



To: FRCOG Council
From: Sub-Committee Chairs and Linda Dunlavy
Date: April 14, 2017

**Subject: Committee and Executive Director Updates for 4/20/17
Council Meeting**

Council Chair Update

Next Council Meeting Date:

FY18 – July 20

All meetings are held in the Transit Center.

Welcome New Council Members

We are sad to report that Gordon Fretwell, an active and very helpful Council and Personnel Committee member, has retired from FRCOG service but we welcome new Leveret representative, Beth Adams.

Although unable to attend this evening, we also welcome Steve Ellis, Montague's new Town Administrator, as our Montague Council representative.

Executive Committee Update

This quarter the Exec Com did the following:

- Sent letter to legislative delegation requesting State legislation to prohibit imposing a "pipeline tax" on electric ratepayers to help finance gas pipeline infrastructure.
- Reviewed new OPEB legislation.
- Discussed FERC relicensing process.
- Reviewed COG's role in tax abatement denial appeals.
- Reviewed recreational marijuana testimony written by staff and HR1499, legislation that would transfer a portion of Deeds fees to counties and COGs.

Executive Director Update

Advocacy

Staff had a busy quarter of advocating on behalf of and representing Franklin County at statewide and regional events.

- Linda D. attended the Workforce Skills Cabinet kick-off event. This new effort, co-led by the MA Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Economic Development will focus on workforce skills development specifically catered to regional employment sectors and needs. Franklin County is part of the Pioneer Valley region along with Hampshire and Hampden Counties and the FRCOG has a seat on the Regional Planning Team.

- Linda D. was asked to present a history and status of broadband efforts in western MA to a group of senators as part of the Senator Rosenberg's Commonwealth Conversations. Later in the day several staff attended a working session on transportation infrastructure.
- A passenger rail expansion update was presented to the Pioneer Valley legislative delegation.
- The FRCOG worked with Community Action to determine and analyze the region's reliance on federal funding and the impact of President Trump's proposed budget cuts to present to Congressman McGovern. The presentation was snowed out in February and has been rescheduled to Friday, 4/21.
- FRCOG submitted written testimony to the Joint Legislative Marijuana Policy Committee on suggested changes to the current law.
- Staff will present to the Rural Policy Commission in late April.

Annual Report

We have again created FRCOG Annual Reports for each community. Each Report documents all of the FRCOG's regional work in 2016 and then highlights specific service to the community. We have printed 5 copies for each community and can send an electronic version upon request. A version with no town summaries (regional highlights only) will be sent to legislators, funders, state agencies and other stakeholders. All reports will be posted on the FRCOG's web site, www.frcog.org.

Bicycle Parking Program

The FRCOG Bicycle Parking Program provides bike racks for public use, free of charge, to our member communities. This opportunity is made possible through a contract with MassDOT, which will reimburse the FRCOG for the cost of bike racks through the Federal Highway Administration Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program. Participating Franklin County towns will be able to select the bike racks that they prefer. The racks will be ordered by the FRCOG and delivered to towns on a first come, first-served basis. In order to be able to provide bike racks at no cost, the FRCOG must have a commitment from each participating town that they will be promptly installed. The first deadline for bicycle rack requests is April 30, 2017. For information on how to receive free bike racks, see the Bicycle Parking Program information page on the FRCOG website or contact Laurie Scarbrough at 413-774-3167 x 139 or lscarbrough@frcog.org.

Bicycle Tourism Plan

The FRCOG is developing a Bicycle Tourism Plan for Franklin County. A meeting of the project advisory committee was held on March 15th, 2017. The meeting brought together representatives of local recreational bicycling businesses and tourism industry representatives to discuss bicycle tourism opportunities. The FRCOG staff has developed an inventory of bicycling assets. A solicitation is currently underway to hire a professional to complete an economic analysis of what bicycling contributes to the regional economy. The FRCOG staff will complete outreach to businesses that serve tourist and tourism industry representatives in order to identify opportunities for growth. If you would like to participate in the effort, please contact Elizabeth Giannini at Giannini@frcog.org.

