



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee —*MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 12, 2017/ 4:30 p.m.
Location:	JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street Greenfield, MA – Room 221/Library
Facilitator:	Bill Perlman, Chair

Representatives Present:

- Kevin Fox, Council Appointee, Colrain
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected
- Jim Basford, Regional Planning Board
- Bill Martin, Council Appointee, Greenfield

Staff Members Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Peggy Sloan, Planning Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA:

1. Adopt 12.8.16 minutes

Bill P. opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Kevin F. moved to adopt the amended 12.8.16 minutes. Bill M. seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Welcome of and overview for new members

Everyone introduced themselves and Linda gave an overview of the committee's roles (including as members on other affiliated boards), goals, and typical schedule. Bill M. expressed interest in being on the Transportation Planning Organization, and Jim Basford in the CEDs.

3. Update on Mohawk Trail Woodlands project and legislation

Peggy Sloan summarized the work of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) forest project which is focused on forest land conservation, natural resource based economic development, and municipal financial sustainability. Eleven Franklin County (FC) and ten Berkshire County (BC) communities are participating in the project. The project advances recommendations of the HUD Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, which called for forest land conservation and sustainable natural resources economic development. A MTWP Advisory Committee was formed to oversee all aspects of the project and has representation from 20 of the 21 towns and eight regional members representing the environment, land conservation, business and regional planning sectors.

Most recently the MTWP Advisory Committee and staff have been working with state representatives to draft state legislation which would establish the MTWP as an entity, set up a governing structure, and identify key objectives of the project. (*See handout.*) If enacted at the state level, each town in the

study region (Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Rowe, and Shelburne in Franklin County) would need to “opt in” by a Select Board or town meeting vote. Towns could also choose to opt in at a later date.

All 11 FC communities and 8 towns in BC have provided a letter of support for proceeding with the legislation. Overall the MTWP has had a positive community response, although there have been some concerns raised about the potential air quality impacts of wood heat if expanded to replace oil. The DOER is funding a study to be conducted by the UMASS Clean Energy Extension that is looking at potential demand for wood heat and potential air quality impacts. DOER’s sustainable supply study found the proposed MTWP region is home to significant amounts of low grade wood that could sustain wood heat expansion.

Bill P. suggested the group look into wood gasification, and asked if money would be available for mitigating invasive species damage. P. Sloan noted that there is a research component to the project with possible assistance from the US Forest Service to address invasive species and climate change impacts. One of the recommendations of the MTWP plan is to build and staff a Mohawk Trail Forestry Center to support sustainable forestry education and outreach, conduct research and development, and provide tourism services.

A \$6 million investment is being requested from the state for funding the MTWP start-up. (*See handout.*) The approach created for the MTWP region by the advisory committee is designed to support municipal financial sustainability with tax impacts of the project either revenue neutral or revenue positive. For example, towns expressed a desire for select boards to be able to deny requests to conserve more land using MTWP funds once 40% of the town’s land area is permanently protected open space. The plan emphasizes support for and conservation of working forests with private land owners retaining ownership. The governing structure is such that communities opting in would have significant control, while the MTWP Executive Committee would oversee day-to-day administration.

4. Discussion of Mass Power Forward request for a letter opposing a pipeline tax

FRCOG received a request by Mass Power Forward for a letter opposing a pipeline tax that would subsidize pipeline construction costs. Members and staff discussed writing the letter, and decided that Peggy could craft it and send the draft to individual members who can send comments back to her. Linda will send the finalized letter to the towns to see if they’d like to do the same.

Bill M. moved that FRCOG take a stand opposing a pipeline tax or tariff. Jay D. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Priorities for 2017

Linda listed FRCOG’s priorities for 2017 were listed as follows:

- Develop a long-term sustainability plan for FCECS
- Rural Policy Commission work
- FRCOG 20th Anniversary celebration.
- Work on diversifying funding — FRCOG is 50% Federally funded in FY17
- Pursue Foundation funding using Community Action and BRPA as fiduciaries.
- Expand and revamp public transportation in Franklin County

- Increase north-south rail service.
- Convert to new accounting software July 1
- Prepare for upcoming retirements in 2017, 2018, and 2019
- Regionalization efforts
- Continue to assess FRCOG/LD involvement in last-mile Broadband

Bill added sending a letter to state legislators asking them to strengthen MA environmental and safety policies to protect us, given the likelihood that federal standards and regulations will be reduced under the new federal leadership.

6. Updates and Announcements

Linda announced that there will be a 1.65 % increase to the regional services assessment. Health insurance figures came in at a 9.4% increase. Staff considered cuts in personnel, but realized that would also be cutting revenue, so for now they assume level staffing for next year.

7. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance

Bill M. moved adjournment. Jim B. seconded the motion. The meeting closed at 5:27 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- 12/8/16 minutes
- *Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Draft Business Plan*, Second draft for discussion purposes only, dated April 12, 2016.
- *An Act Establishing the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership*, Revised final draft legislation, dated December 21, 2016.
- *The Future of Spectra's Access Northeast Pipeline Looks Dim*, Conservation Law Foundation, August 16, 2016.
- MA PowerTemplate letter: *Sign on For Local Elected Officials RE: Pipeline and the "Pipeline tax."*