

The Mayor and Council of the City of Franklin met in Regular Session on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, 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, Pearl Rack, Joseph Garrison, Lester Levine, Jaime Robison, and City Clerk Karen LeBlanc. Absent was City Attorney Russel J. Cremaldi.

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

GUESTS:

Hardy Andrews, with Foley & Judell, LLP, discussed and allowed for questions regarding the proposed Revenue Anticipation Notes. He stated that the note is payable three months of the end of the current fiscal year (July 2026).

Phyllis Glover and Colleen Hammonds with Roots & Ribbons Foundation to promoted their "Puttin' on the Pink – 2025" event scheduled to be held on October 4, 2025 at Morey Park in Patterson.

Dr. Maisha Davis discussed services offered at Positive Transformation Health Services. The new psychiatric treatment center is located at 313 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in Franklin.

Jennifer Olivier, Owner of J's Barber College, discussed training offered at her school. Discussion held on potential partnership with St. Mary Parish School Board.

Efremzimbalist Randle promoted EBP Community Boxing's upcoming boxing show. Several participants, parents, coaches were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT (for items on the agenda): None.

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to accept the July 15, 2025 Regular Meeting minutes. Second by Councilman Robison and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE REPORT:

Mayor Foulcard presented his report and read the following statement:

Leadership is not about avoiding challenges it's about facing them head on. Today, I come before you not to make up any excuses, but to acknowledge the truth; our community's water system has been neglected for far too long. The problems we face are real, but so is our determination to fix them. I refuse to shy away from the tough decisions, because our families, children and our future deserve better. This is our moment to turn years of neglect into a new era of accountability and progress. I am sure many of you all already know I have been as transparent as a leader should always be.

The Reality of an Aging Water System. Our water system was built decades ago, and many of the pipes, pumps, and treatment equipment are far past their intended lifespan. Old infrastructure is more likely to break, which leads to service interruptions, water leaks, and costly emergency repairs. Without consistent reinvestment, the system cannot continue to safely and reliably deliver water to homes and businesses.

Rising Maintenance and Repair Costs. Emergency repairs on old pipes and equipment cost much more than planned upgrades. As the system ages, the number of water main breaks, leaks, and service disruptions increases each year. Replacing parts piecemeal is like putting a "band-aid" on a much bigger problem, it costs more in the long run.

Protecting Public Health and Safety. Clean, safe drinking water is not optional it is essential. An aging system risks contamination, low water pressure for fire protection, and disruptions

that affect schools, hospitals, and local businesses. Investing in upgrades ensures that families can trust the water coming out of their taps.

Meeting State and Federal Standards. Environmental and health regulations are stricter today than when our system was built years ago. This is the reason you receive letters advising what is happening today with our water system. In the past, DHH did not require letters to be sent to each household and business. Today, it is mandatory. Besides, I believe in transparency and not hiding anything when it comes to the quality of life. Without upgrades, the system may fail to meet required safety standards, which could result in fines, restrictions, or even state intervention.

Why Rate Increases Are Necessary. Rates must reflect the true cost of providing safe, reliable water. Current rates do not generate enough revenue to cover both day-to-day operations and the long-term upgrades. A modest, gradual increase now prevents a much larger burden later, avoiding sudden, steep hikes or a full system failure.

The Long-Term Community Benefits. Every dollar invested now extends the life of the system and reduces costly emergencies. Strong infrastructure supports property values, business growth, and community development. Rate increases are an investment in the health, safety, and future of our community.

Mayor Foulcard stated that everyone in the room has a cell phone which you can live without. When AT&T goes up on the rates you will pay those rates. You cannot live without water; it is the substance of life.

This is about fairness, safety, and responsibility. We can either invest in our water system now, while we still have control over the costs, or wait until emergency failures force higher bills and risk our community's well-being. These rate adjustments are not just about paying for water today they are about securing safe and reliable water for generations to come.

For too long, our water system has been neglected to the point where our transfer basin has never been cleaned in the years since installment. This is unacceptable, and it's a problem we can no longer ignore. There are many repairs and replacements that should have been addressed long before my time. Unfortunately, those issues were left unresolved, and I have inherited the problem. I am fully committed to facing it head on.

I am prepared to take whatever criticism or backlash may come, because my focus is on getting the job done and doing what is best for our community. The challenges we face are real, but so is my determination to solving this issue.

We now have a plan of action to fix these long standing issues, but it won't happen overnight.

I want to see real change, and I want to be that change. This council has stepped up to help us move forward with upgrades. I cannot do this by myself. These five council members make a difference. I am not in this fight alone. We want to do better.

Running to Facebook every time something happens does not solve the problem. I humbly ask that you contact my office directly and give us the opportunity to resolve your concerns.

We all know that no system is perfect, and yes, we will encounter flaws, but posting on social media will not fix them. Before social media, people reached out directly to the source, and that was how problems got solved.

Let's get back to doing things the right way: working together, person to person, to make sure your concerns are heard and addressed properly. We have great employees and people on our team who are both experienced and competent, and they are committed to helping resolve these challenges.

