Minutes

PRESENT: Commissioner Carlton, Commissioner Skolfield, Commissioner Saviello, Commissioner Gilbert, and Commissioner Fowler
The meeting was held via: Zoom
Franklin County Commissioners' Meeting
November 4, 2026

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Carlton at 10:00 a.m.

AUDIENCE: Mt. Blue T.V, Jake Nichols, Joel Gilbert, Charlie Woodworth, Susan Black, Earl Martin, Nathan Hiltz, Hunter Lowell, Ashley Palmer, Carrie Castonguay, Susan Pratt, Shawn O'Leary, and Jamie Sullivan.

ZOOM: Allee Reilly, Eugene Mozzoni, Sara Massarello, Jesse LaFreniere, and Eliza Nolan.

RECOGNITION: Commissioner Carlton welcomed Carrie Castonguay, County Administrator, and congratulated Jeff Gilbert on being elected to another term as Franklin County Commissioner, Susan Black on being elected to another term as Register of Deeds, and Susan Pratt on her election as the new Franklin County Treasurer.

Communications Director Kyle Ellis recognized Ashley Palmer as the Third Quarter Communications Specialist. He commended her for her outstanding dedication, professionalism, and exceptional service, particularly her commitment to providing excellent customer service. He noted that her positive contributions are sincerely appreciated. Kyle also presented Michelle St. Clair with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of her tireless dedication and unwavering commitment to ensuring the efficient operation of the FCRCC. He acknowledged that her expertise, professionalism, and perseverance were instrumental in maintaining operations during the transition of a new director. He expressed his appreciation for her continued service and contributions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

APPOINTMENTS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Administrator's Report – Motion to Accept the Administrator's Report: Motion to Accept the Administrator's Report: Tom Skolfield/Tom Saviello (5/0).**
   Motion to approve the hiring of Rae Anne Coburn for the part-time Corrections Officer position with the Franklin County Detention Center: Tom Skolfield/Tom Saviello (5/0).
   Motion to approve the hiring of Scott Croteau for the full-time Cook position with the Franklin County Detention Center: Tom Skolfield/Tom Saviello (5/0).

2. **Minutes – Motion to approve the Minutes as provided: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
3. **Treasurer's Report – Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield: (5/0).**
4. **Coburn Gore Border Crossing –** Representatives from the General Services Administration (GSA) attended the Commissioners' Meeting to provide information and discuss the proposed new border crossing facility in Coburn Gore. The Commissioners had previously submitted a letter to GSA, as well as other relevant agencies and officials, outlining several questions and concerns regarding the proposed project. The Commissioners expressed their desire to gain a better understanding of the project, including its anticipated scope, potential impacts on the surrounding area, and any implications for Franklin County and the local community. The Commissioners indicated that the purpose of their correspondence was to seek clarification on these matters and obtain responses to their concerns. The Commissioner's requested the questions and concerns outlined in their correspondence would be addressed to ensure that the County remains informed as the project moves forward. **Motion to sign the Agreement and accept the offer to bring other parties to the table: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0). Motion for Carrie to sign: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
5. **Joel Gilbert and Charlie Woodworth – Greater Franklin Economic & Community Development –** Charlie Woodworth and Joel Gilbert provided the Commissioners with updates on current initiatives and upcoming projects. Charlie Woodworth reported that an economic analysis of Franklin County is underway, with information being compiled on a town-by-town basis. The analysis will include data and trend information for each municipality, using 2015 as the baseline year. The goal is to identify challenges and opportunities within each community. Charlie also provided an update on the Maine Center for Entrepreneurship, which has been hosting marketing meetups. These gatherings provide entrepreneurs with an opportunity to network, ask questions, share ideas, and discuss ways to promote their businesses using current technology. The Top Gun Program is scheduled to begin on November 19th. Charlie requested that the Commissioners help promote the program. Additionally, Charlie reported that the Greater Franklin Economic Development Corporation (GFEC) plans to invite newly elected officials to an informal meeting to discuss their goals and priorities.

