

**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 7, 2025**

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 by the Clerk."

Mayor Sowden led the assembly in the flag salute.

**Roll Call of 2024 Borough Council Members**

**Mayor Sowden** requested a roll call of the 2024 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 Councilwoman-elect **Patricia Carnes** for a two-year unexpired term as Councilwoman of the Borough of Franklin.
- c. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to Councilwoman-elect **Rachel Heath** for a three-year term as Councilwoman of the Borough of Franklin.
- d. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to Councilman-elect **Gilbert Snyder** for a three-year term as Councilman of the Borough of Franklin.

**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.

**Council Appointment: Council President**

**Mayor Sowden** opened the floor for Council nominations to the position of **Council President** for 2025.

Mr. Snyder nominated Mr. Skellenger as the Council President for the year 2025. Seconded by Mr. Limon.

Mrs. Carnes commented that as being new to the Council coming into this year, the process seemed very vague and stated that her vote will reflect as such.

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Carnes, Formica

**Fire Department Chief and Line Officers**

- a. **Mayor Sowden** recognized the Chief of the Franklin Fire Department for 2025, Corey Houghtaling.
- b. **Ms. Little** administered the Oath of Office to the Chief of the Franklin Fire Department for 2025, Chief Houghtaling.

**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

- c. **Ms. Little** recognized Fire Chief Houghtaling who will introduce the 2025 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 2025.

**Mayor’s Appointments**

At this time, **Mayor Sowden** presented his nominations for appointment to the various positions of Borough Government for the year 2025.

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Municipal Prosecutor (1 yr.)          | Timothy Profeta, Esq.   |
| Municipal Public Defender (1 yr.)     | Orlando Rodrigues, Esq.   |
| 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, Lisa Conte, Becky Fiedler, Michelle Grieco, Susan Hardcastle, Jacquelyn Kimmel, Emelita Naklicki, John Panso, Cara Ross, Robin Saraceni, Diane Witherby |

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

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 to nominate Councilman Formica to serve as the Class III member for a 1-year term to the Planning Board. Seconded by Mr. Snyder.

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

**Mayor Sowden** made the following appointments to the Planning Board:

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Mayor (Class I)   | Mayor Sowden    |
| Fire Safety (Class II) 1 yr. term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Jim Williams    |
| Member (Class IV) 4 yr. term (expires 12/31/2028)           | Wes Suckey      |
| Member (Class IV) 4 yr. term (expires 12/31/2028)           | Michael Raperto |
| Alternate #1 2 yr. term (term expires 12/31/2027)           | Sharon Schultz  |
| Alternate #2 2 yr. term (term expires 12/31/2027)           | James Affinito  |

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

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

**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

**Appointments: Boards and Commissions**

**FRANKLIN/HARDYSTON JOINT RECREATION COMMITTEE**

All current Board of Recreation Committee Members 1-year term

**RECREATION COMMITTEE**

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

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

|        |                                       |                   |
|--------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Member | 3-year term (term expires 12/31/2027) | Barbara Formica   |
| Member | 3-year term (term expires 12/31/2027) | Frederick Babcock |
| Member | 3-year term (term expires 12/31/2027) | Sarah McGreeby    |

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

Upon roll call vote:

Ayes: Carnes, Heath, Limon, Skellenger, Snyder

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: Formica

**BOARD OF HEALTH**

|           |                                       |                   |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Member    | 4-year term (term expires 12/31/2028) | Mary Bauberger    |
| Member    | 4-year term (term expires 12/31/2028) | Connie Cholminski |
| Secretary | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Colleen Little    |

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

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

**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 |

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

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

**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        |
| Alternate #1     | 1-year term | Vacant        |
| Alternate #2     | 1-year term | Vacant        |

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 the Council Liaison to the Economic Development Committee. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Mrs. Carnes 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

**HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

|            |                                       |                  |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Member     | 4-year term (term expires 12/31/2028) | Phillip R. Crabb |
| Member     | 4-year term (term expires 12/31/2028) | Judith Williams  |
| Ex-Officio | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Mayor Sowden     |

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

Mr. Formica made a motion to nominate Joe Limon to serve as the Council Liaison to the Historical Preservation Commission. Seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

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

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

**RENT LEVELING BOARD**

|                |                                       |  |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Member         | 5-year term (term expires 12/31/2026) | Vacant                                 |
| Member/Council | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Vacant                                 |
| Member/Council | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Vacant                                 |
| Alt# 1         | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Vacant                                 |
| Alt#2          | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Vacant                                 |
| Attorney       | 1-year term (term expires 12/31/2025) | Angelo Bolcato<br>Laddey, Clark & Ryan |

**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

Mr. Limon commented that he will volunteer to be on this committee if the need arises.

