

**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
AUGUST 11, 2026**

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: Mrs. Carnes, Mr. Formica, Mrs. Heath, Mr. Skellenger, Mr. Snyder and Mayor Sowden.

Absent: Mr. Limon

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 posted on the Borough website, which adequate notice has been certified by the Clerk."

PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Sowden recognized Keri Marino and Officer Lospinuso and Officer Rotunda for receiving an award from Congressman Gottheimer.

Mrs. Heath commented that we are all very proud of you and you make the town very proud.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mrs. Heath commented that Recreation is moving along with the 9/11 memorial and we are getting a good response on the pavers. The trench is going to be done so that the lighting can be put on the mineral.

Mayor Sowden asked how the walk for addiction go.

Mrs. Heath commented that the police were there from all the departments. It was better than ever. The wall keeps on getting bigger and bigger with the pictures.

Mr. Skellenger had nothing to report.

Mr. Formica commented that the Sussex County Commissioners approved our grant for the walking path. We will be getting our first installation of \$25,000 this year.

Mayor Sowden commented to just remember that there is another grant we received from the state, a year ago, that we need to get into very shortly or they will pull it. This grant was for a playground grant, it was for the fields and things like that.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that we used that grant money already.

Mr. Skellenger thanked the Mr. Formica and Neil for getting the paperwork over to the county for the grant.

Mrs. Carnes commented that the EDC Committee will be meeting in September. There is a new business opening, Metropolitan Dermatology, soon; in the old Dr. Hrabachuck building. In addition to congratulating our hometown heroes, congratulations to Miss Franklin for placing as 1st runner up for the Queen of the Fair.

Mr. Snyder commented that the ordinance committee met and discussed water meters. We are looking into changing insurance coverage due to the cost of participating in SHBP.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that he has been corresponding with both unions and they are aware of the some of the options out there and the cost of the state health benefits is one of the reasons for the increase in the budget. We are exploring other options as this coming years increase could be about 23 percent.

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Mrs. Little had nothing to report.

Mr. Spidaletto had nothing to report.

Mr. Ursin had nothing to report.

Mayor Sowden commented that there is a rail to trails meeting next week.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

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

Ms. Joanne Tatka stepped forward. Ms. Tatka voiced concerns regarding the increase in the tax bills.

Mr. Ursin commented that the timing of the revaluation is not the Borough's choice. The County Tax Board makes the decision about when a town has to do a revaluation and so the fact that the revaluation was done this year and there was a tax increase.

Ms. Tatka commented that they have been revaluating for 5 years.

Mr. Ursin commented that the revaluation that was done, your tax assessor did the revaluation over a five-year period to soften the blow rather than all at once. He would have to explain the how the mechanics of that work.

Ms. Tatka commented that it was not raised very evenly. Ms. Tatka commented that this does not make sense. If this is the case, then you have to start cutting back. Ms. Tatka questioned what the 40x60 building would be used for.

Mayor Sowden commented that this is the new salt shed.

Ms. Tatka asked if the brush could be cut at the intersection of Maple Road and Wildcat and she has not seen that anything has been with that as of yet.

Mr. Formica commented that this was brought up at the last meeting and asked if anything was noticed.

Mr. Spidaletto commented he believes it was noticed but will confirm.

Ms. Tatka asked who was charged the 2 million gallons of water on Route 23 Franklin Square.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that it was the Quarry Grill. There was a faulty meter that ran for a while and it has since been corrected.

Ms. Tatka commented that she sees the police negotiations were made and she does not see, you used to report whenever someone went up a step and you do not do that anymore so we are not aware of salaries that are being made, is there a reason for that why they are not going before a meeting.

Mayor Sowden commented that he does not recall that. We will look into this.

Ms. Tatka questioned the emergency resolution.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that the number listed there is what the emergency appropriation is for. Ms. Tatka questioned the resolution for the test well drilling and asked if it was for Ryan Homes.

