

The Mayor and Council of the City of Franklin met in Regular Session on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at 6:00 PM at City Hall, 300 Iberia Street, Franklin, Louisiana. Mayor Eugene P. Foulcard called the meeting to order. Also present were Councilmembers Chuck Autin, Joseph Garrison, Lester Levine, and Jaime Robison, City Attorney Russel J. Cremaldi, and City Clerk Karen LeBlanc. Absent was Councilman Larry Guilbeau.

The invocation was offered by Mayor Foulcard and Councilman Robison led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

GUESTS:

Kristin Holcombe, Kolder, Slaven & Company, LLC, presented the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Audit Report. She presented the Mayor and Council with a summary of the presentation, the financial audit report with single audit report, and the year five state-wide agreed upon procedures. All three reports were submitted to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor prior to the statutory deadline of October 31st. Ms. Holcombe reviewed the summary report. She stated that unmodified opinions were issued on all of the city's financial statements; an adverse opinion was reported on the aggregate components which includes the Franklin City Marshal and City Court due to the financials not being included since the City presents financial statements of the primary government only.

Ms. Holcombe stated that management has adequately responded to findings and has begun implementing a corrective action plan and is taking a proactive stance. She did mention that recent utility increases may not fully satisfy some of the compliance requirements and get the Utility Fund's deficit and net loss to a net income. Further increases will need to be considered.

PUBLIC COMMENT (for items on the agenda):

Ian Ruskoski expressed interest in commenting on an item on the agenda. Mr. Ruskoski referenced item 9-B on the agenda where Mr. Bernard Daniels will speak on water system improvements. He stated that he is present as a resident of Franklin and believes that the residents are tired of hearing about what has not been done in the past. He asked what the plan was moving forward when it comes to Franklin's crumbling infrastructure.

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to accept the October 17, 2023 Regular Meeting minutes. Second by Councilman Robison and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Robison

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilman Guilbeau

A motion was made by Councilman Robison to accept the October 31, 2023 Special Meeting minutes. Second by Councilman Garrison and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Robison

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilman Guilbeau

MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE REPORT:

Mayor Foulcard presented his report. He stated that his administration has been very transparent. He referred to past issues of the Banner-Tribune where he and city have appeared on the front cover with headlines about the water system. He has consistently stated and posted throughout his tenure as mayor that our aging water distribution lines continue to plague us from time to time but more particularly during bouts of temperature changes or this past summer's severe drought. The drought has caused many lines to rupture. Currently, the lack of rain is causing salt-water intrusion in our source water. We continue to work with our Federal and State officials to rectify our City's 100 year old water distribution lines. The cost analysis performed by Miller Engineers in 2018 was at \$35 million to completely rehab our water distribution system.

He stated that in 2018 we ran new water lines in the Roseville and Norman Bauer Areas of town and began to rebuild the foundation of our water distribution system with new valves and hydrants being placed throughout the City.

He has forwarded letters of requests to both the Trump and Biden Administrations asking for the \$35 million dollars to completely upgrade our aging water distribution lines. Although

Congressman Clay Higgins immediately sent his office to Franklin along with Louisiana Rural Water Association the infrastructure bill was headed to Congress. Unfortunately there is no “free” money from the Federal Government. Whether it is grant funding or Capital Outlay funding the City must cover the usual 25% matching funds on the total amount awarded to the City. As the infrastructure dollars came to Louisiana, the Water Sector Grant Program was created by the Louisiana Office of Community Development and each municipality had to vie and produce the need for said dollars. Unfortunately Franklin did not qualify for both rounds of the Water Sector funding as municipalities with systems that were far worse than Franklin’s received the infrastructure funding. Thanks to Senator Brett Allain and State Representative Vinney St. Blanc the City of Franklin received the average awarded amount of water sector grant funds of \$2.4 million in Capital Outlay funding.

In the past few weeks the City has had many ruptures that our Water Distribution Department continues to address. He is thankful to the citizens of Franklin that continue to understand what his administration has consistently addressed for the past five years in council meetings, social media posts as well as utilizing our media partners both television and newsprint.

He stated that there is no special water distribution for the Mayor and Council. So what affects one affects us all. We will continue to fight through our struggles and for each and every dollar that we can garner through grant or capital outlay funding utilizing various avenues to do so. This is where the community comes in to play. Shop Local First, Eat Local First, Play Local First & Fuel Local First. This continues to help increase local tax revenues that the city utilizes for the 25% matching dollars for grants or capital outlay funding as required. We all play a part in rebuilding and revitalizing our City.