Mrs. Carnes 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

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS:**

Council Representative: Patricia Carnes

Mrs. Heath made a motion to 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

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

|          |               |                             |
|----------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Member:  | Judy Williams | Economic Development        |
| Member:  | Patti Carnes  | Recreation Committee        |
| Liaison: | Rachel Heath  | Joint Recreation Commission |

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

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

**COUNCIL COMMITTEE DUTIES**

**12. Council Committee Duties:**

**Ordinance:**

Member: Mr. Skellenger

Member: Mr. Formica

Member: Mrs. Carnes

Alternate: Mr. Snyder

**Finance, Budget & Insurance:**

Member: Mrs. Carnes

Member: Mr. Skellenger

Member: Mr. Snyder

Alternate: Mrs. Heath

**Buildings & Grounds and Public Utilities:**

Member: Mr. Formica

Member: Mr. Limon

Member: Mrs. Heath

Alternate: Mr. Skellenger

**Personnel & Negotiations:**

Member: Mrs. Heath

Member: Mrs. Carnes

Member: Mr. Limon

Alternate: Mr. Snyder

**Public Safety - Police & Fire:**

**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

Member: Mr. Formica  
Member: Mrs. Heath  
Member: Mr. Skellenger  
Alternate: Mrs. Carnes

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

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

**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.

**RESOLUTION #2025-01 – PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

To adopt a Professional Services Resolution #2025-01 for various professional services (Borough Attorney, Borough Auditor, etc.).

**RESOLUTION #2025-02 - TEMPORARY BUDGET – CURRENT FUND**

To adopt resolution #2025-02, 2025 Temporary Municipal Budget Current Fund and sewer and water temporary operating budgets with attached exhibit A entitled Borough of Franklin 2025 Temporary Budget Exhibit A.

**RESOLUTION #2025-03 – 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 #2025-03.

**RESOLUTION #2025-04 - 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 2024, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 54:4-99, as per the attached Resolution #2025-04.

**RESOLUTION #2025-05 – MEETING DATES**

To establish the regular meeting nights of the Mayor and Council for the calendar year 2025, as per the attached Resolution #2025-05.

**RESOLUTION #2025-06 – 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 2025, as per the attached Resolution #2025-06.

**RESOLUTION #2025-07 – DEFENSE AGAINST TAX APPEALS**

To adopt Resolution #2025-07 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 2025.

**RESOLUTION #2025-08 – PAYMENT OF RECURRING BILLS RESOLUTION**

To adopt a Resolution #2025-08 for payment of recurring bills.

**RESOLUTION #2025-09 – TO ADOPT A CASH MANAGEMENT PLAN**

To adopt Resolution #2025-09 for the year 2025, to serve as the cash management plan of Franklin Borough.

**RESOLUTION #2025-10 – REAUTHORIZING PETTY CASH FUNDS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2025.**

To adopt Resolution #2025-10 reauthorizing petty cash funds for the calendar year 2025.

**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

**RESOLUTION #2025-11 – DESIGNATING DEPUTY CUSTODIANS OF PUBLIC RECORDS.**

To adopt Resolution #2025-11 designating Deputy Custodians of public records.

**RESOLUTION #2025-12 - DESIGNATING PUBLIC AGENCY COMPLIANCE OFFICER (P.A.C.O.)**

To adopt Resolution #2025-12 designating Public Agency Compliance Officer (P.A.C.O.).

**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.

**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 2025.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT LINE OFFICERS**

A motion is in order to approve the ratification of 2025 Line Officers for the Franklin Fire Department, as per the recommendations submitted by Chief Corey Houghtaling.

**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 2025, 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 for January 7, 2025. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

Mayor Sowden asked that Resolution 2025-01 be removed from the consent agenda and be considered separately.

Mrs. Heath made a motion to approve the consent for January 7, 2025 with the removal of Resolution 2025-01. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

Upon roll call vote:

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

Nays: None Absent: None Abstentions: None

Mayor Sowden commented that he has a concern with Van Cleef Associates for the contract of Borough Engineers. Mayor Sowden commented that Mike Vreeland as the principal engineer for the Borough of Franklin, which is already our water/sewer engineer and I feel he is very effective in those positions but I wonder if the council has looked into the fact that he would be going in a lot of other different directions and whether or not that is a good move at this time. He was also comparing the pricing per hour for each proposal received and he noticed that the numbers were a little higher and the other concern is that we have used French & Parrello for 3 years now and that have a lot of institutional knowledge as to what has been going on in Franklin and what grants we are going after. They have also done some design effects for us. He wondered going forward will the engineer from VanCleef feel comfortable with that or will we have to rebuild the project we are working on. Mayor Sowden commented that he would like to have more information on this.

