



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Franklin Regional Planning Board— *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, May 25, 2017 / 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Location:	JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA – First Floor Conference Room
Facilitator:	Jerry Lund, Chair

FRPB MEMBERS

- Jerry Lund**, Chair, Leyden, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Sam Lovejoy**, Clerk, Montague, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Joan Rockwell**, 1st Vice Chair, At-Large Colrain
- James Basford**, Orange, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Ted Cady**, Warwick Planning Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Jan Carr**, At-Large, Heath
- Virginia Desorgher**, Greenfield Planning Board
- Jay DiPucchio**, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Wayne Hachey**, New Salem Select Board
- Thomas Hutcheson**, Conway Select Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Thomas Miner**, Second Vice Chair, FRPB Executive Committee, Shelburne At-Large
- Charles Olchowski**, FRPB Executive Committee, Greenfield At-Large
- Nan Riebschlaeger**, At-Large, Wendell
- John Ryan**, At-Large, New Salem
- Joseph Strzegowski**, Conway Planning Board
- Jeanie Schermesser**, At-Large, Erving
- Mike Shaffer**, Erving Planning Board
- David Travers**, Heath Select Board
- John Ward**, Alternate, Gill Select Board
- Chuck Washer**, Shelburne Select Board

FRCOG STAFF

Peggy Sloan, Planning & Development Director; **Liz Jacobson-Carroll**, Administrative Services Assistant; **Jessica Atwood**, Economic Development Program Manager; **Kimberly Noake MacPhee**, Land Use & Natural Resources Program Manager

1. Introductions	Jerry Lund, FRPB Members
J. Lund convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. A round of introductions followed.	
2. Review and Approval of March 23, 2017, 2017 FRPB Minutes	S. Lovejoy, Clerk-FRPB
J. Lund moved to adopt the 3/23/17 minutes, S. Lovejoy seconded the motion, and the motion passed with J. Carr, J. Strzegowski, and D. Travers abstaining.	
3. Presentation on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Report	J. Atwood, Economic Development Program

J. Atwood presented the Annual Report, the 2nd update to the 2015 CEDS Plan. Due to the Philadelphia Region Economic Development Administration (EDA) office by June 30, this submission will maintain FRCOG’s eligibility for select EDA funding programs. Atwood noted that the report focuses on leveraging assets intrinsic to the region and building additional capacity for economic development. She summarized demographic conditions in the county and the larger CEDS Region, noting that within the county, population has declined, and that both wages and unemployment are low. Atwood outlined the significance of key industries and clusters, including the creative economy; education; forest/farm/food production; the green economy; healthcare; and manufacturing.

Updating the group on recent projects, J. Atwood indicated progress in several areas. Access to skills training has improved through the Middle Skills Manufacturing Initiative, GCC’s expanded programs, and the Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board’s leveraging of partnerships to increase job readiness and literacy skills. Inter-/intra- regional collaboration has improved with the publication of a Tri-State Region CEDS Comparison Report; a Western Mass Developers Conference was held; the extension the FCCDC’s Northern Tier Project through the Governor’s Urban Agenda grant; and a presentation at a recent EDA-FEMA workshop. Broadband/IT development will proceed for nine unserved “last mile” communities through MassWorks awards of \$7.68 million; expansion of broadband in partially served cable towns through state funding to Comcast; and through the GCET launch in Greenfield.

The clean-up of the Ramage Paper Mill wood structure in Monroe, and assessment work in Bernardston, Monroe, Northfield, Warwick and elsewhere represent significant progress in brownfields work. The announcement of grant funds to be awarded for the Greenfield parking structure will support downtown revitalization. Further downtown revitalization progress will be made through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative awards; DLTA economic development projects in several towns; further planning for a new industrial park, and a workshop on New Market Tax Credits held in January. Business technical assistance work has proceeded with FCCDC workshops, loans made through FCCDC Lending Program and the PV Grows Investment Fund, and an update to the Business Development Resource Guide. Progress has been made in key cluster industries through the FCCDC cold storage & freezer project; through the development of plans to increase bicycle tourism marketing; and an upcoming report on encouraging more visitors by rail.