   Joel Gilbert provided an update on the Recreational Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) initiative currently underway in the Town of Jay. The initiative focuses on promoting economic growth through recreational opportunities. Joel also reported that they are working with the Maine Development Foundation to pursue a $50,000 grant intended to support mill communities impacted by mill closures. He is exploring potential communities within Franklin County that may qualify for the funding, with the goal of putting an actionable plan in place. Joel further reported that an inventory of buildings throughout the County has been developed, and efforts are underway to identify opportunities to market these properties. The State of Maine's website, selectmainesites.com, is a resource for promoting available properties. They are currently working to obtain login access so the County's properties can be added to the website.

   Commissioner Saviello requested a Form 990 from the Greater Franklin Economic Development Corporation.

The need for daycare centers or in-home centers was discussed as being a high priority for economic development.

6. **Jail – Taser Discussion –** Major Daley requested this matter be tabled as he is collaborating with the Sheriff's Office with respect to purchasing tasers. **Motion to table the Taser discussion: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
7. **Deeds – Reserve Account – Motion to approve transferring $1,175.00 from the Deeds Microfilm Reserve Account to the Deeds Surcharge Account: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
8. **Communications – Reserve Account – Motion to approve the transferring of $374.18 from the Dispatch Radio Reserve and $3,017.00 from the I Am Responding (IAR) Reserve into the existing Dispatch Equipment Reserve: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
9. **UT FY27-28 Budget Review –** A discussion was held regarding the proposed FY2027 UT Budget, totaling $3,010,370, which represents a 2.98% increase over the prior year. The largest increase was noted in the snow removal contracts, which increased by 18.66%. Commissioner Carlton questioned whether a fuel surcharge or fuel adjustment clause could be incorporated into future contracts. It was suggested that Administration research this option in preparation for the next bidding process. Commissioner Carlton requested supporting documentation from the Town of Phillips to justify the proposed increase in fire protection services for Madrid Township. A discussion was also held regarding Byron Road and Tumbledown Mountain. Commissioners discussed the possibility of establishing a presence at the base of Tumbledown Mountain, potentially through a junior ranger program or volunteer position. The individual would receive a stipend and assist with hiker safety. The goal would be to help reduce the time and resources required by the Fire Department to respond to incidents on the mountain. The Commissioners also questioned whether individuals could be held financially responsible for the cost of emergency services when assistance is needed to evacuate them from the mountain. It was determined that further discussion and collaboration would be necessary among Franklin County, the Bureau of Parks and Lands, and the Warden Service to explore possible options and responsibilities. **Motion to set Public Hearing for November 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the Emergency Operation Center prior to the regular scheduled Commissioner's meeting: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (4/0), Commissioner Saviello was not present for the vote.**

10 Minute Break

10. **Vacation Leave Policy – Discussion –** Commissioner Fowler requested that this matter be placed on the agenda for discussion following a recent Teamsters grievance concerning the payout of an employee's unused vacation time upon separation from employment after July 1st. The current policy provides for vacation time to be front-loaded on January 1st of each calendar year. Employees who separate from employment are eligible for compensation for unused vacation time only if they have completed six (6) full months of employment during the current calendar year. Employees who have not completed six (6) full months of continuous service are not eligible for payment of unused vacation time. The proposed policy outlines a quarterly accrual system for employees eligible for vacation benefits. Discussion was held regarding the importance of consulting with the three unions

before making any changes to the policy. It was further discussed that vacation time could remain front-loaded on January 1st, while revisions could be made to the portion of the policy addressing the payout of unused vacation time upon separation from employment. Shawn indicated that he would schedule a meeting with the three unions to discuss the proposed policy change. The Policy Committee would then review the policy prior to it being presented to the Commissioners.

