

Franklin Borough Planning Board
Meeting Minutes for
May18, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Mr. Estes. Mr. Estes the assembly in the flag salute. Mr. Estes read the Statement of Compliance pursuant to the "Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975."

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Floy Estes Chairman (Present)
Mrs. Keri Marino Vice Chairwomen (Present) 7:06
Mr. John Sowden, Mayor (Absent)
Mr. Concetto Formica Councilman (Present)
Mr. Suckey (Absent)
Mr. James Nidelko (Present)
Mr. Jim Williams (Present)
Ms. Sharon Schultz (Present)
Mr. George Drossel (Present)
Mr. James Affinto, Alternate #1 (Present)

ALSO PRESENT: Robert Correale, Planning Board Attorney

APPROVAL OF ESCROW REPORT:

Mr. Williams made the motion to approve the Escrow report for May 18, 2026

Seconded by Mr. Drossel

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Drossel, Nidelko, Estes, Marino, Schultz, Williams, Affinto

NAYS: NONE

ABSTENTIONS:

APPLICATIONS FOR COMPLETENESS:

390 Rutherford Ave LLC. 390 Rutherford Avenue Block 605 Lot 5
Preliminary & Final Site Plan

Mr. Estes asked Mr. Knutelsky to proceed with his report.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that he would be reading from his May 14, 2026 report.

Mr. Knutelsky summarized his completeness report and asked the planning board to consider deeming the application complete with his recommendation from his completeness report.

Mr. Estes asked if any of the board members had any questions.

Mr. Estes reminded the board members that this portion of the meeting was for completeness only and that the next meeting would be where board members would have the chance to ask questions in regards to the actual project. Mr. Estes Stated tonight we are just here to deem the application complete at this time based off of Mr. Knutelsky's report.

With that being said Mr. Estes asked for a motion to deem the application complete at this time including all waivers that Mr. Knutelsky spoke of when reading his report.

Ms. Schultz made the motion to deem the application complete.

Mr. Affinto seconded the motion.

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Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: **Drossel, Formica, Nidelko, Estes, Marino, Schultz, Williams, Affinto**

NAYS: NONE

ABSTENTIONS:

Mr. Estes stated that the next application on the agenda for completeness is

Ascend NJ LLC 24 Munsonhurst Rd Block 2401 Lot 20& 21

Amended Preliminary & Amended Final Site Plan

Mr. Estes stated that the applicant stated that they would only be prepared for completeness only at this time and asked to move their hearing to a later date.

Mr. Knutelsky stated yes, that is correct.

Mr. Estes stated that he would have Mr. Knutelsky read from his May 14 completeness report at this time.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that he like Mr. Estes stated would be reading from his May 14th report.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that he wanted to remind the board that this application was first before us back in November where we deemed the application incomplete because of a lot of different information being missed one of the biggest ones being having 12 Munsonhurst property included in the application.

Mr. Knutelsky proceeded with summarizing his report dated May 14th. Mr. Knutelsky summarized his report listing the waivers. Concluding that his recommendation to the board be to deem the application complete at this time including all the waivers including the temporary waivers for completeness only.

Mr. Estes asked if there were any questions. Not hearing any Mr. Estes asked for a motion to deem the application complete at this time.

Mr. Williams made the motion. Seconded by Ms. Schultz

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: **Drossel, Formica, Nidelko, Estes, Marino, Schultz, Williams, Affinto**

NAYS: NONE

ABSTENTIONS:

CORRESPONDENCE:

Letter from Franklin Boro Apartments, LLC

PRELIMINARY MAJOR SITE PLAN, USE "D" VARIANCE AND BULK "C"

VARIANCE RELIEF

104 MAIN STREET

BLOCK 1004, LOT 2

APPLICATION # PB-09-25-01

Mr. Correale stated that Mr. Brady reviewed this and gave him some notes about this letter.

Mr. Brady explained that they will need a hearing date that needs to be noticed. Because there are some variances concerns.

Mrs. Babcock stated is this something that would be on the agenda for the next meeting in June.

If so, there are already to large applications on the agenda for the June meeting.

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The board discussed having this application moved to the July agenda due to the June agenda being full already.

Mr. Knutelsky stated what about using the June Workshop meeting for this application only.

Mr. Estes liked that idea and asked if June 3rd would work for everyone to hear that application.

The board agreed.

Mrs. Babcock stated as long as the applicant was able to notice in time, we will be all set for Wednesday June 3rd.

OLD BUSINESS:

TCC Meeting Memo – Dave Brady

Mr. Estes gave a brief summary of the TCC meeting that was held on May 4, 2026 for 46-29 Church Street.

Mr. Estes stated that they had many ideas and almost wanted to do too much in a smaller area.

Mr. Estes stated that the committee spoke at length with the applicant giving him different ideas of what might work there but, in the end, both the committee and the applicant said that they need to go back to the “drawing Board” and come up with new ideas, especially with the lack of parking the property will allow.

