

**MINUTES OF THE ORGANIZATION MEETING
OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL
OF THE BOROUGH OF FRANKLIN
HELD AT THE FRANKLIN MUNICIPAL BUILDING
46 MAIN STREET, FRANKLIN, NJ AT 6:00PM ON
JANUARY 6, 2026**

Mayor Sowden called the meeting to order.

Mayor Sowden stated “this meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L. 1975, Ch. 231. It has been properly advertised and certified by the Clerk.”

Mayor Sowden invited all persons present to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

Roll Call of 2025 Borough Council Members

Mayor Sowden requested a roll call of the 2025 Governing Body:

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

Oaths of Office

- a. **Ms. Little** read the “Statement of Determination” of the Board of County Canvassers.
- b. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to Councilman-elect **Concetto Formica** for a three-year term as Councilman of the Borough of Franklin.
- c. **Mr. Jeffrey Parrott, County Clerk**, administered the Oath of Office to Councilman-elect **Stephen Skellenger** for a three-year term as Councilman of the Borough of Franklin.

Roll Call of 2026 Borough Council Members

Mayor Sowden requested a roll call of the **2026 Governing Body**.

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

Council Appointment: Council President

Mayor Sowden opened the floor for Council nominations to the position of **Council President** for 2026.

Mr. Skellenger nominated Mrs. Carnes as the Council President for the year 2026. Seconded by Mrs. Heath.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Formica, Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Carnes

Fire Department Chief and Line Officers

- a. **Mayor Sowden** recognized the Chief of the Franklin Fire Department for 2026, Corey Houghtaling.
- b. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to the Chief of the Franklin Fire Department for 2026, Chief Houghtaling.
- c. **Ms. Little** recognized Fire Chief Houghtaling who will introduce the 2026 Line Officers and Administrative Officers of the Franklin Fire Department.
- d. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to the **Line Officers and Administrative Officers** of the Franklin Fire Department for 2026.

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Walkkill Valley First Aid Squad Captain and Line Officers

- a. **Mayor Sowden** recognized the Captain of the Walkkill Valley First Aid Squad for 2026, Jennifer Friend.
- b. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to the Captain of the Walkkill Valley First Aid Squad for 2026, Jennifer Friend.
- c. **Ms. Little** recognized First Aid Captain Jennifer Friend who will introduce the 2026 Line and Administrative Officers of the Walkkill Valley First Aid Squad.
- d. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to the **Line and Administrative Officers** of the Walkkill Valley First Aid Squad for 2026.

Mayor’s Appointments

At this time, **Mayor Sowden** will present his nominations for appointment to the various positions of Borough Government for the year 2026.

Municipal Public Defender (1 yr.)	Orlando Rodriguez
Historian (1 yr.)	Phillip Crabb
Municipal Housing Liaison (1 yr.)	Neil Spidaletto
Right to Know Coordinator	Brian VanDenBroek
Assessment Search Officer (1 yr.)	Neil Spidaletto
Tax Search Officer (1 yr.)	Diana Falica
Borough Physician (1 yr.)	Dr. Bollard, Premier Health
School Crossing Guard Captain (1 yr.)	Rebecca Babcock
School Crossing Guards (1yr.)	Jaymie Babcock, Kathleen Clohessey, Becky Fiedler, Michelle Grieco, Susan Hardcastle, Melissa Holland, Emelita Naklicki, John Panso, Cara Ross, Robin Saraceni, Kim Siccardi, Diane Witherby

Mr. Snyder made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

Upon roll call vote:
Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder
Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Emergency Management Coordinator (3 yrs.) (Expires 12/31/2028)	Jim Williams
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Mr. Snyder made a motion confirm the Mayor’s Appointment. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:
Ayes: Carnes, Formica, Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder
Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Appointments: Planning Board

Mayor Sowden commented the **Council** shall, by motion, select a representative to serve on the Planning Board as a Full Member Class III (1 yr.)

Mr. Skellenger made a motion nominate Councilman Formica to serve as the Class III member for a 1-year term to the Planning Board. Seconded by Mrs. Carnes.

Upon roll call vote:
Ayes: Carnes, Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder
Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Formica

Appointments: Boards and Commissions

FRANKLIN/HARDYSTON JOINT RECREATION COMMITTEE

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All current Board of Recreation Committee Members 1-year term

RECREATION COMMITTEE

Mayor Sowden commented the **Council** shall, by motion, select a representative to service on the Recreation Committee as Council Liaison.