J. Atwood referred to performance measures included in the report. Specific dollar figures invested and numbers of jobs created are itemized by project. Changes in select employment and earnings figures for Franklin County and the CEDS Region are listed as well. The full report is available for download from <http://frcog.org/draft-2017-ceds-annual-report-available-review/>. Comments are welcome prior to the close of business on June 20, 2017. The final report will be presented at the June 22, 2017 meeting. J. Lund’s expression of thanks was followed by a round of applause.

4. Deerfield Watershed Based Plan for Health & Resiliency

K. Noake MacPhee, Land Use & Natural Resources Program Manager-FRPB

K. Noake MacPhee reported on the completed plan which has been under development for several years. The plan contains diverse information pertaining to climate change adaptation, resiliency strategies, and EPA requirements for projects funded by their non-source pollution program. She

explained that while Franklin County's five watersheds meet the MA DEP's technical definition of healthy, damage from Tropical Storms Tammy, Floyd and Irene remain, and miles of river are impaired. After focusing on storm-water management projects for decades, a multi-year assessment in 2008 identified damage to four tributaries in the Deerfield River watershed. This prompted FRCOG's planning department to begin targeting erosion-related problems. FRCOG staff and towns are now working to protect as well as repair local assets. Protection has become increasingly important as the frequency of severe storms increases. The plan sets out to establish a tool box of strategies for use by town officials, K. Noake MacPhee said.

Utilizing an expanded definition of a healthy river, and the principles of fluvial geomorphology, FRCOG first identified infrastructure located beside rivers. Using the South (Conway) and North (Colrain/Shelburne) river projects as examples, she described the assessment process and summarized findings and lessons learned. It has become clear that site-specific problems are not happening in isolation since each is affected by upstream and downstream problems such as eroding banks, absent buffers, straightened channels, and construction in the valley. With the completion of the South River Restoration Project, habitat and geomorphic function were restored, and infrastructure was protected, though not without some compromise to accommodate abutters to the river.

K. Noake MacPhee expressed her concern regarding the amount of funding and time required for all the projects already identified. While river restoration projects will continue, strategies incorporating the protection of healthy watersheds must be implemented. Focusing on green infrastructure at the watershed scale, tools are needed to protect forested land, flood plains and rivers, as well as the interconnected landscapes benefitting both humans and habitat. These will enhance climate change resiliency, ensure clean drinking water, provide flood storage, enhance economic opportunities, and protect species diversity.

Upon examining the Deerfield Watershed in this way, K. Noake MacPhee and colleagues saw a need for permanent protection for aquifers, public water supplies, community ground water sources, emergency surface water, and more. They recognized the possibility of using EPA funding for restoration and preservation projects serving multiple purposes which would bring more stakeholders to the table and hopefully funding to the table. At the sub-watershed level, town and site-specific concerns include storm-water management, flood mitigation, and groundwater recharge. Rain gardens are one type of tool that can be implemented at the town and site specific level. The goal is to develop tools to work at each level, and to undertake projects that will connect and work together, resulting in broad and comprehensive coverage over time, she said.

K. Noake MacPhee presented three maps, of ten under development, for use by towns within the Deerfield watershed to address specific vulnerabilities. The first example was of Charlemont center and featured a moderately developed road and railroad tracks along the river, a lack of vegetative buffer along the river, a wastewater treatment plant in the floodplain, significant erosion, a tributary carrying debris, and a nearby school and highway garage nearby. Strategies to address these concerns include increasing culvert size, protecting large blocks of forested land, using low-tech techniques to address storm-water runoff, protecting land along the river including space for flooding, and providing incentives for farm landowners to restore floodplains. Discussion included the possibility of adding rather than increasing the size of existing road culverts; retaining water in upland areas; and coordinating standards for culverts and remediation with other states.

K. Noake MacPhee noted that NGOs such as Trout Unlimited have begun to convene groups with these goals. They are looking for private foundation funding to do more comprehensive work and are trying to get regulatory agencies to talk, but progress is slow. Area conservation groups are attempting to align their projects with their counterparts throughout the CT River watershed, she added. There was general agreement that Massachusetts organizations can learn a great deal in these matters from those in Vermont.