Bike Week Breakfast

In celebration of Bay State Bike Week, the FRCOG will be hosting a bike breakfast at the John W. Olver Transit Center on Tuesday, May 16th, 2017. The breakfast will take place from 7:30-10:00 a.m. There will be coffee, juice and light breakfast fare. The event is an opportunity to meet other bicyclists and share thoughts on bicycling. The FRCOG will also be featuring information about bicycling in the region. Copies of the Franklin County Bike maps will be available. For further information, please contact Elizabeth Giannini at Giannini@frcog.org.

Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Projects

FRCOG was awarded a \$131,280 grant from the Baker-Polito administration's FY17 Community Compact Cabinet Program's Efficiency & Regionalization Grant Program to develop a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the Deerfield River Watershed, which includes all or portions of 14 Franklin County towns. Last month a lively and participatory workshop was held to get public input that will be incorporated into the project's plan. For more information, contact Kimberly Noake MacPhee, P.G., CFM, at 774-3167 x130 or kmacphee@frcog.org.

Collective Purchasing Program

April is a busy month in purchasing. Highway bids for 25 towns were just issued, and Fuel bids for 19 towns and non-profits will also go out this month. Because construction season is just around the corner, several towns are gearing up with bids for sidewalks, bridges, and building rehabilitation, and tennis courts and transfer station upgrades. The FRCOG is taking on as many of these bids for towns as can be fit into the schedule. All bids are posted on the website <http://frcog.org/bids>.

Contact Andrea Woods at ext. 104 or bids@frcog.org if you have any questions.

Community Health Improvement Plan

On April 7 the FRCOG was pleased to host a broad group of community based organizations, health care providers, local and state government representatives, school officials, and public health professionals for the release of the region's first Community Health Improvement Plan, in conjunction with the release of the 2017 National County Health Rankings. Staff have been working for over a year with a dozen other organizations to assess health needs, identify evidence-based interventions, and prioritize strategies for health improvement for the region for the next three years. To review the Community Health Improvement Plan, visit the CHIP web page at frcog.org.

Communities That Care Mass in Motion

Next Mass in Motion Steering Committee meeting: Thursday, May 25 from 11am-1 pm in the 1st Floor Conference Room at the John W. Olver Transit Center If you are interested in joining, please contact Rachel Stoler rstoler@frcog.org

Communities That Care Coalition Substance Abuse Prevention

FRCOG has applied for a federal grant to the Office on Women's Health to work with four school districts to support the implementation of the PreVenture Program – an evidence-based, school-based prevention program that screens students for four personality factors that put them at high risk of substance use and mental health problems, and offers specialized workshops for students deemed to be high risk based on these personality factors (hopelessness, anxiety-sensitivity, sensation-seeking, and impulsivity). The program, designed for students entering high school, and generally run by school counselors with support from a community mental health provider, would build nicely on the existing programming in middle schools. We expect to hear back from the Office on Women's Health in September.

In collaboration with the Parent Education Workgroup and the schools, we are in the process of sending out a series of bookmarks to parents with positive messages for youth substance use prevention and working with the Regional School Health Task Force to finalize a best-practice guide for schools on policy and practice related to student substance use.

DLTA Local Technical Assistance Program

DLTA is the state grant funding that allows the FRCOG to help towns with traditional planning projects, Community Compact best practices, and projects that promote regionalization. Thanks to all towns for submitting project ideas. FRCOG has assigned projects based on the state funding priorities and which towns have had DLTA projects in the past. If your project was selected, you should be hearing from a FRCOG staff person by the end of April at the latest. A summarized list of projects is:

Economic Development Planning Program

Under its planning partnership grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), staff is creating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2017 Annual Report. The Annual Report will be discussed at upcoming CEDS Committee meetings to be held on May 4 and June 7. Also at these meetings, MassDevelopment will present an overview of their programs to support municipal economic development and private investment.