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to nominate Rachel Heath to serve as the Council Liaison to Recreation. Seconded by Mrs. Carnes.

All were in favor.

Member	3-year term (term expires 12/31/2028)	Christine Affinito
Member	3-year term (term expires 12/31/2028)	Crystal Talmadge
Member	3-year term (term expires 12/31/2028)	Jennifer Torres

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

All were in favor.

BOARD OF HEALTH

Member	4-year term (term expires 12/31/2029)	Aimee Zschack
Member	4-year term (term expires 12/31/2029)	Judith Williams
Secretary	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Colleen Little

Mrs. Heath made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

All were in favor.

LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Mayor	1-year term	John M. Sowden
Deputy	1-year term	Gregory Cugliari
Member/OEM	1-year term	Jim Williams
Member/FFD	1-year term	Corey Houghtaling
Member/WVFAS	1-year term	John Friend
Member	1-year term	Hector Acevedo
Member	1-year term	Neil Spidaletto
Member	1-year term	James Nidelko
Member	1-year term	Steve Sluka
Member	1-year term	Brian VanDenBroek

Mrs. Heath made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

All were in favor.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Member/Secretary	1-year term	Judy Williams
Member	1-year term	Keith Yodice
Member	1-year term	Dawne Rowe
Member	1-year term	Vacant
Member	1-year term	Vacant
Member	1-year term	Vacant
Member	1-year term	Vacant
Member/Council	1-year term	TBD
Alternate #1	1-year term	Vacant
Alternate #2	1-year term	Vacant

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Mayor Sowden commented the **Council** shall, by motion, select a representative to serve on the Economic Development committee as council liaison.

Mrs. Heath made a motion to nominate Patricia Carnes to serve as Council Liaison to the Economic Development Committee. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

All were in favor.

Mrs. Heath made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

All were in favor.

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Ex-Officio	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Mayor Sowden
Council Liaison	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	TBD

Mayor Sowden commented the **Council** shall by motion, select a representative to serve on the Historical Preservation Committee.

Mrs. Heath made a motion to nominate Joe Limon to serve as the Council Liaison to the Historical Preservation Committee. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

All were in favor.

Mrs. Heath made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

All were in favor.

RENT LEVELING BOARD

Member	5-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Vacant
Member/Council	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Vacant
Member/Council	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Vacant
Alt# 1	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Vacant
Alt#2	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Vacant
Attorney	1-year term (term expires 12/31/2026)	Angelo Bolcato Laddey, Clark & Ryan

Mrs. Heath made a motion to confirm the Mayor’s Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

All were in favor.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Council Representative: TBD

Mrs. Heath made a motion to nominate Stephen Skellenger as the community relations representative. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

All were in favor.

Recreation Committee, Economic Development, also serves as the “Awards Committee.”

Member:	Economic Development
Member:	Recreation Committee
Liaison:	TBD Joint Recreation Commission

Mrs. Heath commented that she would be on this committee. All were in favor.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE DUTIES

13. Council Committee Duties:

Ordinance:

Member: Concetto Formica
Member: Patti Carnes
Member: Gilbert Snyder
Alternate: Stephen Skellenger

Finance, Budget & Insurance:

Member: Patti Carnes
Member: Stephen Skellenger
Member: Gilbert Snyder
Alternate: Concetto Formica

Buildings & Grounds and Public Utilities:

Member: Concetto Formica
Member: Rachel Heath
Member: Joe Limon
Alternate: Stephen Skellenger

Personnel & Negotiations:

Member: Rachel Heath
Member: Stephen Skellenger
Member: Patti Carnes
Alternate: Joe Limon

Public Safety - Police & Fire:

Member: Concetto Formica
Member: Rachel Heath
Member: Stephen Skellenger
Alternate: Patti Carnes

Mr. Formica made a motion to confirm the Mayor's Appointments. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

All were in favor.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Mayor Sowden requested that all present review the consent agenda. If any member of the Council or public wishes an item on the consent agenda to be discussed and considered separately, a motion to this effect shall be made at this time.

