



# CITY ATTORNEY

## CITY OF FRANKLIN, VA





The City of Franklin is seeking an experienced professional to serve as City Attorney. The City Attorney, appointed by the City Council, supervises the legal affairs of the City and represents the City in legal matters.

This recruitment profile provides background information on the community, its government operations, and its aspirations. It also outlines the qualifications, experience and characteristics determined to be necessary and desirable for successful performance as City Attorney.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references, to The Berkley Group via email at [steve.rosenberg@bgllc.net](mailto:steve.rosenberg@bgllc.net). While the position is open until filled, **the formal review of applicants will begin November 7, 2025**. Inquiries relating to the City Attorney position may be directed to:

Steve Rosenberg

Executive Manager

Berkley Group

Email: [steve.rosenberg@bgllc.net](mailto:steve.rosenberg@bgllc.net)

Mobile: (540) 255-1589



## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

A dynamic and diverse community with small-town charm, the City of Franklin is known for its gracious hospitality, resilience, and community spirit. The City, located in the Tidewater region of Virginia, encompasses 8.75 square miles and is home to about 8,400 residents. As a vibrant industrial hub throughout its history, the City remains a center of commerce and trade as well as an important regional hub for health care, education, recreation, and civic life.



## LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

The City of Franklin is intersected by U.S. Route 58 and U.S. Route 258 about forty miles west of Norfolk, Virginia and less than ten miles north of the North Carolina state line. The City is bordered by Southampton County to the west, north, and south and by Isle of Wight County to the east. Within an hour's drive in any direction residents can reach many popular attractions including the Virginia Beach oceanfront, the Outer Banks of North Carolina, historic Williamsburg and Jamestown, and the capital city of Richmond.

Convenient passenger air services can be found at Richmond International Airport (RIC) and Norfolk International Airport (ORF), each about an hour from Franklin.



## HISTORY

Franklin was incorporated as a town in March of 1876. Due to its agricultural advantages and its industry, its growth has been steady. The first official census of 1880 listed 447 inhabitants. By 1950, the town had grown to about 5,000 residents. The Town became an independent City in 1961 and annexations in 1986 and 1996 increased land area as well as the population. After years of a stable population, the City is now experiencing modest residential growth.

Located on the Blackwater River, Franklin began its history as a transportation center. In 1835, the Blackwater Depot, soon after named the Franklin Depot, opened. Passengers from Norfolk could travel to the Depot and depart by stagecoach for points further north or west, or they could board one of several steamships docked at the nearby wharf to continue their journey to North Carolina.

Throughout the 1850s, commerce on the railroad and Blackwater River flourished. New steamboat companies sent their steamers into the Franklin Depot to pick up bales of cotton, livestock, slaughtered beef and pork, and other products. In 1856, a sawmill was constructed opposite Franklin on the Blackwater River. This mill, operated by R.J. and William Neely, processed huge amounts of wood products that were sent by rail to the Norfolk market and elsewhere. For many years, under the ownership of Union Camp, the mill thrived and brought wealth and jobs to the area. In 1999 it was acquired by International Paper. Though Union Camp no longer exists in Franklin, the Camp family name lives on. Its legacy is most notable in the community, with Camp Community College, the James L. Camp Jr. Family YMCA, the Texie Camp Marks Children's Center, and the Ruth Camp Campbell Memorial Library.

Following disruptions in commercial activity caused by the Civil War, Franklin Depot again became active and was a major exporting point for the "ground pea," better known as the peanut, which became a popular food product in the late 19th century. In 1881, a fire destroyed all the commercial buildings in the community. As a result, an ordinance was adopted only allowing for brick or stone buildings. Today the downtown area consists almost entirely of rows of brick buildings that post-date the 1881 fire.

The Franklin Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, and that same year the community became a designated Virginia Main Street community. The Downtown Franklin Association has led revitalization efforts for over 20 years, and many downtown buildings have been rehabilitated with a mixture of private and public investment.