11. **Food Drive/Pajama Drive/Chester Greenwood Day Parade –** Staff requested employee participation in the Chester Greenwood Day Parade, as well as organizing a food drive among County employees and participating in the Children's Task Force pajama drive. It was also noted that the Franklin County Chamber had requested permission to have solo fire pits in the courthouse parking lot and to have a food truck on-site during the event. **Motion to approve the county staff to participate in the Franklin County Employee Food Drive, Franklin County Children's Task Force Pajama Drive and the Chester Greenwood Day Parade along with allowing the use of the parking lot to make smores: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
12. **NCEU – Union Negotiations –** The County has received notification from the NCEU that they would like to open negotiations. Commissioner Saviello indicated that he would like to sit on the negotiating team. **Motion that Commissioner Saviello be representative of that board: Tom Skolfield/Bob Carlton (5/0).**
13. **MOU – Sandy River Watershed Geomorphic Study Community Action Grant – Motion to accept the two CRP grants in the amount of $197,730 each from the Maine Office of Community Affairs, accept the role as the financial agent and assign a designee to Docusign the MOU, and designate Carrie to sign the contracts: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
14. **Food Sovereignty – Discussion** – Commissioner Skolfield requested that this matter be placed on the agenda for discussion. He explained that a constituent residing in the UT within his district would like to sell food products prepared in her home. Discussion centered on the ability of residents in the UT to engage in home-based food sales and the absence of a Franklin County Food Sovereignty Ordinance. Commissioner Saviello noted that the County does not currently have ordinances in place for the UT. He referenced the constitutional amendment establishing the right to food, which was approved several years ago, and questioned whether the amendment provided sufficient authority for individuals to produce and sell food without the need for a Food Sovereignty Ordinance. **Motion to proceed through the process to develop an Ordinance under the Food Sovereignty Act for Franklin Counties Unorganized Territories: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Radio Infrastructure Upgrade Project – Update –** Kyle Ellis provided the Commissioners with an update on the radio infrastructure upgrade project. He reported that the Communications Upgrade Committee had met and finalized its recommendation for a consulting firm to present to the Commissioners. The committee recommended Televate, LLC, based in Virginia, at a cost of $74,171. Kyle indicated that Phase 1 of the project is expected to be completed within four months. Televate also indicated that it would provide project deliverables, including figures and supporting information, by the end of 2026. This

information would help position the County to pursue grant funding opportunities, should it choose to do so. **Motion to award the Regional Emergency Communications System Study to Televate in the amount of $74,171 and authorize the County Administrator or the Chair or the Board to sign the Agreement: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**

2. **Chester Greenwood Day Tree Lighting** – This matter was discussed during Agenda item #11. See motion above.
3. **Board of Assessment Review – Approval/Process –** The Commissioners were provided with documentation regarding the proposed formation of the Franklin County Board of Assessment Review, including applicable statutes, a proposed policy, implementation procedures, an application process, and a draft advertisement. The Commissioners were asked to consider the structure of the Board, including five (5) or seven (7) members, two (2) alternates, staggered three-year terms, and whether stipends would be provided. The proposed policy outlines member qualifications, responsibilities, hearing procedures, and the appeals process. The Commissioners were also provided with a proposed recruitment process and advertisement, with an application deadline of November 16, 2026. The materials were presented for review and consideration as the County moves forward with establishing the Board. **Motion to accept the draft policy as written for a five (5) member board with two (2) alternates with no stipend and ask for volunteers: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield**
   Amend motion to $25.00 stipend per meeting: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).
   Motion as amended: (5/0).
   Carrie indicated that there will be training on December 5, 2026, at the Wilton Town Office. The cost for the training will be $250.
4. **Regional Fire and EMS Services – Discussion only –** Commissioner Carlton attended a recent Franklin County Fire Officers' meeting concerning the proposed regionalization of fire services. While there is some interest in exploring regional services, the fire officers expressed a desire for guidance and leadership from the County in moving forward. Commissioner Carlton indicated the possibility of hiring Paul Froman, a consultant previously utilized by Penobscot County for a regionalization project in Howland, to potentially facilitate a meeting with area Fire Chiefs, Town Managers, and Selectboard members. Commissioner Carlton indicated that obtaining support and participation from municipal Selectboards would be essential before moving forward. It was acknowledged that regionalization may benefit some departments more than others. The potential cost of retaining Mr. Froman as a consultant was also discussed, with contingency funds identified as a possible funding source. **Motion to initiate and invite people and hire Mr. Froman to facilitate: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. Carrie asked the Commissioners if they would like to appoint her to the AVCOG Executive Committee. **Motion for Carrie be the representative to the AVCOG Executive Committee in Commissioner Skolfield's stead: Tom Skolfield/Bob Carlton (5/0).**

WARRANTS: County AP, TIF, UT & Payroll - Motion to sign Warrants: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 1:30 p.m.: Tom SavielloTom Skolfield (5/0).

A recording is available for this meeting.

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST: C Costonguay, CLERK