FRCOG shared an updated *Franklin County Business Development Resource Guide* with Town Clerks, Town Administrators and business groups. The Guide was created to introduce entrepreneurs to organizations offering technical assistance, financing, training, and other resources to help make their venture a success. The Guide also includes basic information about Franklin County and the greater region which may be of interest to people developing a business plan. The Guide was designed to be a quick, useful reference that can be easily uploaded onto a municipal or business group website. For more information, contact Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager at jatwood@frcog.org or (413)774-3167 x123.

Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS)

As presented at the last meeting, the FRCOG-owned 450 MHz system is estimated to have approximately 2 to 5 years of useful life remaining and needs to be rebuilt or replaced. Staff and the FCECS Oversight Committee have been actively exploring a long-term sustainability plan for emergency communication infrastructure. Activity over the last quarter includes:

- The FCECS Oversight Committee reaffirmed that migrating to the state's 800MHz system appears to be the best option for the region.
- The FRCOG sent a letter to Curtis Wood, EOPSS Undersecretary for Forensic Science and Technology requesting that EOPSS consider Franklin County as a pilot region for expansion of the statewide system. While we have not received a formal letter back from EOPSS, their actions and involvement since the letter indicate a positive response.
- The FCECS formed a subcommittee to work with the FRCOG and EOPSS on the development of a migration business plan. The subcommittee identified an initial list of questions for EOPSS that address coverage, cost and capacity issues.
- Using Deerfield's existing 800MHz radios, initial testing is being performed by members of the FCECS Oversight Committee. A 5-week coverage testing schedule has been developed and will commence when additional radios are made available. Every town will have at least 2 radios for 3 days to identify served and unserved areas of their municipality. Unserved areas, by latitude and longitude, will be logged.
- The FRCOG will map all identified unserved areas to use to work with EOPSS during the next steps of the pilot program.
- An E-911 grant for the purchase of radios is being pursued.

The FRCOG and FCECS Oversight Committee currently believe that migrating to the state's system is the only good and viable option for the future of the FCECS. A presentation providing more detail about

current activities will be presented at the Council meeting. An outstanding question to be addressed is what kind of role or vote is required of the 26 municipalities should the pilot program prove successful.

FRTA Proposed Route Changes

The FRTA is looking to make changes to its many of its schedules beginning July 1, 2017. To prepare for this, the FRTA will be holding a series of public meetings to obtain public feedback on its proposals. There will be 7 meetings held around the region between April 12th and May 1st. Details on the meetings and proposed changes can be found on the FRTA website: www.fрта.org. FRCOG Planning Staff are reviewing the proposed changes and will be attending the public meetings to better understand the region's transit needs. For more information, please contact Senior Transportation/Land Use Planner Megan Rhodes at mrhodes@frcog.org or (413)774-3167 x132.

Local Officials Workshop

Save the date of Thursday, June 8th, for a Local Officials Workshop on the New Public Records Law: Regulatory and Implementation Updates. Michele Randazzo from KP Law will be our presenter from 7:00pm to 9:00pm in the William B. Allen 1st floor meeting room at the John W. Olver Regional Transit Center in Greenfield. This session will offer a quick overview of the law, but will mainly pick up where our previous workshop ended last fall and focus on the accompanying regulations promulgated by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, as well as a discussion of what has been learned over the first five months since the law took effect. Audience participation is encouraged! For more information about this workshop go to <http://frcog.org/event/public-records-law-update/>. Please pre-register by email to registrations@frcog.org or by phone to (413) 774-3167, ext. 101.