In summary, K. Noake MacPhee acknowledged that the large scale of the plan -- 14 towns, 10 watersheds -- is daunting, especially given that much of the responsibility for implementing it rests with local towns with talented volunteers, but with limited staff capacity and funding. She suggested that town officials begin by updating out-of-date land use and subdivision regulations. MacPhee cited a recent proposal FRCOG submitted for funding to the MassDEP that could fund a pilot project in Orange to identify opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure into transportation projects in order to utilize transportation funding. A handbook for other Franklin County towns would also be developed as part of this project.

There was discussion about how best, and through whom, to disseminate this information to towns. Among those suggested were DPW professionals. For example, Vermont has an effective training program for road bosses which at least one local town is hoping to import. J. Basford noted that this approach to watershed protection will need to be mandated in order to be effective. J. Lund suggested that articulating these goals in town master plans could mitigate the effects of municipal official turnover and enhance the possibilities for funding through Town Meeting. D. Travers proposed requiring related expertise for certification in these techniques in relevant professions. K. Noake MacPhee emphasized that without regulations on town books, promotion of these practices may be difficult. J. Lund's expression of thanks was followed by a round of applause.

5. Update on FERC Relicensing of the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility	T. Miner, CRSEC Chair & FRPB Executive Committee
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T. Miner explained that relicensing has been broken into two processes – one public, the other confidential. The public process involves completion of studies that are mostly focused on fishery issues. The confidential process is in pursuit of a Settlement Agreement between FirstLight and the stakeholders, which could cover many of the environmental and recreational issues identified during the FERC process.

After five years, important fishery issues are still under study. They include water releases for fish habitat protection and changes to fish passage facilities to make it possible for migratory fish to get past the Turners Falls dam, going both up and downstream. Once all of the studies have been completed, the next steps will be FERC acceptance of FirstLight's license application as complete and preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

After consultation with its attorney, FRCOG has signed onto the settlement ground rules subject to compliance with the MA Public Records & Open Meeting Laws and the Freedom of Information Act. T. Miner indicated that he and the other representatives – P. Sloan, K. Noake MacPhee, and L. Dunlavy -- share FRPB's reservations about this closed process. Nonetheless, they believe it is more valuable for the FRCOG to participate in the settlement negotiations to protect public interests in a new license

that will better protect the CT River, than to be excluded. If a Settlement Agreement is achieved, it will be brought to the FRCOG Executive Committee for their review and will be subject to their approval.

Discussion covered the logistics and timeline of the negotiations, which are expected to conclude by the end of the calendar year; the resulting license is likely to be in place for 30 – 50 years. P. Sloan emphasized that FRCOG and the towns have been explicit about their plans to comply fully with public records laws throughout the process. S. Lovejoy noted that at the end of the negotiation process, all related documents should become public.

T. Miner underscored his appreciation for K. Noake MacPhee’s considerable contributions to the process, noting that her expert scrutiny of reports guided much of their subsequent work.

6. Planning Updates (Zoning Reform 2017)	P. Sloan, Planning Director-FRCOG
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P. Sloan reported that the Kulik and Peake Act and other zoning reform bills are being considered once again by the State legislature. It is unclear if a combined version will be reported out of committee. FRCOG staff will continue to monitor the progress of zoning reform.

7. Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance/Adjourn/Public Comment	J. Lund, Chair - FRPB
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J. Lund announced that FRPB annual elections will be held at the June meeting, and that an additional At-large member is needed. The nominating committee is accepting suggestions, and encourages members to consider Planning Board, Conservation Commission or other municipal officials whose local terms are expiring and who might be interested in serving at the regional level.

T. Cady moved to adjourn the meeting, J. Rockwell seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Documents Distributed / Presentations Viewed:

- Agenda
- FRPB Minutes 2017.05.23 DRAFT
- A printout of the presentation *DRAFT 2017 CEDS ANNUAL REPORT*, by Jessica Atwood
- A printout of the presentation *A Watershed-Based Plan to Maintain the Health and Improve the Resiliency of the Deerfield River Watershed,* by Kimberly Noake MacPhee

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 22, 2017. Copies of all documents are available. Please contact Liz Jacobson-Carroll at ljc@frcog.org or 413-774-3167 x101.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Lovejoy, Clerk - FRPB