1. **RESOLUTION #2026-01 – PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**
To adopt a Professional Services Resolution #2026-01 for various professional services (Borough Attorney, Borough Auditor, etc.).
2. **RESOLUTION #2026-02 - TEMPORARY BUDGET – CURRENT FUND**
To adopt resolution #2026-02, 2026 Temporary Municipal Budget Current Fund and sewer and water temporary operating budgets.
3. **RESOLUTION #2026-03 – RATES OF INTEREST/DELINQUENT TAX PENALTY**
To establish the rate of interest to be charged for non-payment of taxes and water/sewer bills, on or before the date when they would become delinquent and to authorize the Tax Collector to charge a six percent penalty to a taxpayer with a delinquency in excess of ten thousand dollars, who fails to pay the delinquency prior to the end of the calendar year, as per the attached Resolution #2026-03.
4. **RESOLUTION #2026-04 - OVERPAYMENT/UNDERPAYMENT OF TAXES**
To authorize the Tax Collector to cancel any record of overpayment or underpayment of taxes in the amount of \$10.00 or less for the calendar year 2025, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 54:4-99, as per the attached Resolution #2026-04.

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5. **RESOLUTION #2026-05 – MEETING DATES**
To establish the regular meeting nights of the Mayor and Council for the calendar year 2026, as per the attached Resolution #2026-05.
6. **RESOLUTION #2026-06 – DESIGNATE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS**
To designate the New Jersey Herald and the New Jersey Sunday Herald of Newton, N.J. to be the official newspapers of the Borough of Franklin for the year 2026, as per the attached Resolution #2026-06.
7. **RESOLUTION #2026-07 – LEGAL NOTICE PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS**
To establish legal notice publication requirements for the Borough of Franklin for the year 2026, as per the attached Resolution #2026-07.
8. **RESOLUTION #2026-08 – DEFENSE AGAINST TAX APPEALS**
To adopt Resolution #2026-08 to authorize the Borough Attorney and the Borough Tax Assessor to defend the Borough of Franklin against all tax appeals filed during the calendar year 2026.
9. **RESOLUTION #2026-09 – PAYMENT OF RECURRING BILLS RESOLUTION**
To adopt a Resolution #2026-09 for payment of recurring bills.
10. **RESOLUTION #2026-10 – TO ADOPT A CASH MANAGEMENT PLAN**
To adopt Resolution #2026-10 for the year 2026, to serve as the cash management plan of Franklin Borough.
11. **RESOLUTION #2026-11 – REAUTHORIZING PETTY CASH FUNDS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2026.**
To adopt Resolution #2026-11 reauthorizing petty cash funds for the calendar year 2026.
12. **RESOLUTION #2026-12 – DESIGNATING DEPUTY CUSTODIANS OF PUBLIC RECORDS.**
To adopt Resolution #2026-12 designating Deputy Custodians of public records.
13. **RESOLUTION #2026-13 - DESIGNATING PUBLIC AGENCY COMPLIANCE OFFICER (P.A.C.O.)**
To adopt Resolution #2026-13 designating Public Agency Compliance Officer (P.A.C.O.).
14. **RESOLUTION #2026-14 – APPOINTING A QUALIFIED PURCHASING AGENT**
To adopt Resolution #2026-14 authorizing the award of a purchasing agent contract to Robert Dolan of RMD Associates LLC to perform the duties of a Qualified Purchasing Agent for the year 2026.
15. **RESOLUTION #2026-15 – AUTHORIZING E-PROCUREMENT**
To adopt Resolution #2026-15 authorizing the Qualified Purchasing Agent to receive certain bids in accord with N.J.A.C.5:34-5.1, E-Procurement.
16. **RESOLUTION #2026-16 – AUTHORIZING WINDOW CONTRACTS**
To adopt Resolution #2026-16 permitting the award of window contracts under the New Jersey Election Transparency Act.
17. **RESOLUTION #2026-17 – GRANTING APPROVAL FOR CERTAIN PURCHASES THROUGH NEW JERSEY STATE CONTRACT AND/OR PURCHASING COOPERATIVES**
To adopt Resolution #2026-17 granting authority for approval of certain purchases through the New Jersey State Contracts and/or purchasing cooperatives for 2026.
18. **MINUTES OF MEETINGS**
A motion is in order to direct that copies of the minutes of meetings be made and delivered to each meeting of the Governing Body at least 24 hours prior to the next regular council meeting, in order that the reading of the minutes may be dispensed with at the meeting.