He stated that he was once called by a colleague and asked why water pressure was so low. At that moment, he was looking at distribution employee on a nine degree weather night in January with ice cycles on his back while working to fix a ruptured line so that citizens can

have water. The Fire Department had heaters set up so the workers would not develop hypothermia. Neighboring water systems sent help to us because it was crucial. Our Water Distribution crew gets the brunt of a lot of complaints because that is what the public sees but no one knows the challenges they face or what is happening behind the scenes.

Mayor Foulcard encouraged the public to call him, the councilmembers, or staff and ask questions. He thanked the public for their patience. We have been fighting this battle for some time. It did not get like this overnight. He thanked God for the Council and the employees that are willing to fight the good fight so that 20 or 30 years from now some other mayor and council are not fighting these same battles.

Councilman Garrison reiterated that these problems have been going on for decades. This administration inherited the problem. He expressed commitment to fixing the problems.

Councilwoman Rack stated that the decision to raise water rates was not done without warrant. She stated that a study was done, recommendations were considered, discussions were held and this is what was best for the City of Franklin. Councilwoman Race expressed that her bill increases just like everyone else. She stood behind her decision to vote for the water rate increase.

Councilman Autin stated that the city needs to be ran like a business. Raising the rates was a good business decision.

Councilman Robison stated that he stands by his decision to raise the water rates. He said the council did what they had to do to move the city forward.

Councilman Levine reiterated that the council's bill increases like everyone else's. He expressed that the city has to charge what it costs to make improvements.

Councilman Garrison mentioned that there are water systems all over the state in the same situation.

#### DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Mayor Foulcard mentioned that he had initially requested that Mr. Tony Sonnier with Louisiana Rural Water Association return to the meeting to discuss the water rate study but he had a prior engagement. Alternatively, he asked Mr. Ed Hay to discuss the study but Mr. Hay was unexpectedly unable to attend the meeting at the last minute. He will request that Mr. Sonnier attend the September meeting.

Chad Hebert, Water Plant Manager, discussed plant improvement progress. Mr. Hebert stated that he will speak about the water plant and the improvements that have been made over the last year. He mentioned that the public may not know that if we do not do a rate study and increase rates that the city is unable to seek funding for improvements. He discussed the exuberant cost for chemicals and treating water. He stated that 2024 was a tumultuous year for the water plant.

Mr. Hebert stated that the water plant is currently fully staffed with certified and qualified operators. A lot of improvements are being made. The transfer basin was cleaned out several months ago at a substantial cost, things are being fixed as they break, new state-of-the-art turbidity meters were purchased and installed, and new filter media was recently installed. He mentioned that a new treatment process is being implemented to address the effects of algae blooms that occur every year. He assured the public that the water that is produced at the plant is quality water.  
Discussion held.

Police Chief Cedric Handy reported on crime statistics in Franklin. He presented statistics on crime totals and arrests since 2022 representing a decrease in crime overall. He expressed a 21% decrease in shots fired calls from 2022 to 2023; a 52% decrease from 2023 to 2024; comparing the first half of 2024 to the first half of 2025 we have had a 20% decrease. Comparing 2024 to 2025 we went from 75 reports of shots fired to 12 reports. He credited

the decrease to citizen reports and the police department solving crimes. Additionally he mentioned that there has been a 3% spike in burglaries. He asked the public to lock their cars and sheds and be more mindful. Chief Handy mentioned that crime cameras are currently being installed around the city.

Mayor Foulcard stated that the June 2025 Financial Statements were presented to the council.

#### ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt Ordinance No. 3469 – 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. Second by Councilman Robison and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

#### RESOLUTIONS:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt a Resolution requesting that the St. Mary Parish Council re-calculate the cost for fire protection services provided by the City of Franklin in Fire District 5 and requesting that this calculation be reviewed and updated at five (5) year intervals. Second by Councilman Robison and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt a Resolution giving preliminary approval to the issuance of not to exceed One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) of Revenue Anticipation Notes of the City of Franklin, State of Louisiana; providing certain terms of said Notes; making application to the State Bond Commission for approval of said Notes; and providing for other matters in connection therewith. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rack to adopt a Resolution authorizing Mayor Eugene Foulcard to execute and submit any and all documents including, but not limited to, applications, award closing documents, request for funds, status reports to DRA for the Fiscal Year 2025 federal award program cycle and beyond. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt a Resolution authorizing Mayor Eugene Foulcard to make an application to the Louisiana Infrastructure Technical Assistance Corporation Matching Funds Grants Program. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

#### PROCLAMATIONS:

The Council unanimously approved a Proclamation declaring July 29, 2025 as Franklin Fire Department Day and celebrating the 178th anniversary of the Franklin Fire Department.

BIDS:

A motion was made by Councilman Autin to approve the contract award for the LCDBG Clearance Program, Multi-Property Clearance /Demolition Project to Gary Matte Builders, Inc. Second by Councilman Garrison and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

A motion was made by Councilman Autin to approve Substantial Completion for Filter Media Replacement. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:  
YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, Rack, and Robison  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Foulcard made announcements for upcoming events including the City-Wide Clean Up, and Bayou to Main Marketplace.

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

ATTEST:

CITY OF FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA

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Karen LeBlanc  
Clerk of the Council

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EUGENE P. FOULCARD, MAYOR