In 1999, the City was devastated by flood waters resulting from Hurricane Floyd. As the Blackwater River swelled to a historic crest of 26.4 ft (8.0 m), downtown Franklin was submerged under as much as 12 feet of water. The flooding inundated 182 business and 150 homes, located primarily in downtown, and resulted in approximately \$13 million in business losses and \$2.5 million in lost annual tax revenue for the City.

Today, little signs of the flooding are visible. The City and its downtown have recovered with new parks, a vibrant farmers market, revitalized buildings, and an active business environment.







## ECONOMY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture is the chief industry in the region followed closely by manufacturing. Adjacent Southampton County is the number one county in Virginia for the most family-owned “Virginia Century Farms”—farms in ownership for over one hundred years—and consistently ranks in the top five of Virginia counties yielding the largest harvest of peanuts, soy, corn, cotton, and timber and hogs. Area manufacturing includes meat products, lumber, chemical and concrete products, plastics, and peanut products. Although Franklin lies in a predominantly agricultural area, manufacturing provides the largest employment for the City’s residents. More broadly, Franklin serves as a major commercial center for the entire region.

Franklin’s most significant industrial presence is International Paper, which is located just to the east of the City in Isle of Wight County and produces lumber, Kraft paper, pulp, and chemical by-products. Other major industries in the area include Hercules, Inc., which produces Pamak rosin and other chemical processing materials, and Birdsong Peanut Co. Bon Secours - Southampton Medical Center is the City’s single largest employer.

Industrial sites are available in a city-owned Industrial Park adjacent to four-lane U.S. Route 58.

Economic development support services are provided by Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc. (FSEDI), a public-private economic development organization serving the City of Franklin and Southampton County since 2005 with a mission to diversify the economy, create high quality jobs and provide a future for the families and youth of the region. FSEDI’s four main focuses are (1) business attraction, including marketing available properties and incentives to local, state, and national brokers; (2) business retention and expansion; (3) tourism, including marketing, promotion, and sponsorship; and (4) small business development, planning and development services, and training. In downtown Franklin, the 40,000 sq. ft. Franklin Business Center provides incubator space for startup and expanding businesses.





## RECREATION & COMMUNITY ATTRACTIONS

The Franklin Department of Parks and Recreation operates 11 recreation areas for both indoor and outdoor recreation activities.

*Armory Drive Recreational Park* offers facilities for organized sports programs for football, soccer, baseball, softball, recreational play, as well as tennis courts, a swimming pool, a tot lot playground and picnic tables.

*Barrett's Landing Park* boasts a large gazebo overlooking the Blackwater River and a wharf and a foot bridge along the water's edge. Barrett's Landing Park is a popular venue for concerts, family outings, picnics, and weddings or for just enjoying the peace and quiet of the natural surroundings. Barrett's Landing is also an ideal fishing spot.

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center* is a community-based recreation center offering a variety of programs and activities such as arts & crafts, fitness, sports, life skills enrichment and family activities. The center consists of a large multi-purpose room, a pool room, a fellowship hall, and additional rooms for community organizations to hold meetings. The outside area has two basketball courts and a play area.

*Blackwater Park* is a 200-acre park which features an 800-foot boardwalk and two miles of trails, giving patrons the opportunity to observe wildlife and learn from educational signage. Blackwater Park is home to some of the City's oldest trees reaching over 155 feet tall. Through the generosity of an adjacent land owner, the park will soon expand by 100 acres.

Following the demolition of the long-closed City armory, the City will break ground on a new recreational facility. It will provide much needed indoor recreation opportunities, including collegiate basketball and volleyball in conjunction with Camp Community College.

The local James L. Camp, Jr. Family YMCA provides a rich mix of recreational, social and educational programs for members. The facility includes a large gym, indoor and outdoor pools, and indoor tennis courts.









## HEALTH CARE

Bon Secours – Southamptton Medical Center is located in the City and serves Franklin, Southamptton County, eastern Isle of Wight County, the City of Suffolk, and northeastern portions of North Carolina. This major health care amenity is a Joint Commission-accredited, 219-bed facility that provides inpatient, outpatient, emergency, medical, surgical, and long-term care.

