



TOWN OF FRANKLINTON
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State of the Town - 2008
Mayor Elic A. Senter
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To be certain, 2008 was a great year in the Town of Franklinton. While there were many moments of adversity, there were also many accomplishments that have helped to set our Town and community on a course for prosperity in the future. As we move forward with the current year, now is the time to take a look back to ensure that we take our lessons from the past to inform the future.

In constructing the budget for the 2008-09 fiscal year, the Board of Commissioners were very diligent in working to maintain a constructive, efficient and manageable budget. Within that process, the Board was able to adjust our utility rates so that those utility customers who use less water (thus producing less sewer output) aren't paying for water and sewer that they aren't using. This has been of great benefit to our senior citizens, many of whom were vocal about this issue, as well as to those who are able to conserve. While not everyone saw a huge savings, most everyone served by the Town's utility system saw some savings.

In the process of examining our utility system, Town staff members were able to move forward with projects to rehabilitate our aging sewer system made possible through grants obtained in the previous year. We received word early in the year that we had received an additional \$338,000 grant from the NC Rural Center to complete the major project initially funded through the grant from the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund. In February 2009, the bid process was opened, and the Town received a low bid of just under \$450,000 for the project as a whole – a project that was estimated to cost over \$1.3 million. We are in high hopes that the Town will have an opportunity to converse with both the NCCWMTF and NCRC to be able to utilize those remaining funds in order to move forward in servicing our sewer rehabilitation needs.

As most everyone is aware, there was another major grant project achieved by the Town staff in the past year, that of the NC Rural Center grant for what is referred to locally as the 'Hardee's Project', a project to bring sewer to the west side of US Highway 1 from Pocomoke Road to NC Highway 56. Initial reports were that Hardee's (Bodde-Noell Enterprises) were able to bring 21 full time jobs, this estimate has been lowered, which may of course impact grant funding as well as the amount that the Town is required to fund. The Town is still actively seeking grant funding to complete the project; if we are unable to fund the remainder of the project through grant funding, we will secure the lowest interest rate possible for a loan to complete this project which is of vital need to the future of the Town.

The Town has also applied for several other grants. Towards the end of 2008, Town staff applied for a grant to create a water reuse facility in conjunction with the Olde Liberty Golf

Course and Country Club. This project would cost an estimated \$2.5 million, and would route nearly all of the Town's municipal 'gray water,' water that is cleaned through sewage processing, to the golf course so that potable drinking water is not used to maintain grass and fields, which will have a great ecological impact. As well, following conversations I had with Town staff, we have applied for a Safe Routes to School grant which will hopefully be able to be used to create a sidewalk on Hillsborough Street from Mason Street to Person Street at Franklinton Elementary School. We are hopeful that this grant process will allow us to begin expanding our sidewalks in Franklinton. We are also actively pursuing other grant programs, and are examining our sidewalk infrastructure in creating our Capital Improvement Plan. A third grant that the Town has requested is to fund the creation of a true, fully developed Capital Improvement Plan, which would guide our budgeting and project funding over the course of the next 25 years. This plan would consider water, sewer, streets, sidewalks, and other services such as police and planning.

Our Police Department has continued to work towards improving services and the safety of our citizens. With the continued use of Kado, our K-9 officer, we have been able to prevent thousands of dollars worth of drugs from moving into our streets. We have purchased two new police cruisers so that our fleet is up to date and able to be maintained for a longer service life. The department also completed its full review of standard operating procedures, adopting a new, revised system of procedures in mid-2008. These procedures guide the daily work of the department. Additionally, the department received a portable speed check device which can be stationed around Town so that individual drivers will know their speed as they travel our streets and highways.

The Police Department also held the Town's annual National Night Out celebration at the Franklinton Park in August. This event, Franklinton's 17th, was an incredible success, with over 300 people attending, and many prizes given away. Officers were able to network with citizens, hearing concerns and building relationships. Proceeds from the raffle held at National Night Out were used as tradition to host a luncheon for the Senior Citizens Center on Halloween. Town staff and Board members continue to work to support our Senior Center of Excellence, and have begun receiving monthly updates from Center Director Patrick Woods as a result.

As well, our Public Works Department continues to work to maintain clean streets and sidewalks, repair broken water and sewer lines, and to maintain our public utility system. Town staff in this department work hard to ensure that when there are problems, they are resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. They are also some of the most supportive people one could ever hope to work with, and no doubt this is a tribute to their department head, who consistently works to ensure the success of all Town events, regardless of his own involvement. Without the support of the Public Works Department, it would indeed be difficult to host events such as Frankenfest on Main, Fun in the Sun, the Christmas Parade, Open House at Town Hall, and others. It is also thanks to this department that our streets are clear as quickly as possible when we have inclement weather conditions such as snow (which we finally got in January). Our gratitude, as always, to these dedicated employees.