Mr. Estes suggested they come back to the TCC board when they narrow it down to exactly what they want to have on that property. Right now, there are too many ideas floating around to come up with a solid application to bring to the full board.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ms. Schultz stated that she printed out an article and shared it with the board.

Mr. Estes asked her to briefly summarize what exactly the article was about and how it effects the planning board.

Ms. Schultz stated that she has read in this article and a few others now that the legislatures are looking to bypass local planning & zoning boards.

Ms. Schultz stated that she just wanted to bring it to the board’s attention. She asked if everyone could read the article that she printed out.

Mr. Estes stated that he wonders if Jessica would have a better idea on this and if she has heard anything about this.

Ms. Schultz stated that she gave the article to Ms. Babcock to send to Jessica as well to get her thoughts on it.

Mr. Formica stated that the board can take the time to read the article and maybe at the next meeting the board comes up with a statement to pass on the council to pass a resolution stating that the Franklin Borough Planning Board is not in favor of this idea.

Mr. Estes stated yes, lets make sure everyone has the chance to read it and let’s hear from Mrs. Caldwell as well and see what her thoughts are on the topic before we go ahead and do anything as a board. Mr. Estes thanked Ms. Schultz

The board members agreed.

Mr. Estes stated that he would move on to the next agenda item.

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DISCUSSION:

Accessory buildings recommendations – Jim Williams

Mr. Williams explained that the Borough currently has a one size fits all kind of ordinance when it comes to accessory structures.

Mr. Williams stated that a few people have come to him discouraged because they would like to put up a garage, shed or even a pole barn on their property but they cannot because the current ordinance does not allow for it.

If you look around town there are a lot of homes that do not have the property for large accessory structures because their property size would not allow for it.

However, there are other parts of town with homes that may have the lot size and or acreage to accommodate a larger sized accessory structure.

Mr. Williams handed out a suggested building size per size of one's lot.

Mr. Williams stated that they would still have to keep in mind of the side setbacks.

The board members discussed at length the different suggestions that Mr. Williams had nicely put together on his handout.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that he might not agree with all the sizes for particular lot sizes but he believes that it's a good starting point for sure and that the board may be able to use that as a guide when putting something together to give to the council as a suggestion to modify the existing ordinance that is in place.

Mr. Estes stated that he would like to the board members to read over the handout that Mr. Williams gave out do research of their own to see the different lot sizes and town.

Mr. Estes stated that we will readdress this at another meeting when the board and our professionals have more time to look into it and suggest how the board should go about writing up something along these lines to the council to help the homeowners out who have the property to be able to build larger accessory buildings on their larger lots. The board members agreed and stated that this is something that the board should definitely consider.

Mr. Estes thanked Mr. Williams and moved on to the next item on the agenda.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Estes asked for a motion to open the meeting to the public.

Ms. Schultz made the motion and All were in favor.

David Thompson approached the microphone and stated his name and gave his address.

Mr. Thompson stated like the Sussex County Motto Says "Sussex County Motto is People and Nature together" That's how it should remain. Mr. Thompson stated he choices to live her for the quiet open space very rural area. Mr. Thompson stated that he is not for any sort of data centers or warehouses. They use a lot of our energy; they are noisy and bring unwanted industrial development and unnecessary traffic.

Mr. Thompson urges the borough to be proactive and protect our animals, our nature and our communities by not allowing such projects into our town.

Mr. Thompson is asking the town to ban AI data centers and large-scale data centers all together.

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Mr. Thompson thanked the board for their time and consideration. God Bless you all and God Bless America.

The Board thanked Mr. Thompson as well and stated that it is something that the board will discuss and consider.

The board members spoke at length of different rumors that they have heard in regards to data centers being built.

Mr. Estes stated that he would like to proactive about the development of large-scale data centers.

However, like Mr. Knutelsky explained not all data centers are bad and not all data centers need large or overly large space.

Mr. Knutelsky explained that the word "Data Center" is a hot topic. A buzz word some would say to get everyone worked up not knowing that not all data centers are bad. Mr. Knutelsky stated that data centers have been around a lot longer than most think. It's just like anything else in the early 2000's cell towers were the "not in my backyard" issue now we have data centers.

Mr. Knutelsky stated like everything else you have to treat each application fairly.

Krista Puffer – 220 North Church

Ms. Puffer stated that she is still learning all the ins and the outs of what Data centers are and what they do to a community once they come into a town like ours.

Ms. Puffer stated that it seems like if there is nothing in place for these billion-dollar developers to come in and make it next to impossible not to approve their applications because the towns have nothing in place to stop them.

Ms. Puffer stated that she would just like the board and townspeople to be proactive and seriously thing of putting something in place to not make it so easy for these types of developments to come into our communities.

Ms. Puffer thanked the board for their time and returned to her seat.

Mr. Estes stated that the board members and the professionals would discuss and come up with something that would protect both the town & residents for future developments that might not fit into what our town is looking to be in years to come.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: The meeting will be adjourned from executive session with no other decisions being made, with no reason to return to the public meeting.

Mr. Estes asked for a motion to enter into executive session.

Ms. Schultz made the motion. Seconded by **Mr. Drossel**

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