He stated he will not focus on the past but move forward to what we have at hand. His administration fights hard each and every day to rectify our aging infrastructure.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Mayor Foulcard stated that the September 2023 Financial Statement was presented to the Council.

Bernard Daniels, Director of Utilities, to discuss water system improvements. He stated that the City has approximately 161,000 feet of pipe; the cost to replace that much line is about \$95 million. If you replace the water line, you have to replace the road. He stated that 98% of our water lines are under the center of the road or under the sidewalk. If you take the old line out and put a new line in you have to replace the road. \$95 million at a 25% match is \$23 million. He said that the citizens could vote for a millage to improve the water system.

Mr. Daniels stated that the salt water intrusion (in the Bayou Teche) has improved with the recent rainfall and the change in the wind direction.

Mr. Ed Hay stated that the City has been replacing iron lines with PVC lines as breaks happen. Weather changes move the connections in the lines and cause breaks. Most water line breaks lately have been in the bell of the line. He discussed difficulty in getting Bond Commission approval for water plant improvements. He also stated that recently the state removed the 25% Capital Outlay match requirement for small communities under 6,500 in population. The City of Franklin is slightly larger; therefore, the match requirement stands.

Councilmen Garrison and Levine expressed appreciation for the workers that are battling the problems. They also expressed that the administration is not doing nothing; they are doing the best they can.

Chuck Bourgeois, Fire Chief, to discuss firefighting capabilities and emergency notification system. He stated that when water pressure is low he has protocols and agreements in place. Neighboring fire districts are contacted for additional resources.

Chief Bourgeois discussed grants that have been received to replace hydrants and water valves over the last three years. With these grants, so far, 20 locations have been addressed. Work on eight more locations will begin within the next month or two. Also, a new grant cycle will be applied for around the end of the year and, if awarded, eight more will be done. He stated one hydrant with valve costs \$6,750.00 to replace and does not include resurfacing of the street.

Chief Bourgeois discussed the emergency alert phone call system. Due to water main ruptures not being considered an emergency, the CodeRed system will no longer be able to be used for such notices. It will continue to be used for emergencies such as boil water advisories and other emergency situations. He stated that the City will continue to notify social media and local media

outlets of water outages. Other means of providing notifications to the public is currently being researched.

Councilman Garrison asked about other grants.

Chief Bourgeois stated that the Fire Department received \$26,000 in grants already this year. Two are currently pending for around \$395,000; \$335,000 of that amount is to purchase new radios, portables, mobiles, and pagers. It has been 12 years since these have been updated.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES:

A motion was made by Councilman Robison to introduce Ordinance No. 3446 – An ordinance declaring certain movable property no longer needed for public purposes as surplus movable property; due to said movable property constituting a burden of unnecessary expense and consuming needed space and offering said property for sale that could be utilized by others; authorizing the mayor and council of the City of Franklin to auction said surplus movable property through the sealed bid process to the bidder submitting the highest sealed bid.

A motion was made by Councilman Autin to introduce Ordinance No. 3447 – An ordinance of the mayor and city council of the City of Franklin, Louisiana, authorizing the city to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement transferring immovable property owned by the City of Franklin to St. Mary Council on Aging.

RESOLUTIONS:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt a Resolution designating the day and time of the Regular Council Meetings of the City of Franklin for the year 2024. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Robison
NAYS: None.
ABSENT: Councilman Guilbeau

A motion was made by Councilman Levine to adopt a Resolution regarding a partial settlement of the PFAS litigation. Second by Councilman Robison and carried. Roll call is as follows:
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Robison
NAYS: None.
ABSENT: Councilman Guilbeau

NEW BUSINESS:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to accept Change Order No. 1 for Asphaltic Concrete Street & Drainage Improvements to Cayce Street. Second by Councilman Autin and carried. Roll call is as follows:
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Robison
NAYS: None.
ABSENT: Councilman Guilbeau

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Foulcard made announcements for upcoming events including Bayou to Main Marketplace, Christmas Under the Lampposts, Franklin City-Wide Clean-Up, Mingle & Jingle, Christmas Lighting Contest, and New Year’s Eve Celebration.

Chief Chuck Bourgeois announced that the State Fire Marshal lifted the state-wide burn ban. He announced that the burn ban in Franklin has also been lifted.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Garrison. Second by Councilman Robison and carried.

ATTEST:

CITY OF FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA

Karen LeBlanc
Clerk of the Council

EUGENE P. FOULCARD, MAYOR