



TOWN OF FREEPORT

Town Council Meeting #01-26

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

6:00PM

Town Council Chambers
30 Main Street, Freeport, Maine

MINUTES

I. Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll Call

Present: Council Chair Benoit, Council Vice Chair Smith, Councilor Brown, Councilor Pillsbury, Councilor Lawrence, and Councilor Piltch (via Zoom). Councilor Sparta is excused.

III. Waive reading and accept as printed on [December 16, 2025 \(#26-25\) Meeting Minutes](#)

Moved and Seconded: (Smith & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nays)(1-Excused-Sparta)(Video Record Time: 00:01:11 - 00:01:43)

IV. Announcements (10 minutes)(Video Record Time: 00:01:43- 00:02:53)

2025 Dog Licenses expired on December 31st. A \$25 late fee will be assessed starting February 1st. You may renew your Dog Licenses online at Maine.gov or in the Clerk's Office.

Freeport Community Library will be hosting a Tiny Art Show in February, exhibiting tiny works of art created by members of our community. All ages are welcome to participate and submit a piece of art no larger than 3x3. The library will be giving away 3x3 canvases and easels starting January 14th and will continue while supplies last. To be included in the show, art must be returned to the library by

closing time on February 6th. An artist's reception will be held on February 10th from 3-6pm. This show is co-sponsored by Freeport Community Library and Freeport Middle School, but is open to all ages.

V. Information Exchange (15 minutes)(Video Record Time: 00:02:53 – 00:13:22)

a. Councilors:

-Sidewalk clearing is the responsibility of the business and building owners (Sidewalk Maintenance Ordinance)

-Three Housing projects are underway in Town. There will be a Public meeting at -The Freeport Grange on Saturday at 10 am. This is a non-official meeting to talk about housing in Freeport.

-Town Council Workshop Jan. 14 at Freeport Community Services from 6-7 pm. Stantek will be present and a high-level update on processes regarding the Village Corridor Initiative will be discussed.

-The Council is holding the date of Feb. 3rd at 5 pm for a Workshop on the Village Corridor Initiative prior to the Town Council meeting at 6 pm.

Council is continuing to work on the Town Manager's annual evaluation.

b. Committees

i. Greater Portland Metro Update (Freeport Representative, Bill Rixon)

Bill Rixon, Freeport's representative to the Greater Portland Metro, reported on recent developments in regional transit. In November, GP Metro received a \$4 million federal grant to purchase six new buses—three for fleet replacement and three to expand service in South Portland and Scarborough. The expanded Scarborough service, scheduled to begin this summer, will provide broader coverage beyond the current limited route. Rixon also discussed the ongoing micro transit pilot in Falmouth, which allows residents within a designated zone to book rides via phone or online for local trips or connections to the Route 7 bus. While there is hope to extend this service to Freeport in the future, funding is not yet available. Additionally, Rixon noted efforts to encourage public transit use and reduce reliance on cars, including outreach in Yarmouth. He emphasized that many residents remain unaware of existing services like the Breeze, which connects Freeport to Portland and Brunswick. Councilors expressed interest in monitoring ridership trends in Scarborough's high-density housing areas as a potential indicator for future transit-oriented development in Freeport.

VI. Town Manager's Report (10 minutes) [Town Manager's Report #2026-01-06](#) (Video Record Time: 00:13:22 – 00:16:43)

Town Manager Sophie Wilson provided updates on several operational matters. She noted that the Town Clerk's office is currently operating at half-staff for up to 12 weeks, which has required adjustments to public hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Tuesday until 6:00 p.m. Staff from the Finance Department will assist with certain tasks and help residents navigate state online services when clerks are unavailable. Wilson also highlighted

communication efforts to inform the public about these changes, including signage and outreach. She expressed appreciation for the Public Works crew’s effective response to the unexpected snowstorm on December 23–24, which required significant effort to keep roads clear. Additionally, Councilor Smith commended the Freeport Community Library for its successful December programming, including a well-attended author event, and emphasized the library’s role as a vital community space during winter months.

