

The Mayor and Council of the City of Franklin met in Regular Session on Tuesday, September 17, 2024, 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, and City Clerk Karen LeBlanc. Absent were Councilman Jaime Robison and City Attorney Russel J. Cremaldi.

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

GUESTS:

Diane Wiltz, with the Franklin Merchant's Association, promoted the 25th Annual Harvest Moon Festival and associated events to be held on October 24-26, 2024.

Alfreida Edwards and Florence Beverly promoted National Night Out to be held on October 1, 2024. Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Beverly announced that this will be their twentieth and last year organizing the event.

PUBLIC COMMENT (for items on the agenda):

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to accept the August 20, 2024 Public Hearing and August 20, 2024 Regular Meeting minutes. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Garrison, Levine, and Rack

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilmembers Autin and Robison

(Councilman Autin briefly stepped out of the meeting at 6:28 pm and returned at 6:29 pm)

MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE REPORT:

Mayor Foulcard read aloud the following report:

Giving honor to God first we were once again spared major storm damage across the City of Franklin. We did have those that did suffer with trees on their homes or trees down in their yards but we must remain thankful and prayerful. Please continue to keep our neighbors to the east in your prayers as they continue picking up and cleaning up after Hurricane Francine's devastating wrath.

However, these are times when we as a city become the strongest. We see those in our community step up to help their neighbor. We see neighborhoods pulling together to help clean their own front and backyards. We also see outside disaster relief organizations giving that helping hand to those impacted in major ways.

I would like to thank many of the people that you do not see before, during and after the storm keeping our community informed and as safe as possible. I would like to thank Mr. Jeremy Smith and the City of Franklin Public Works crew, Mr. Bernard Daniels and the City of Franklin Utilities Departments, Chief Chuck Bourgeois and the Franklin Fire Department, Chief Cedrick Handy and the Franklin Police Department, Franklin City Council, City Hall Administrative Staff, St. Mary Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness & Homeland Security, St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Department, KQKI, KBZE, KWBJ, KADN, KATC, KLFY, News 15 Meteorologist Michael Crowley for being embedded at our Emergency Operations Center during the storm, News 15 Meteorologist Adam Olivier for being in constant contact with the City of Franklin prior and during the storm, The Weather Channel for live streaming our important social media posts before and during the storm, AmeriHealth Caritas of Louisiana & Brookshire/Super 1 Foods for serving food and water to our community immediately after the storm, Cleco and its dedicated lineman that did wonderful job getting power back to our community with many lines down across the city, Cox Communications for consistently updating their status of restoration to our community, Pelican Waste for their consistent massaging to keep us up to date of household waste removal schedules after the storm, and I certainly want to thank our community for stepping up to the plate when it came to helping one another as well as adhering to the one night of curfew that was put into place as we had many pockets of our community without electricity.

Today, the City of Franklin remains under a Boil Notice by the Louisiana Department of Health for turbidity monitoring from January 1, 2024 through July 18, 2024.

On the night of August 18, ongoing power surges due to severe thunderstorms caused CLECO outages and reports of smoking power lines causing the Franklin Water Plant's water pressure to fall below the standard recommended by LDH. Out of precaution a Boil Notice was issued the morning of August 19. On mid-morning August 19, 2024 my office was notified by the State of Louisiana Department of Health that turbidity monitoring from January 1, 2024 through July 18, 2024 of treated water turbidity was not monitored continuously (every 15 minutes) as required. The Louisiana Department of Health advised us on August 19 to issue a Boil Notice for deviations in our turbidity from January 1, 2024 through July 18, 2024. Notice immediately was sent to the public via the St. Mary Parish Red Alert One Call system, Social Media, traditional media and direct mail together with our previously imposed Boil Notice. Per that release it was stated, "This BOIL NOTICE is to remain in effect until rescinded by the Franklin Water System after Louisiana Department of Health clearance." With installation of computerized turbidity monitors on August 26, the Franklin Water System has now been monitoring turbidity continuously (every 15 minutes) 24 hours per day and received instruction how to report findings to LDH.

On Monday, August 26, I met with consultants with Thornton, Musso & Bellemin as well as Miller Engineering to finalize the planning and engineering phases for the \$2.3 million Capital Outlay funding from Senator Allain and State Representative St. Blanc to begin water plant and water distribution upgrades.