Board members and Town staff are also working diligently to update (and in some cases, overhaul) the Town's Code of Ordinances. Once this project, which has been underway for

nearly two years, is complete, we will do our best to publish a PDF version on our Town website for citizen use. Our Town staff is not only working tirelessly to make this project happen, but they also work hard to make other projects and events occur. Without the hard work and dedication of all of our Town staff, and their personal and professional involvement in the community, it is certain that organizations such as the Uptown Revitalization Committee, the Arts Alive Committee, the Tree and Beautification Committees, and others would not be able to be successful. Many nights Town staff can be found either at Town Hall or other meetings, working to ensure Franklinton continues to move forward. Again, I thank you on behalf of this Board and our citizens.

The Town has worked hard to step up efforts to address citizens concerns. In response to issues brought forth by staff at Franklinton High School and Franklin County Schools, our Police Department adjusted its schedule so that there is an overlap of officers during the dismissal of school at Franklinton High. Town staff and Board members also worked to determine which streets were truly unsafe to have curbside parking at the request of several citizens in various parts of the Town. Due to this, several streets were added to the parking ordinance for the Town. As well, the Board of Commissioners and I created a Town Hall Open House day, held once per quarter and on a Saturday when possible, so that citizens who may not ordinarily be able to connect with those charged with governing the Town would have that opportunity. While we have not had the participation we would like, these events have offered the Town an opportunity to shine a spotlight on several programs of the Town. Again, we invite all citizens to participate in these Open House events.

In addition to the Open House events, we have worked to increase our efforts to communicate with our citizens. The Town debuted our website (www.franklintonnc.us) in early February 2008, and we continue to expand, upgrade and update our website so that it will be able to address citizens information needs. Our website contains minutes and agendas, the Town's budget, e-mail addresses for all Town staff and our Board, as well as much more information regarding committees, commissions and Town departments. As well, we have continued our commitment to publishing a quarterly newsletter to ensure the announcement of important information and upcoming events. While the newsletter is important, we are also working towards reducing the amount of paper and postage required to produce the newsletter by offering our citizens the opportunity to receive the newsletter and other information by e-mail.

One of our biggest accomplishments of 2008 was the hiring of a Town Manager. Larry Carver, who served as interim manager for the first half of 2008, was selected among a pool of applicants to head Town staff in June. Mr. Carver has been a true asset to the Town, pursuing many grant opportunities and moving quickly to bring projects to fruition and to just as expediently see them efficiently carried out to bring them to a close. He is working to identify areas in which the Town can be more efficient, thus saving our taxpayers and utility customers much needed dollars. Thanks to Mr. Carver's guidance and his collaborative efforts with both myself and our Board, we have opened a new Town Hall Annex which has tripled the seating capacity for our Board meetings and workshops, as well as gained over 500 square feet of office space in the main Municipal Building, which will be used to expand the Planning and Zoning department, and make more effective the office space used by the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk. Staff will also gain access to a new conference room. Mr. Carver has also led efforts to

rehabilitate a Town-owned building just off Main Street to become new office space for the local magistrates.

Within our community, we have also seen a great deal of growth and celebration. The Franklinton American Legion Post 52 again held their Stand Up for America event on July 4. The event was attended by over 2,000 people, and even though it was nearly rained out (and many of us were rained on later), it was a wonderful event and a great asset to the Town. The Franklinton Township Chamber of Commerce has also seen a resurrection, which will hopefully be a boon to our business community. The Chamber is working to create events and benefits for businesses that will support those businesses and urge citizens to shop locally, and informing citizens of the benefits of doing such. The Chamber held its annual Christmas parade in December, and announced plans to bring back the Fun in the Sun event this spring.

Several committees of the Town have also seen a great deal of activity, thanks to the citizens and staff who participate. The Uptown Revitalization Committee was able to begin moving forward with many of its major goals for 2008, including the completion of the Uptown Streetscape Plan (on display at Town Hall), the creation of information packets for those interested in becoming business citizens in the uptown business district, and a couple of Movies on Main events at which movies are shown free of charge for all citizens. The URC is moving forward in 2009 with Movies on Main, hosting the event on the second and fourth Saturday of every month beginning April 25 and ending September 26. Also, the URC again hosted Frankenfest on Main, which, though also rained on, wasn't rained out. In 2008, the event attracted nearly 80 vendors, and the entertainment stage was full the entire day. Thanks to a grant from the Franklin County Tourism Development Authority, the event also turned a profit for the first time. Frankenfest will again be held this year on the last Saturday of October, which this year falls on Halloween. We look to an even bigger and better event this year. The URC continues its candy and drink sales at Town Hall which provide a modest income (about \$500-\$750 per year) and members are hopeful that the 2009-10 budget will provide the opportunity for uptown businesses to participate in a façade grant program.