Mr. Formica commented that as far Mr. Vreeland, we are just approving Van Cleef as the engineer. As far Mr. Vreeland being the head engineer that would be something done internally at Van Cleef. I know for the past couple years there has been some issues with French and Parrello. There are still on going issues/current ones that need to be

## MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025

remediated. Mr. Formica commented that as for the projects that they are working some are being wrapped up and none were committed; they were only concepts.

Mayor Sowden commented that the Council has reviewed this and he has a different opinion about the engineer. He would want to make sure that Mike Vreeland is not always the engineer on these projects because he can only go in so many different directions.

Mr. Skellenger made a motion to accept Resolution 2025-01, VanCleeef. Seconded by Mr. Formica.

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 2025.

Mayor Sowden thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and wished everyone a happy and healthy new year. Mayor Sowden commented that this is our 112<sup>th</sup> Reorganizational Meeting since 1913. I am proud of where we have been coming from, we are evolving which is a never ending kind of process between ourselves the Council and Mayor. Our opinions, mine are very strong about the history of Franklin and it is something that I feel great respect for because of what these people had to go through to make a living, have a family and have a decent life. I know some people vilify the Zinc Company and say that they were slave drivers. For that era of time, I do not think that there were very many companies out there that were too concerned. I have to say that the Zinc Company did build a hospital, built the neighborhood house and they did a lot to educate the "foreigners" that were coming in at that time so that they could speak English, how they brought their children up, there was a lot. I find it hard, yes on one hand, I find part of the problem that the Zinc Company was somewhat of a villain but still they had the right ideas and they made this town work from the 1880's to 1913. I do not want to forget that and I really hope that I can educate the Council in that so that they will have the same kind of respect or ideas about our past and how we can capitalize on it. We have got a lot of good projects going such as the rails to trails, development of the lands around Franklin. We are trying to make Franklin a cost effective town and I think we are getting there but it is not an easy task. I hope we can all work well together and understand a lot of our misconceptions and misinformed ideas and make this a better town that it is already.

### Council Comments

**Mayor Sowden** invited each member of the Council to offer remarks concerning the 2025 Council's goals and priorities.

Mr. Limon commented that he echoes the Mayor's statements. I would love to see Franklin always remember its past. I know we have an individual out there (Mrs. Williams) who is a very upbeat lady about it along with Phil Crabb and looking forward to working with the Historian. One other thing I learned over the last few years, this is not 1968, things evolve and its not the same but we also want it remembered. I just want to hope that we can keep our portion of the taxes down. Thank you for letting me work with you and hopefully we can look forward.

Mrs. Carnes thanked everyone for coming out this evening. Mrs. Carnes stated that she is looking forward to working with the Council this year.

Mr. Snyder thanked everyone for coming out this evening. Mr. Snyder commented that there is a lot that needs to be done and we will be working on it this year. Mr. Snyder thanked the dedicated employees of the town and they have done a great job and the year to come.

Mrs. Heath read the following statement:

I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.



**MAYOR & COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2025**

Congratulations Councilman Snyder on your re-election and congratulations Councilwoman Carnes on your election; welcome aboard. Congratulations to 2025 Council President Stephen Skellenger.

Thank you to our Volunteer Franklin Fire Department, the volunteer Wallkill Valley First Aid Squad as well as all the volunteers on all of the Borough Boards and Committees. "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time: they just have the Heart."

Thank you to the Franklin PD, DPW and our office staff for all their hard work and dedication.

Thanks to Councilman Formica for your guidance and knowledge.

My wonderful family who always are there to support me (whether they agree with me or not); and to my dear friends who make my life fun. Thank you all!

2025 is a new beginning with our new administrator Neil Spidaletto and our new RMC Colleen Little (Darlene did leave us in good hands).

I am looking forward to working with the Mayor and Council moving forward with many new projects in 2025.

Mr. Skellenger wished everyone a happy new year. Mr. Skellenger thanked everyone for their support and congratulated Mrs. Carnes, Mr. Snyder and Mrs. Heath for being sworn in this evening and I look forward to working with you. We have a lot of exciting things for 2025; one being that the real id deadline is this year and we are trying to set a date of the MVC Mobile Unit to come to Franklin, hopefully in March. Mr. Skellenger looks forward to working with everyone this year.

Mr. Formica thanked all the volunteers, first responders and staff; you guys really make the town run. Being up here you get to make some difficult decisions but you guys are really our day to day operations and you really mean a lot. It is kind of easy, in a way, to be a good councilperson when you have a great staff around you. Mr. Formica is looking forward to this year; there are some projects to finish up and new ones to start. There are still some areas we can improve on and to move forward but still pay homage to our history; we have to find a happy balance to do that. Looking forward to working with everyone this year.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items for discussion by the Mayor and Council, Mr. Formica made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:52p.m., seconded by Mr. Skellenger.

All were in favor.

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John M. Sowden IV, Mayor

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Colleen L. Little, Municipal Clerk