On September 3, 2024, the Louisiana Department of Health visited the Franklin Water System to monitor equipment installed to better our system monitoring of the turbidity of water.

From August 19 through today's date myself along with Mr. Bernard Daniels has been in constant contact with the Louisiana Department of Health by sending daily turbidity reports fulfilling & satisfying each and every written request from LDH within 5 days as required from August 19.

I have had constant contact with our Senator and State Representative on this matter as the 5 day deadline was met by the Franklin Water System.

Unfortunately after in person visits and the City of Franklin having satisfied turbidity parameters as requested by LDH we continue to wait on the Louisiana Department of Health to rescind the Boil Notice.

I feel our citizens are being held hostage and penalized although the City of Franklin was denied twice the ability to receive Water Sector Grant Funding through the Federal Infrastructure Act although we desperately need it to address our 100 year old water distribution system. However, thankfully to State Rep Vinney St. Blanc and Senator Bret Allain we are currently in the engineering phase to utilize the \$2.3 million to begin addressing our plant and water distribution upgrades. I continue to ask for your patience as we didn't just begin having problems with our water distribution 5 years ago with this administration. However, I did vow to not kick the can down the road and we are actively working each and every day to address a now 40 year old problem. I appreciate the many thanks and support from those in the community that continue to uplift and speak out against the very few negative "Facebook experts" in our community. However, if they cannot see the major changes our community has gone through in a very short 5 years they never will. As this administration continues to move forward making small steps and positive changes each and every day know that we are leaving no stone unturned or no sector in our government not addressed. May God continue to bless the City of Franklin.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Mayor Foulcard stated that the July 2024 Financial Statements were presented to the council.

Bernard Daniels, Utilities Director, discussed the current status of the boil advisory and water treatment system. He stated that turbidity is the fine particles left in the water once it is filtered. He stated that turbidity has zero health affects but the state is holding us hostage. We have calibrated the equipment and provided twenty days of data. When DHH came out on the (August) 28th, they took some samples. Tests were taken during the timeframe of the violation and did not indicate any presence of bacteria in the water.

Mr. Daniels stated that in 2021 we applied for \$4.4 million through the Water Sector (Program) grant and were not awarded. In 2022 we applied for \$2.4 million and were denied. He stated today they are telling us that they will put us under a boil notice for the things that were in our applications. We received \$2.4 million (Capital Outlay) thanks to Sen. (Brett) Allain and Rep. St. Blanc. He stated that we are currently waiting on engineering and design. He apologized for the notices but mentioned that we are at the liberty of the state.

Discussion held.

ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt Ordinance No. 3458 – an ordinance increasing the rate to be assessed as a monthly charge for street light services to all residential customers to six and one half (\$6.50) dollars per month and commercial customers by thirty percent (30%); providing for billing to said residents and customers; and repealing all ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith. Second by Councilman Autin and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Rack

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilman Robison

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

A motion was made by Councilwoman Rack to expand the agenda to include the introduction of Ordinance No. 3459. Second by Councilman Garrison and carried. No public comment heard on the expansion. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Rack

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilman Robison

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to introduce Ordinance No. 3459 – An Ordinance providing for the incurring of debt and issuance of Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$750,000) of Revenue Bonds, Series 2024, of the City of Franklin, State of Louisiana; and providing for other matters in connection therewith.

RESOLUTIONS:

A motion was made by Councilman Garrison to adopt a resolution lifting the open alcohol container law on October 24-27, 2024 for the Harvest Moon Festival and associated events; no glass containers. Second by Councilman Autin and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Rack

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilman Robison

NEW BUSINESS

A motion was made by Councilman Autin to authorize a contract with Special Legal Counsel to represent the City in claims for damages. Second by Councilman Levine and carried. Roll call is as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Autin, Garrison, Levine, and Rack

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Councilman Robison

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Foulcard announced the upcoming City-Wide Clean Up, National Night Out, and Harvest Moon Festival.

Ed Verdin announced the PACE Meeting with the Franklin Police Department to be held at Bayou Bend Wellness Center on September 24, 2024.

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

ATTEST:

CITY OF FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA

Karen LeBlanc
Clerk of the Council

EUGENE P. FOULCARD, MAYOR