The Virginia Department of Health operates a local Health Department in a City-owned facility adjacent to the Hospital.

Emergency medical response and transport services are provided locally 24/7/365 by the City's Department of Fire and Rescue with additional support from area volunteers.

## EDUCATION

The City of Franklin Public Schools serves 1,130 students with one high school, one middle school, and one Pre-K-5 elementary school under the governance and management of an appointed City School Board.

While there are numerous institutions of higher education within a 60-mile radius offering a full range of certificate and degree programs, Camp Community College (CCC) is located within the City. In addition to its many traditional course offerings leading to certificates and 2-year degrees, CCC also hosts the City's Workforce Development Center which provides a broad range of business support education services including pre-employment training, customized training, job analysis, employee basic skills assessment, open enrollment classes, and business startup and expansion training.







## DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the City of Franklin's 2025 population as 8,430, showing recent growth. The City's racial make-up is 51.7% Black, 37.8% White and 10.5% other. The adjacent counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight have populations of 17,882 and 41,219, respectively. The median value of owner-occupied housing in the City is approximately \$198,000, and the median household income is just over \$65,000. The City had a poverty rate of 16.7% in 2023.

## CITY GOVERNMENT & SERVICES

The City of Franklin has about 260 full-time equivalent employees who support the delivery of a broad range of municipal services to residents and visitors in the areas of public safety, public works, utilities, recreation, social services, and general administration.

The City operates under a Council-Manager form of government as defined by the City Charter. The City is governed by a City Council comprised of six members elected by ward for staggered four-year terms and one member elected at-large to serve as Mayor for a two-year term.

City Council appoints the City Manager to serve as the Chief Administrative Officer responsible for implementing Council policies, enforcing City ordinances, and providing for general management of all municipal functions of City government.

The Franklin Department of Public Works is responsible for all city-owned property including public buildings; streets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters; water supply and distribution infrastructure; sewer collection and treatment infrastructure; city parks; and cemeteries. Water is supplied from two deep wells, which provide an abundant supply of unusually soft, pure, and palatable water. Water storage capacity is 1.3 million gallons.

The City owns and maintains the Franklin Municipal Airport located a mile outside the City limits and offering a variety of aviation services including fuel, hangar space, flight training, and maintenance. The airport operates as a City department, and its manager reports to the City Manager.



Public safety services are provided by the Franklin Police Department and the Franklin Fire and Rescue Department. The Police Department provides a full range of law enforcement and crime prevention services through six operating divisions including patrol, criminal investigations, animal control, emergency communications, records management, and special operations. The Fire and Rescue Department provides critical emergency response with highly trained career and volunteer staff from one main station and one substation in the City. The Department also provides supplemental career staffing support to volunteer fire and rescue partners both within the City and in adjacent Southampton County. Southampton County contracts with the City of Franklin for those services.

A unique attribute of Franklin is that it is one of the few localities in the Commonwealth of Virginia that owns and operates a municipal electric distribution system. Established in 1892, Franklin Municipal Power and Light purchases electricity from Dominion Energy and provides its customers in the City and parts of the surrounding counties with reliable, low-cost energy and energy-related services. It also serves as a profit center for the City, providing an annual operational subsidy to the General Fund.

The Community Development Department provides services related to planning, zoning, building permits, and code enforcement.

The City's Tourism office supports a wide variety of community events and marketing efforts throughout the year that serve to enrich community quality of life and to boost tourism related revenues. Notable annual events and activities in the City include The Franklin Market, Spring Fest, Juneteenth Celebration,

Independence Day Celebration, Food Truck Rodeo, Boo Bash (downtown trick or treat), Holiday Open House, and Franklin Christmas Parade. The City also partners with Southampton County to promote regional tourism. For more information see: <https://visitfranklinsouthamptonva.com>.

