discussion on the usage of the Senior Center with increased COVID cases.

The general consensus of the Governing Body was to keep the Senior Center open and that food is OK to bring in. The individual groups would need to clean up as usual and Fred Babcock will do extensive cleaning after each use.

### Walkkill Valley Girl Scout Request

Mr. Postas made a motion to authorize the request from the Walkkill Valley Girl Scouts for the usage of the Senior Center for various 2022 meetings and a Walkkill Valley Field Day event in 2022. Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Postas, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

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Mayoral Appointment

Mayor Sowden will make the following appointments.

**Historical Preservation Commission**

Charlie Postas	Member	(4-yr. term)	expires 12/31/2025
Mayor John Sowden	ex-Officio	(1-yr. term)	expires 12/31/2022
John Postas	Council Liaison		expires 12/31/2022
Dr. Earl Verbeek	Advisory Member		

Mrs. Heath made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Snyder. All were in favor.

School Choice Week Proclamation

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to adopt the School Choice Week Proclamation proclaiming January 23 – January 29, 2022, as the Borough of Franklin School Choice Week. Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Formica, Postas

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

There was no executive session.

**MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS**

Mr. Limon commented the hiring of a snowplow driver should have been acted on and that he abstains from all conversations with regard to the house on Nestor Street.

Mrs. Heath asked about the Franklin Quilters request and if it needed to be voted on or if it was just information.

Mrs. Tremont stated that the Franklin Quilters request was for informational purposes only.

Mr. Snyder commented that signs should be placed at the pond regarding ice skating.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items for discussion by the Mayor and Council, Mr. Skellenger made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:42p.m., seconded by Mr. Postas.

All were in favor.

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John M. Sowden IV, Mayor

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Darlene J. Tremont, Municipal Clerk