Mayor Sowden commented that this is for Franklin Borough and it is being done behind Shoprite Liquors.

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Ms. Tatka commented that you are going to drill a well there and she believes that for a couple years the Hardyston School had their own well and they went on Franklin Water, why did they go onto Franklin Water.

Mayor Sowden commented that PFAS's were very high in their well.

Ms. Tatka asked what is the real reason for the big budget increase.

Mayor Sowden commented schools.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that if you look at the numbers in regards to where we are at, we had a 2.975% increase. Wallkill Valley had a 4.08 increase and Franklin local schools had a 3.78 increase. This council has consistently been frugal and on top of things as far as their budget. They are in good shape financially as well as keeping their surplus in place. Everything went up in cost, exponentially.

Ms. Tatka commented that we have all those expenses too and we only have so much money to cover those expenses.

Mr. Formica commented that we raised 2.9% on a 9-million-dollar budget; the high school raised 4% on a 20-million-dollar budget and the elementary school raised almost 4% and they at a 15-million-dollar budget. Next week there is a board of education meeting on the 18th at 7pm and they are doing a mid-contract negotiation with their superintendent who is looking for a raise. We definitely tried with what we can to keep everything the same. Mr. Formica commented that his portion of the taxes that went up on the town was only a couple hundred but it went up \$900 for the schools and the county. We are trying everything we can here but it seems while we are trying to keep it in line the schools are just doing what they want to do.

Mayor Sowden commented that no, sometimes they are and sometimes they are being made to do.

Mr. Formica commented that he is seeing a lot of waste and he is more than willing to say that on the record.

Mrs. Christine Affinito stepped forward. Mrs. Affinito raised concerns regarding the policy and procedures that the Recreation Committee needs to follow.

Mr. Formica commented that the mulch for the playground, somehow on the operating budget it got left out, so from what he was told; Michelle took it from the field use fees because that is not generally part of the operating budget so it was kind of a safe spot to us for now as far as it being reimbursed, I'm not sure of.

Mrs. Affinito commented that she is not questioning that when she went back and asked, should we have a vote for this; she was told no, I have the power. So, here's the money that is being used from one of the Recreation accounts that we are willing to vote on but we don't have to because somebody has the power. Similar to that \$25,000 which there is no vote for and no motion sheet.

Mr. Formica commented that there was a vote for that by the Council.

Mrs. Carnes commented that is at the Council level and I think, Neil you provided that documentation.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that he has showed the documentation to members of the committee on multiple occasions.

Mrs. Affinito commented that when a meeting was held when she first came on, we sat at that table and Michelle.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that he brought out the paperwork during that meeting and showed it, it was March 11, 2025 and it states the conversation that occurred.

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Mrs. Affinito commented that when we had that conversation here in the lunch room and that point was brought up the first instinct was that was a mistake and she pointed out all of the transactions that was the only transaction that says as per this person and this person that transfer was made.

Mr. Formica commented that when the playground was done there was a Millie Harden Fund. When the playground was getting ready to go, in order to order the playground, they had to encumber the money so they took the money out of a CD and put it into an account. So then when the money was getting transferred back into the account, they left \$25,000 in the carnival account because there was no playground account at that time. That way if there was added expenses toward the end of playground the money was still allocated, that was when Debbie Bonnanno was here. When she left, Andrew came and the money never got transferred. He was here for about a year and then he left and Michelle came and that is when the money finally got transferred back. And that went back to the Millie Harden Fund. In regards to the dugouts, there was a contractor that we were going to use but it did not work out. Talking with the QPA about different options to go through, I was going to do with the DPW and got involved with a couple other projects.

Mrs. Heath asked why \$4,800 was used to spread the mulch, when DPW just needed to straighten it out. Mrs. Heath is appalled that we hired an outside contractor for \$4,800 to spread mulch, that volunteers could have done.

Mrs. Carnes asked what is the delay with the bricks.