There are five constitutionally mandated officers that are funded by state and local resources. They are each directly elected and are not accountable to City Council but work closely with the Council and the City Manager. The Commissioner of Revenue and Treasurer are elected by voters in the City of Franklin and serve only the City. The office of the Commissioner of Revenue assesses individual and business personal property taxes, issues business licenses, administers meals, lodging and cigarette taxes, and is responsible for real estate assessments. The office of the Treasurer is responsible for all activities related to the receipt and collection, safekeeping, accounting, and disbursement of tax revenues. The Sheriff, Commonwealth's Attorney, and Clerk of the Circuit Court are elected by the voters in and serve both the City of Franklin and Southampton County.

The City of Franklin has an approved FY26 total budget of \$90.6 million, which includes \$35.4 for general government, \$21.3 million for schools, \$3.3 million for water and sewer, and \$18.9 million for electric service. The approved FY26 Budget document, past budgets, and annual comprehensive financial reports can be found on the City's website at: [https://franklinva.gov/government/departments\\_a-g/finance/forms\\_documents.php](https://franklinva.gov/government/departments_a-g/finance/forms_documents.php).





## THE POSITION

City Council appoints a City Attorney to serve as the chief legal advisor to Council and the City Manager, and other departments, boards, commissions and agencies of the City as designated by Council. Currently, only limited representation is provided to the Commissioner of Revenue, the Treasurer and the Department of Social Services, concerning general administrative matters unrelated to the core functions of those offices. Though the City Charter provides that the City Attorney is the “chief legal officer” of “agencies of the city, including the school board,” the Franklin City School Board is presently represented by separate counsel.

The City Attorney serves at the pleasure of Council and performs the following essential functions:

- Represents the City in complex legal matters.
- Prepares and tries cases, including appeals, in state and federal courts; processes and litigates claims against the City; prosecutes suits, actions and proceedings for and on behalf of the City.
- Provides oral and written legal opinions and advice on complex matters to City Council, City administration, and City departments on a daily basis.
- Attends a variety of meetings, including meetings of City Council and various boards, commissions, committees and authorities.
- Prepares, reviews and/or approves various complex legal documents on behalf of the City, including contracts, ordinances, resolutions, bonds, bids, deeds, leases and policies.
- Researches, interprets and applies laws, court decisions, and other legal authority in the preparation of opinions, advice and briefs.
- Advises on the purchase, sale, exchange and/or leasing of properties.
- Reviews procurement matters to ensure compliance.
- Supervises and reviews codifications of City Code.
- Provides legal defense counsel in suits and actions brought against the City, except in cases where outside legal counsel is engaged.
- Drafts, reviews and/or supervises the preparation of legislation affecting the City for consideration by the Virginia General Assembly.
- Provides legal assistance and participates in employee relations matters.
- Responds to and resolves difficult and sensitive citizen inquiries and complaints.
- Engages, supervises and coordinates with outside counsel as needed, ensuring services are delivered effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with the City’s budgetary and policy guidelines.
- Stays abreast of new trends and innovations in the field of public law; maintains proficiency in municipal law through training, professional journals, and technology-based resources.
- Performs other duties that may be required by ordinance, resolution, or City Council.





## ISSUES, CHALLENGES, & OPPORTUNITIES

The City's vision statement is: *By the year 2030, the City of Franklin, Virginia will maintain our small city identity, heritage, and beauty while being a regional hub for economic opportunities, first-class education, a job-ready workforce, and balanced housing options.*

Within the context of that vision, City Council's priorities are focused on business development, building a stronger local workforce, enhancing educational opportunities, supporting well-managed, affordable residential growth, and improving City operations and service delivery.

Challenges and opportunities that the new City Attorney will address, to facilitate Council's efforts to achieve its vision and priorities, include:

- Developing positive working relationships with Council members, the City Manager and members of City staff and functioning as an integral and collaborative member of the City organization.
- Advising City Council and Community Development staff concerning the City's upcoming comprehensive plan update process and participating in the preparation of zoning and subdivision ordinances for Council consideration, subsequent to adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan update.
- Reviewing the City Charter and advising City Council and the City Manager of the need for charter updates and amendments, based on consultation with Council members and the City Manager.
- Ensuring that the City Code is updated with all ordinances adopted previously by City Council and maintaining currency of the Code.
- Working with City Council and the new City Manager, currently being recruited, to establish a code of conduct for Council members.



## PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

- Immediately engage with staff, City Council, court officials and members of the local bar; achieve familiarity with active projects.
- Obtain working knowledge of City Charter and City Code, and City policies and procedures.
- Maintain strong, consistent, and equal communications with the City Council.



## QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- Juris Doctor degree from an American Bar Association accredited and approved law school.
- At least five years of progressive experience practicing law sufficient to successfully accomplish the duties of the position of City Attorney. Five years of service as legal counsel in the public sector in Virginia is preferred.
- Admission to the Virginia State Bar and licensure to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia or eligibility for the same within a reasonable period of time after appointment.
- Also admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of Virginia and the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia or eligible for admission within a reasonable period of time after appointment.
- Broad familiarity and experience with governance, municipal finance, employment and land use law with local government(s) of comparable size, complexity, and responsibilities as the City of Franklin, as well as knowledge of Virginia state law and government. Experience with airport, economic development and utility law preferred.
- Comprehensive knowledge of local government, including rules of procedure, and state and federal law.
- Thorough comprehension of judicial procedures, rules of evidence and methods of legal research.
- Comprehensive skill in formulating legal opinions, conducting complex litigation and professional judgement.
- Strong written and oral communication skills, and analytical, research and problem-solving skills.
- Strong supervisory, organization and time-management skills.
- Ability to read, analyze, interpret and apply the most complex legal principles, precedents and documents.
- Ability to present or respond orally or in writing effectively, persuasively and/or appropriately to highly complex, controversial and/or sensitive matters.
- Ability to render immediate legal advice when necessary.
- Ability to deal with competing priorities, varied instructions, and abstract/concrete variables.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with all public officials, staff and the general public.
- Ability to exercise the highest degree of confidentiality and professionalism at all times.
- A demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional development through membership in Local Government Attorneys of Virginia, Inc. (LGA) and participation in conferences, seminars, and continuing legal education programs.
- Residency within the City is preferred.
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.





## PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Absolute integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, and open interactions with members of City Council, City employees, community members and court officials.
- Professionally competent, with confidence tempered by humility.
- Decisive in decision making, adhering to timelines; able to keep things moving.
- Able to lead as a team player while being approachable and solution minded; to multi-task among many responsibilities; and to set priorities and expectations of self.
- Possess an understanding of the political environment and able to present in that light.
- Able to work cooperatively with other City officials and employees in an impartial manner.
- Maintain regular and equal communications with members of City Council; ensure accessibility and approachability; keep Council informed of legal matters and respond promptly to inquiries.
- Exercise sound independent judgment and render straightforward advice; refer not only to the law but to other considerations such as moral, economic, social, and political factors that may be relevant to a situation.
- Able to provide legal advice and legal support to City Council and the City Manager in an assertive but respectful manner.
- Provide well-researched, succinct, prudent, and clear legal options to City Council; proactive in approach to work; able to present well.
- Understand that decision-making responsibility and authority rests with City Council as a whole body; fully advise and guide Council concerning the potential legal consequences of a decision and respect and support Council's decision.
- Respect and understand the City's history, with a dedication to serving the City of Franklin.
- Well-rounded in exposure to local government operations.
- Excellent communications and interpersonal skills, including the ability to listen effectively, understand differing views, and collaborate.

## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Compensation will be dependent on qualifications and experience. The City's pay plan identifies a range of \$124,059 to \$193,843 for the position. The successful candidate will be offered a generous benefit package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health insurance coverage, paid time off, professional membership and development, and other benefits as identified in a negotiated employment agreement.



## APPLICATION PROCESS

**A formal review of applications will begin on November 7, 2025**, and those candidates considered to most closely match the qualifications contained in this profile will be contacted for initial virtual interviews. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled; however, timely submittal will ensure the most advantageous review. To be considered, please submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references, to the Berkley Group, via e-mail at [steve.rosenberg@bgllc.net](mailto:steve.rosenberg@bgllc.net). Questions may be directed to:

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