



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Executive Committee —MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, February 23, 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
- Kim MacPhee, Land Use & Natural Resources
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Bob Dean, Regional Services

### Guests:

- Andy Fisk, Exec Dir CRWC

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA:

### 1. Adopt 1.12.17 minutes

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

**Jay D. moved to adopt the 1.12.17 minutes. Bill M. seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

### 2. Continuation of Whately Road Hearing and consideration of closure of that action for now.

Bob Dean explained his uncertainty about whether canceling the most recently scheduled Executive Committee meeting (due to the unsafe driving conditions caused by the snowstorm) ended the public road hearing continuation on the relocation of Whately Rd, which was scheduled to convene at that meeting. He brought the issue to Atty. Donna McNichol but has yet to hear her determination. Bob also noted that the committee now consists of two new members that likely can't vote at the public hearing, as they were not at the original viewing.

**Bill M. made a motion to continue the hearing to April 13, 2017, at 5 p.m. unless counsel deems it legally closed. Motion passes with 4 in favor and 1 abstention.**

### 3. Discussion of future of FCECS

Bob Dean reported that this winter's FCECS budget notices included a detailed letter to town finance committees, select boards, and fire departments, explaining the FY18 FCECS assessment, increased due to aging equipment. Bill P. offered the committee a two-minute history of the system.

Last year the FCECS Oversight Committee used homeland security funds to analyze and predict the future of the system. Their conclusion: The system is obsolete and should eventually be replaced.

The conversation with state officials has begun: Linda broached the subject with Rep. Steve Kulik reporting that FRCOG will continue to manage the system if need be, but we see the state as being the best public safety option. EOPSS is considering picking a region to pilot its statewide 800 MHz system for local use and we will volunteer our region to be the pilot.

Our radios currently use 450 MHz range. If we did shift to 800 MHz, we'd need to acquire all new portables, mobiles, and pagers. Because FRCOG and the FCECS Oversight Committee have been proactive in terms of taking local control; managing operating procedures for dispatch, ambulance, police, and fire; and actively working to make the system fit our needs precisely, we want to make sure we have some input if we hand over the system, Bill urged.

Members discussed the gains and losses associated with moving from 450 MHz to 800 MHz, and beyond that, what other technologies might be available. Linda clarified to the group that we're not discussing the dispatch service, feeling that the state police do a very good job managing that system of communication already.

Some members felt strongly that we need to have the system fixed or to ask another entity more able to own and operate the system to take over. They wondered if it will be difficult to convince towns that the state will do better job of overseeing the FCECS. The convincing argument, it was suggested, is the level of success in the state's handling of dispatch. Dispatch is working well. It's the infrastructure that's in danger of failing. Members agreed on the need to urgently relay to towns that this is a big expense we have to plan for, and that there's no avoiding it. The more we can generate political interest in what the options are externally, the better, Jay suggested. Jim Basford agreed, saying that if towns band together, they'll have more clout. Constituents need to say either a.) that they want to keep the infrastructure and pay for it, or b.) that they want to figure out a way to let go of it.

#### **4. Updates and Announcements**

Kimberly Noake MacPhee introduced Andy Fisk, the Executive Director of the Connecticut River Watershed Committee (CRWC) who was unexpectedly available to attend the meeting. He and his staff have been working closely with the FRCOG on the Federal Energy Regulating Commission (FERC) relicensing of Northfield Mtn. Pumped Storage and the Turners Falls Dam projects.

Kimberly reminded the committee that FirstLight recently completed all of its required Connecticut River environmental studies as part of their relicensing efforts, and found that their Pumped Storage facility contributes to only 4% of the erosion of the river, a result which the CRWC and the Streambank Erosion Committee dispute.

While FERC works on their water recertification, FRCOG and the CRWA have the opportunity to work with towns to think both locally and regionally about what kind of licensing makes sense, what kinds of assessments we want done on the river over the life of the license, what types of established recreational facilities require expansion and maintenance, and what new facilities are needed. FirstLight has entered into settlement talks and the company wants to hear what towns want as part of settlement. Legal advice is critical.

Mr. Fisk told the group that the new license will last for 30-50 years — with every subsequent owner required to comply —and that the CRWC sees the relicensing process as a collaborative one with many stakeholders, including FRCOG. The outcome they're hoping for is a smaller ecological footprint from facilities, erosion mitigation, the establishment of recreation businesses and infrastructure. We want to work together with stakeholders to come up with common perspectives on what we want, he said. The CRWC has hired expertise to help, and it's now getting to the point where we need to coherently present our perspective. These consultants know all of the issues and are educated to get the best possible outcomes for the river. That assessment is starting soon, with conversations with FirstLight starting in March and taking a year. Mr. Fisk explained that all 5 dams will have licenses, but a single settlement agreement will cover all of the stakeholders.

The committee discussed FirstLight's use of Northfield's assessed evaluation agreement to haggle settlements with other towns, although settlement discussions are meant to be an administrative step separate from evaluation level discussions.

Questions regarding future erosion mitigation on the part of FirstLight arose. Kimberly explained that we are encouraging the DEP to require erosion mitigation. We've never been happy with methodology and assessment work and would like to see FirstLight assess river conditions periodically and do mitigating work within context of a framework that makes sense and looks at the entire river system. The current license articles are very broad and FERC is skeptical about the erosion conclusions. With some urging, DEP is now engaged in the process and watching FirstLight.

Jim B. asked who would police erosion control. Kimberly explained that if DEP requires a river or bank management plan, we'd like requirements for assessing erosion conditions added, and the success and failure of those plans included in reports.

Franklin County has been at the table for many years; it makes sense to continue, said Jay D. Bill M. suggested doing something different, such as making use of hydro-storage and crafting some sort of purchase-power agreement or encouraging towns to bargain for discounts in electricity. How can affected communities recoup money, he asked. Jim B. suggested creating a mitigation fund. Working on the agreements gives us an opportunity to think outside of the box, Kimberly said, encouraging the committee to share their suggestions and ideas.

The next meeting will be held March 9, unless no agenda items arise, in which case it will be April 13.

**Bill M. moved adjournment. Kevin F. seconded the motion. The meeting closed at 5:30 p.m.**

**Documents Distributed:**

- **Agenda**
- **12/8/16 minutes**