Marijuana Legalization

FRCOG submitted written testimony to the Joint Legislative Marijuana Policy Committee on suggested changes to the current law (a copy is available in your packets). FRCOG Staff have collected a wide variety of resources and information on the FRCOG website for towns interested in learning more about the provisions of the new law. You can find these at: <http://frcog.org/publication/municipal-marijuana-legalization-resources/> or by typing "marijuana" in the search bar. Planning staff may be available to assist with zoning revisions in your towns – contact Peggy Sloan at psloan@frcog.org if interested.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Project

The goals of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Project (MTWP) are to bring recognition and additional financial and technical resources to the 21 municipalities in northwestern Massachusetts, primarily via special designation by the State Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and U.S. Forest Service to:

- Increase economic development related to forestry and natural resource based tourism
- Support the expansion of sustainable forestry practices and forest conservation on private lands
- Improve fiscal stability and sustainability of the municipalities

In addition to a Plan that was completed in December 2015, a Draft Business Plan, Potential Governance Structure and Draft State legislation have been developed. Meetings with each Franklin County town's Select Board have been completed to discuss the recommendations of the Plan and to determine town interest in proceeding with State legislation to create a Special Designation for the 21-town region. All eleven communities in Franklin County have provided letters of support for proceeding with State legislation for a Special Designation for the 21-Town region. Eight of the ten towns in Berkshire County have also provided letters of support. A final Draft of the proposed legislation has been submitted to our State legislators and was filed in January 2017. For more information, contact Peggy Sloan at psloan@frcog.org. The Plan is available on our website (www.frcog.org).

Regional Brownfields Program

Under its current EPA grant, the FRCOG has resources to conduct environmental site assessment activities on properties potentially impacted by hazardous substances or petroleum products, pending determination of site eligibility. All funds for assessment of hazardous substances sites have been allocated. However, funding for assessment of petroleum sites is still available. In this past quarter, two new sites were accepted and prioritized for assessment using petroleum funding under this Program. The McKnight Property in Warwick and the Caldwell Road Property in Northfield have been confirmed as eligible for the Program and will have a Phase I assessment conducted in the coming weeks.

Staff continued to support the Town of Monroe with their clean-up and demolition of the wood structure of the former Ramage Paper Mill. The Town has begun to drawdown on the brownfields clean-up subgrant provided by the FRCOG to fund related engineering and remediation costs. Along with 2017 DLTA Program funds, FRCOG staff have provided support to the Town for their public procurement process to hire a contractor. The clean-up and demolition project is scheduled to be completed by mid June 2017. For more information about the program, please contact Peggy Sloan at 774-3167 x133 or psloan@frcog.org.

Regional Preparedness Program

The Franklin County Citizen Corps program held a full-scale sheltering exercise at Mohawk Trail Regional High School in March. The High School was designated as a regional sheltering site when the Regional Sheltering Plan was written and this exercise was the first opportunity town officials and Citizen Corps volunteers had to test the Plan. Town officials were happy to see that preparedness for sheltering has moved forward since Tropical Storm Irene. An after action report/improvement plan will be completed by the end of April indicating next steps and another exercise is being planned for fall 2017, perhaps at Turners Falls High School, another designated regional shelter.

The Regional Preparedness Program is assisting four west County towns in exploring ways to collaborate in the realm of public safety using DLTA funds. With the help of Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dan Nietzsche, the towns of Charlemont, Heath, Hawley, and Rowe are currently exploring sharing police services. As time allows, the project will move on to exploring shared ambulance and highway services as well.

Dan is also working with the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) Oversight Group to get the MACC up and running. Tri-State Fire Mutual Aid voted during their annual meeting in February to endorse the FRCOG taking on ownership of the MACC while the Northwest Massachusetts Incident Management Team, a subcommittee of Tri-State, will be responsible for operations at the MACC. Dan is working under DLTA funds this year to hammer out all of the legal and coordination details of this partnership.

Lastly, Program Manager Tracy Rogers assisted Conway in recovering from the tornado that struck the town on February 25th. Tracy first served in a volunteer capacity in her role as interim deputy team leader on the Northwest Massachusetts Incident Management Team. Later, in her FRCOG role, Tracy worked with town officials to write an after action report and improvement plan assessing how well the town responded and suggesting planning and training opportunities to improve future responses.