Mrs. Affinito commented that we have figured out how to get through the brick situation. There is a string of emails; we found a brick company which we were having problems with because they are in Florida. We found that brick company because in the concession stand, we found a brick that had Franklin Borough's name on it from Bricks R Us and figured it was a company that we already used. We tried to move forward with it and we ran into obstacles because they are in Florida and don't know if they can sell in New Jersey. We had the orders coming in which somebody had held for three weeks and did nothing with. We reached out to the outside landscaper that we hired to do this for us and he is going to get the bricks for us. We have received donations for 9/11; in October we sent letters out to everybody which is why the \$1,000 fishing derby check didn't make sense to us because Ascend told us they were going to donate \$1,000.

Mr. Formica commented that he is the one who solicited the \$1,000 for the police and fire department.

Mrs. Affinito commented that she hopes the check says fishing derby. As long as it does then I feel like somebody did something right.

Mr. Matthew Daspin stepped forward. Mr. Daspin voiced concerns regarding the zoning officer's hours and the over growth of grass and trees throughout the town.

Mr. Peter Liverakos stepped forward. Mr. Liverakos voiced his concerns regarding the budget and the tax bills. What programs are being instituted to restrain cost for the current fiscal year.

Mr. Formica commented that we are looking into shared services with other towns.

Mr. Ursin commented that this council only controls the municipal part of the budget. That is 30% or less; if you look at the municipal budget, it is small number of employees compared with the budgets in the other governments.

There being no one else present who wished to address the Governing Body, Mr. Skellenger made a motion to close the meeting to the public, seconded by Mr. Formica. 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.

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CORRESPONDENCE (ACCEPTANCE FOR FILING ONLY OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. Sewage Flows for the months of April, May and June 2026 from SCMUA.
2. Sandyston Township resolution defending property taxpayers, local control and community character against state preemption of municipal authority over data center development.

REPORTS (ACCEPTANCE FOR FILING OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. County Board of Health Report – June 2026
2. COH Report – July 2026
3. Permit List – July 2026
4. Certificate Activity Report – July 2026
5. Road Department Report – July 2026

APPLICATIONS (APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. Application for use of the Senior Center from Loretta Walker for Franklin Boy Scouts Troop 90 on various dates beginning September 14, 2026 through June 14, 2027 as per the attached schedule and to waive the associated fees.
2. Application for use of the Senior Center from Maureen Hubbard for Wallkill Valley Girl Scouts on various dates beginning September 2026 through June 2027 as per the attached schedule and to waive the associated fees.

RESOLUTIONS (APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING):

1. Payment of bills for the meeting of August 11, 2026.

Mrs. Carnes made a motion to approve the consent agenda of August 11, 2026 with the removal of check #59769 and check #59827. Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: Skellenger

Mrs. Carnes made a motion to approve check #59827. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: Snyder

OLD BUSINESS

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

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of the Minutes

Mrs. Heath made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes for July 14, 2026. (Absent: None) Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-75

Mrs. Carnes made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-75 authorizing a disabled veteran exemption on Block 601, Lot 14. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-76

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-76 authorizing the award of Test Well Drilling and Pumping Bid #26-03R2 to William Stothoff Company in an amount not to exceed \$90,545. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

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Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-77

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-77 approving the memorandum of understanding with the Borough of Franklin Police Department/PBA Local 404 (MOU included in Council packet) Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger

Nays: Snyder Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-78

Mr. Formica made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-78 approving an emergency resolution in accordance with NJS 40A:4-48 in the amount of \$314,126. Seconded by Mrs. Carnes.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger

Nays: Snyder Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-79

Mrs. Heath made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-79 authorizing the hiring of a part time Senior Center attendant at the rate of \$15.92 per hour not to exceed an average of 25 hours per week effective August 12, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-80

Mr. Snyder made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-80 authorizing the correction and restoration of widow of a veteran property tax deduction for Block 601 Lot 37. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Resolution 2026-81

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-81 authorizing the Water/Sewer Collector to cancel an overbilling on Account #1251-0. Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Sewer Connection Application