As well, the Town's Arts Alive Committee was very active toward the latter part of the year. In October, committee members hosted the annual Pumpkin Carving Contest and Costume Contest, which was the largest ever, with over 200 pumpkins entered. During the holiday season, the committee held its first Community Holiday Concert, presented in lieu of the Northeast Piedmont Chorale which held its concert in Louisburg this year. The Community Holiday Concert was attended by nearly 150 citizens, and six local performers (or groups) were presented to the audience. Also a first for this year was the Holiday Lights Tour, which saw nearly 25 participating homes and many excited residents picking up tour maps or participating on guided tours. Finally, the committee placed luminaries along the front sidewalk of Franklinton High School, which many citizens commented was one of the best displays of luminaries they had seen. The committee plans to continue these events this year, and looks to expand by hosting a spring and summer event. Stay tuned to Channel 10 and the Town website and newsletter for updates and more information.

Our Tree Committee also continued its hard work this year to ensure the support and maintenance of our urban forest. While one would assume that a rural community like

Franklinton would have no difficulty maintaining trees in the municipal limits, I believe we would all be surprised at the high amount of work it takes to keep our trees healthy and growing. Thanks to the efforts of past chair Stan Whitlow, Franklinton celebrated its 23rd consecutive Arbor Day and Tree City USA designation. The committee has also taken an inventory of all trees that grow in Town-controlled areas such as street shoulders and curbs, and has determined what needs these trees have to maintain their health. There is, as identified by the committee, a major mistletoe problem found in many trees around Town. Mistletoe, often thought to be a lovely plant and celebrated during the holidays, is actually a truly noxious weed and a have a parasitic relationship with the trees they may inhabit. This poses a great danger to many of our urban trees, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the committee for bringing this to the attention of our community and our Board. The committee, under new chair Sheila Allers, will continue to work towards expanding our urban forest, and will celebrate Arbor Day this year on Saturday, March 21, at which time we will hopefully celebrate our 24th consecutive naming as a Tree City USA.

This year also saw the creation of the Franklinton Economic Development Committee. Committee members have been tasked with working to determine what our local business community needs are, and what the Town can do to spur business growth within the Franklinton area. The EDC works not only to identify those infrastructural needs, but also workforce and other concerns of businesses seeking to locate in our area. The Franklinton EDC works in concert with the Franklin County EDC as well as the Franklin County Economic Development Office to work to bring opportunities for businesses to locate (or re-locate) in Franklinton. Franklinton EDC Chair Dr. Stephanie Brown and staff liaison Tammy Ray continue to work hard to ensure the success of this burgeoning effort.

Of course we still face challenges. There is, unfortunately, still pending litigation against the Town. Our water resources, though stable now, may see challenges in the coming months if we are hit with another below-average rainfall for the summer. As we found out a year ago, our Town is still vulnerable to the threat of a massive and widespread wildfire. Thanks to the diligence and hard work of our volunteer fire department and other emergency services personnel across Franklinton and Franklin County, we can feel safe from these threats, as we know we will be protected by the best. Franklinton still faces the possibility of major traffic and emergency services concerns by the construction of a high speed railway through the center of town. We continue to work with the Department of Transportation Rail Division to determine the effects of such on the citizens of our community.

We of course still face fiscal challenges, and as we prepare the 2009-10 budget, we are working to ensure that all dollars vested with the staff and Board of Commissioner are spent wisely, used effectively, and function efficiently. Staff members are examining now whether we may have the ability to offer the choice of curbside or backyard pickup for garbage service, which may result in an opportunity to again lower utility bill fees. While unfortunately we will not be able to reduce or eliminate the debt service fee found on each utility customer's bill each month, we are hopeful that residents of Franklinton should not see that fee increase. Your Board is also committed to doing all we can to prevent any increase in utility fees for water and sewer service, though sewer service is not always within our control. We work diligently to try to find ways to trim, and though we may do our best, we may not be able to manage this year without some form

of an increase in property taxes. Understand, however, that the Board and staff will do our very best to avoid any increase in costs to our citizens, both in property taxes and utility costs.

I must also share, however, that there are many bright spots on the horizon. Our water quality continues to improve, and we are seeing much needed repairs to our sewer system as I mentioned previously. Our business community continues to grow. Franklinton can claim many businesses' headquarters, such as Novozymes, A-1 Gumballs (a world leader in vending and gumball machine expertise), and Homecare Medical Group, among others. We are fast becoming somewhat of a medical community, with the growth of Franklinton Medical Practice, the opening of Franklin Community Health Services, and the addition of several medical care and supply businesses operating in Franklinton. Many of our staff and public servants are award winners for their hard work and dedication. We have the prospect of the Cedar Creek Development fast approaching, and once built out, will be over 110 acres of business, retail, and residential development. We continue to host local events and work to build the sense of community that is so crucial to bringing our citizens together to move toward a bright and prosperous future. While we may have some difficult choices to make in the immediate future, rest assured that your Board of Commissioners, Town staff and myself are all doing our best to ensure that the Franklinton of today is prepared to grow into the best community possible as we move toward tomorrow.