Traffic Counting Program

The FRCOG performs traffic counts, free of charge for all Franklin County communities who request them, on a first-come, first-served basis. As we begin to develop our 2017 count calendar, we ask that Town officials think about any traffic counts you would like performed in your community and submit a count request. The FRCOG has the ability to measure traffic volumes, vehicle classification, vehicle speeds and vehicle turning movements (intersection counts). Count requests should be submitted to Laurie Scarbrough, Transportation Planning Engineer, at 413-774-3167 x 139 or lscarbrough@frcog.org.

Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC)

WRHSAC is offering multiple trainings through spring and early summer. The trainings will enhance first responders' skills and address identified gaps from recent exercise after action reports. Any questions can be directed to Raine Brown at raine@frcog.org.

- Warm Zone Operations Training – The Warm Zone is an area of reduced threat in an emergency response, such as a cleared area following an active shooter incident, however the threat may be in the near vicinity. Emergency medical operations to treat and retrieve victims often occur in Warm Zone areas. This training will provide EMS and Fire personnel with performance level experience in tactical operations, interaction with law enforcement and triage prioritization. The training will be held in late June and open to first responders throughout western Massachusetts. Registration will begin in May on WRHSAC's website wrhsac.org.
- Stop the Bleed is a nationwide campaign to empower individuals to act quickly and save lives. The increase in Mass Casualty Incidents (MCI) from active shooters or other aggressive attacks has prompted the Department of Homeland Security to encourage the public to initiate potentially lifesaving techniques in situations of severe bleeds. This training will focus on ensuring first responders are well versed in assessing the need for tourniquet application, how to apply a tourniquet to self and others, and scene assessment for safety. It will also train first responders to be able to teach colleagues and the general public on tourniquet application. Each participant will be provided with a tactical tourniquet for their personal go-kit. Two sessions will be held, one in May and the other in June. Registration will begin in April on WRHSAC's website wrhsac.org.

Finance Committee Update

OPEB Trust Reauthorization

The Finance Committee met in March. Members were provided with our audited FY16 financials and management letter. An item in FY16's management letter was to consider reauthorizing our OPEB Trust under amended MGL Chapter 32B Section 20. The legislation expands and clarifies the responsibilities of governmental entities in maintaining OPEB trust funds. Some of the changes in legislation were to clarify the appropriation process and provide investment guidelines. The amended legislation allows for either a trustee or board of trustees with very specific requirements for a board's composition. The revised legislation also specifies that if no designation is made, the treasurer shall be the trustee and shall manage and invest the funds. In fiscal year 2014 the Council authorized the Director of Finance as trustee.

Our current OPEB funds are invested with Vanguard but staff could not confirm if that product complies with the amended legislation. Two guests (Paul Todisco and Francesco Daniele) from the state's pension investment board, met with members to explain the State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund (SRBTF).

Committee members had follow-up questions regarding the management and performance of the fund. While the plan is comparable to Vanguard in returns, there are several advantages of SRBTF. It assures compliance, gives us access to a larger allocation pool, and gives us direct access to a professional management team. The committee supports the transfer of funds from Vanguard to SRBTF.

The SRBTF requires the reacceptance of MGL Chapter 32B Section 20 and trustee designation. The Finance Committee passed two motions that if approved by the Council, will allow the paperwork to proceed for the transfer of OPEB funds.

Committee Motions:

The Finance Committee recommends that the Council adopt M.G.L. c. 32, Sec. 20, as amended by Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2016, to reauthorize the OPEB Trust Fund.

The Finance Committee recommends the Council designate the Finance Director as trustee of the fund.

Accounting Software:

The Finance Department and Town Accounting staff have begun the conversion process to Abila MIP. The full conversion should be finished by early June, giving staff time to run tests before the July 1 start date. Staff also worked with New Salem to apply for a Municipal IT grant on behalf of the Town Accounting Program. If received, the grant funds will be used to purchase software enhancements for the Town Accounting Program and professional technical assistance to continue to enhance and optimize the program's operations.