VII. Public Comment Period (Part I): Limited to Comments on Items Not on the Agenda
 Part I is for In-Person Attendees Only (15 Minutes)
 (Video Record Time: 00:16:43 - 00:21:22)

Chalmers Hardenberg, a resident of Somerset Condominiums, spoke on behalf of approximately 50–60 residents regarding the proposed increase in bridge clearance as part of the Village Corridor Initiative. Hardenberg urged the Council to support maintaining the current clearance of 19 feet 6 inches rather than raising it to 22–23 feet as requested by Maine DOT and CSX. He outlined three primary concerns: first, there is no practical need for the higher clearance since auto racks and double-stack rail cars are unlikely to operate in this region; second, even if such operations were considered, raising one bridge would be ineffective without modifying 12 additional bridges between Portland and Bath, which he estimated would cost \$50 million and take decades to complete; and third, proceeding with the project would result in a “bridge to nowhere,” wasting millions of dollars without tangible benefit. Hardenberg requested that the Council adopt a resolution opposing the clearance increase to strengthen advocacy efforts at the state level, noting that local legislators—including Art Bell, Melanie Sachs, and Dan Ankeles—are supportive of pursuing legislative action on this issue. The Council acknowledged the concern and noted that the bridge is part of the Village Corridor Initiative, with Maine DOT expected to provide design timelines and opportunities for public input.

VIII. New Business

ITEM # 01-26 To consider action relative to adopting the January 6, 2026, Consent Agenda.

BE IT ORDERED: That the January 6, 2026, Consent Agenda be adopted.

01-26 (a) Accepting the following Donations totaling \$8,312.10

HEATING DONATIONS	
Gladys and Dan Cofrin	\$5,000
Richard Trub	\$400
Julia and Douglas Dahmer	\$50

FIRE DONATIONS	
Julia and Douglas Dahmer	\$50
Richard Trub	\$100
Dale and Diane Inman	\$50
Terry Hutchinson	\$50
Matthew Carpentier	\$50
LIBRARY DONATIONS	
Julia and Douglas Dahmer	\$50
Linda Roberts	\$25
Darryl Uy and Robert Brown	\$100
Daniel Freund	\$100
Susan Gillies	\$100
Dale and Diane Inman	\$50
Alan Weiner	\$100
Sally and Peter Esponnette	\$250
Miscellaneous Cash Donations	\$47.10
Anonymous	\$2000

Moved and Seconded: (Pillsbury & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nays)(1-Excused Sparta)
 (Video Record Time: 00:21:32 – 00:22:09)

(Council Chair, Joanna Benoit) (5 minutes)

ITEM # 02-26 To consider action relative to an appointment to the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) as an Alternate Delegate for a one-year term.

Jessica Maloy was previously appointed to be the Alternate Delegate, but the Chair wanted to poll the Council to see if there was interest in being the Delegate. Councilor Smith was selected to be the Alternate.

BE IT ORDERED: That Eric Smith be appointed as the Alternate Delegate to the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) for a one-year term. Moved and Seconded: (Lawrence & Piltch)(6-Ayes)(0-Nays)(1-Excused- Sparta)(Video Record Time: 00:22:09 - 00:24:12)

** Note: After discussion, Councilors will insert the name of an individual and vote on the appointment.*

(Council Chair, Joanna Benoit) (5 minutes)

ITEM # 03-26 To consider action relative to bid acceptance for the [Flying Point Road Reconstruction and Drainage Project](#).

Public Works Director Earl Gibson provided an update on the Flying Point Road reconstruction project, originally approved in 2023 but delayed due to planning and design adjustments. The project will involve a full rebuild of the roadway, replacement of cross pipes, and improvements to drainage by deepening ditches to three feet to ensure proper water runoff. Gibson noted that bids were received, with significant differences in pricing due to material costs—one bidder owns its asphalt plant while the other must purchase materials. He also highlighted recent cost increases, citing asphalt prices exceeding \$120 per ton, which reflects inflation and market volatility. Councilors acknowledged the importance of the project for traffic flow and safety, particularly given its role as a key connector for northeast Freeport neighborhoods. They also commended Gibson for incorporating public feedback from earlier engagement sessions with residents along the corridor. The Council unanimously approved awarding the bid to Crooker Construction in the amount of \$599,875.

BE IT ORDERED: That Crooker Construction be awarded the bid for the Flying Point Road Reconstruction and Drainage Project in the amount of \$599,875.00. Moved and Seconded: (Brown & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nays)(1-Excused Sparta)(Video Record Time: 00:24:12 – 00:29:05)

Note: \$480,000 was appropriated for this project in the FY2023 Capital Improvements Budget. If approved, the remaining balance of \$119,875 would be appropriated from the Public Infrastructures Reserve Account, which currently has a balance of \$3,631,229.