Mr. Formica made a motion to approve the sewer connection application submitted by Pablo Perrone for 1.5 EDU's commercial dwelling at 12 Park Drive contingent upon receipt of associated connection fees, all directives followed as per Utility Engineer, Michael Vreeland and his final review. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

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Uhl & Associates, Inc. Proposal

Mr. Formica made a motion to approve Uhl & Associates, Inc. proposal for Professional Hydrogeologic Consulting Services for the Ryan Home Test Well Drilling and Pumping oversight at a cost not to exceed \$24,000. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

Police Chief Agreement

Mrs. Heath made a motion to approve the addendum to the Police Chief Employment agreement between the Borough of Franklin and Police Chief Gregory Cugliari from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2028. (Agreement provided in Council packets). Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Mr. Snyder commented that he looked at this and regarding the police contract, the two contracts are connected which they should not be. One is saying one does the other. Now if we voted down the regular police contract; this would not apply. This part of the police chief's agreement is beyond what this town is going to afford. We are talking about every tax payers dollar that is being spent and everyone complaining about the taxes going up. And yet, this Chief does a great job; he wants to be paid to what he believes he thinks he should get as being police chief, closest to the police chiefs in the county. This police chief signed a contract two years ago stipulating that he had a 5-year agreement to get paid a certain amount of money for that particular time. Now he goes and says that he wants to be paid more than what I signed for. Mr. Snyder commented that he is upset with what is going on. That's a lot of money people; he had no idea at this particular time obviously it is the worst time because of what happened to the taxes and then this happens at the same meeting. But you voted for it, good luck.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger

Nays: Snyder Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

ADDENDUM

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution #2026-82

Mr. Formica made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-82 authorizing a contract for the purchase of a 60x40 metal fabric roof building on a National Cooperative Contract in an amount not to exceed \$104,372.05. Seconded by Mrs. Carnes.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: Limon Abstentions: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Mr. Formica commented thanked everyone for coming out.

Mr. Snyder commented that he is glad the gentleman came forward who wanted to know what is going in town. There was a piece of garbage in the roadway for three weeks and never picked up. Our employees need to be woken up to see what is going on.

Mayor Sowden commented that he has to agree, it has been about 2 years and it has been slowly sliding down hill and needs to be corrected.

Mr. Snyder commented that he has been here a long time and still respects this town and has lived here his whole life; to see what it is going on and explain what needs to be done. I don't want to see people lose their homes, the tax structure is

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out of control. We are getting out of control. We have a little bit of backing through the cannabis, how long is that going to go.

Mayor Sowden commented that we need to concentrate on shared services.

Mrs. Heath commented that Mrs. Tatka brought up a good point, in the past when we had a reevaluation our tax rate was adjusted but she sees this time it was not.

Mrs. Tatka commented that Rachel made a motion to pay the senior center assistant at a rate of \$15.50 but the resolution says \$15.92. Which is it?

Mr. Spidaletto commented that the resolution is correct, that is minimum wage.

Mr. Ursin commented that because the resolution is correct then its ok.

Mrs. Tatka commented that if you wanted to cut the budget, you had your chance tonight by keeping the police chief at what he was making not giving him another raise. Nobody is going to merge with Franklin’s Police Department because we are overstaffed. You are not going to cut anything by your actions tonight.

Mr. Snyder commented that we were told, when going over the budget this year, that the surplus amount we had which we used \$750,000 of but we were told that we should not go under that amount, that’s hardly anything these days.

Mrs. Carnes commented that it was explained that you need to have a certain amount to pay bills for “x” amount of time.

Mr. Snyder commented that the committee wanted to do a little bit more but we thought it better that we didn’t. My understanding from what the CFO said it would be \$118 increase on the average assessed home.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items for discussion by the Mayor and Council, Mrs. Heath made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:18p.m., seconded by Mr. Skellenger. All were in favor.

John M. Sowden IV, Mayor

Colleen L. Little, Municipal Clerk