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19. RULES OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

A motion is in order to adopt the Rules and Regulations of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Franklin for the calendar year 2026.

20. FIRE DEPARTMENT LINE OFFICERS

A motion is in order to approve the ratification of 2026 Line Officers for the Franklin Fire Department, as per the recommendations submitted by Chief Corey Houghtaling.

21. FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU ATTORNEY

A motion is in order to approve the Borough Attorney as the official Fire Prevention Bureau Attorney for the calendar year 2026, in accordance with the requirements of the Uniform Fire Code.

After all persons present have had an opportunity to review the consent agenda and offer requests for changes, **Mayor Sowden** requested a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Mrs. Heath made a motion to approve the consent agenda for January 6, 2026.
Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Mayor's Statement

Mayor Sowden addressed the Council and the public with remarks concerning the priorities and goals for the Borough of Franklin in 2026.

Mayor Sowden commented that the other day he was looking through his paperwork and he found a newspaper article from 2023. Mayor Sowden commented that he had talked about water and his ideas of hoping to develop some kind of business in the Borough of Franklin that we could keep people; our tax payers working in the town and not have to commute. Mayor Sowden commented that pretty much everything that he said in that article is the same; nothing has changed in three years. Mayor Sowden is going to make a very conservative effort to develop more historic tourism for the Borough of Franklin and also would like to do eco-tourism. Mayor Sowden commented that we are working with rails to trails on a section that should be open by June which will be from Maple Road to Wildcat Road. Mayor Sowden commented that we may get a little more aggressive and move further out on to the Junction area; that is his goal. There have been a lot of interesting things that have happened here in Franklin and a lot of valuable historical information needs to be retained. Mayor Sowden wants to try to make this town on the best towns in the State of New Jersey; we have succeeded as we have Franklinites as the State Mineral

Council Comments

Mayor Sowden invited each member of the Council to offer remarks concerning the 2026 Council's goals and priorities.

Mrs. Heath wished every one a Happy New Year. Mrs. Heath congratulated Councilmen Skellenger and Formica on their reappointments and looks forward to working with them. Mrs. Heath commented that she feels that the town has seen growth in 2025 as new businesses opened and seem to be very successful. Special thank you to Chief Cugliari and the outstanding Franklin Police Department. Thank you to all of the volunteers serving on the many committees and special thank you to the Franklin Fire Department and Wallkill Valley First Aid Squad for their outstanding volunteerism. Mrs. Heath is looking forward to working with the Council in 2026 and it's going to be a great year.

Mr. Skellenger wished everyone a Happy New Year. Congratulated Councilman Formica on his reelection and all the members of the First Aid Squad and Fire Department. Congratulated all the local businesses that opened up in the last 3 years. Looks forward to working with the Council in 2026. Thanked the Police department for keeping Franklin safe.

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Mr. Formica wished everyone a Happy New Year. Thanked everyone for another opportunity. Mr. Formica commented that he takes his position seriously and its great having all of our volunteers, fire department, first aid squad and police department to work with; we try as much as we can to give you guys all the equipment needed to do what you do best. Mr. Formica commented that he is proud of the accomplishments and improvements we have made over the years; whether it be relations between departments and improvements made throughout the town.

Mr. Limon commented that he looks forward to working with the Mayor on preserving the history of Franklin. Mr. Limon referenced the pie chart that is in the municipal calendar and what percentage the Borough is responsible for. Mr. Limon is looking forward to working with everyone throughout the year.

Mrs. Carnes thanked everyone for coming out and congratulated Councilmen Formica and Skellenger on their reelection. Thanked her fellow council members for the nomination for Council president this year; it truly means a lot. Thanked the Police department, Fire department, First Aid Squad, DPW, Borough Employees and all the volunteers on the various committees. You all make up this town and it is truly appreciated what you all do day in and day out. Looks forward to working with everyone and having a great 2026.

Mr. Snyder wished everyone a Happy New Year. Congratulated Councilmen Skellenger and Formica on their reelection and Patti as Council president. Looking forward to working with everyone this year.

Mr. Spidaletto commented that he is looking forward to a productive 2026 and appreciates being here as Administrator.

Adjournment

There being no further items for discussion by the Mayor and Council, Mr. Snyder made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:40pm. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

All were in favor.

John M. Sowden IV, Mayor

Colleen L. Little, Municipal Clerk