(Public Works Director, Earl Gibson) (10 minutes)

VII. Public Comment Period (Part II): Limited to Comments on Items Not on the Agenda
Part II is for Virtual Attendees Only (15 Minutes)

There were no comments

IX. Other Business:

1. Discussion of [Short-Term Rental Registration Ordinance](#)
(Council Chair, Joanna Benoit) (15 minutes) (Video Record Time:)

The Council held an extensive discussion on the short-term rental (STR) registration ordinance to evaluate its effectiveness and future direction. The conversation focused on balancing the need for data collection and code compliance with minimizing burdens on property owners. Councilors acknowledged that the ordinance has resulted in approximately 86 registered STRs, though estimates suggest there may be 175 operating in Freeport, indicating a significant number remain unregistered. Staff noted that most enforcement issues have involved initial compliance with building and septic codes rather than ongoing neighborhood complaints such as noise or parking.

Councilors debated whether the ordinance should be simplified to require only registration—particularly for corporate owners—to ensure a local contact is available, while removing provisions that duplicate existing ordinances (e.g., parking and noise). Some expressed concern that maintaining the ordinance without enforcement creates inequity between compliant and noncompliant operators. Others emphasized the value of the ordinance for housing data, cap limits, and future planning, especially as new high-density housing developments emerge.

The Council reviewed options for improving compliance, including adopting GP COG’s software platform, which offers online registration, data tracking, and automated outreach to unregistered STRs identified through web scraping. The platform would cost \$20 per registered unit annually and could streamline staff workload. Councilors generally supported exploring this solution, noting that the current registration fee could offset costs. There was consensus to maintain the ordinance, prioritize data collection, and consider software implementation, while continuing to review fee structures and enforcement strategies.

2. Discussion of [Creating Associate Member Positions for Town Boards and Committees](#) (Councilor, Matt Pillsbury) (10 minutes)(Video Record Time: 01:04:13 – 01:21:01)

The Council discussed creating associate member positions for town boards and committees to engage residents who express interest but cannot be appointed due to limited vacancies. The goal is to provide a pathway for involvement, build a bench of future appointees, and maintain community engagement. Two options were considered: **Option A**, fixed non-voting associates who attend and participate in discussions but never vote unless formally appointed; and **Option B**, fluid voting associates who may vote when elevated to replace an absent or recused member.

Councilors expressed concerns about legal and logistical challenges with Option B, particularly for quasi-judicial boards such as the Project Review Board and Board of Appeals, where continuity and training are critical. They noted that elevating associates mid-process could create complications for projects spanning multiple meetings. The discussion highlighted the importance of training requirements for associates, such as MMA or town-provided orientation, before participating in official decisions.

Consensus emerged to begin with **Option A**, allowing non-voting associate members to participate in discussions and receive meeting materials, without voting authority. This approach minimizes risk, simplifies implementation, and provides an entry point for residents to learn and contribute. The Council agreed to start with smaller advisory committees—such as FSAB, Complete Streets, and Conservation Commission—rather than quasi-judicial boards. Staff will implement the program administratively and report back on its effectiveness before considering codification in ordinance.

3. Discussion of [Non-Resident Use of the Recycling/Transfer Facility](#)
(Assistant Town Manager, Caroline Pelletier) (15 minutes)(Video Record
Time: 01:21:01 – 01:51:54)

Staff provided an in-depth update on operations at the transfer station following recent changes to the Silver Bullet recycling program. The discussion covered efforts to improve efficiency, communication, and data tracking, including new signage, updated website content, and a year-round bulky waste coupon system replacing the former spring cleanup event. Staff also implemented a ticketing system to better monitor usage and link transactions to property owners.

The primary issue raised was the sale of non-resident stickers, which allow limited use of the facility for bulky waste disposal. While Freeport residents pay \$6 for an annual sticker (in addition to supporting the facility through property taxes), non-residents currently pay \$40. Staff noted that the ordinance is unclear on non-resident access and that historical agreements from the 1990s designated Freeport as a regional disposal facility for neighboring towns, including Pownal, Durham, and North Yarmouth. Approximately 19% of stickers sold in 2025 were to non-residents.

Councilors expressed concern about equity, as Freeport taxpayers subsidize the facility, and discussed options for revising fees and clarifying policy. Staff recommended resuming sticker sales immediately while continuing research on historical agreements, usage data, and cost structures. The Council agreed to increase the non-resident sticker fee to \$50 for the full year calendar, effective immediately, with formal action to follow at the next meeting. This interim measure will allow time to review bulky waste fees, evaluate regional partnerships, and consider operational adjustments. A representative from Pownal spoke during the discussion, emphasizing the importance of the partnership and requesting improved communication with neighboring communities.

Motion to adjourn (Lawrence & Smith)(6-Ayes)(0-Nays)(1-Excused Sparta)
END OF AGENDA (Estimated time of Adjournment 7:45 PM)