



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## COUNCIL — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 29, 2015 / 5:30 p.m.
Location:	JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street Greenfield, MA – Downstairs Meeting Room
Facilitator:	John O'Rourke, Chair

### ATTENDEES

**Mary Fitz-Gibbon**, Ashfield; **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; **Rob Riggan**, Buckland; **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **John O'Rourke**, Conway; **Tom Sharp**, Erving; **Philip Keenan**, Hawley; **Bill Latrell**, Heath; **Gordon Fretwell**, Leverett; **Christopher Boutwell**, Montague; **Brian Noble**, Northfield; **Marilyn Wilson**, Rowe; **John Payne**, Shelburne; **Becky Torres Shutesbury**; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Dan Keller**, Wendell; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately; **Sam Lovejoy**, Reg. Plan. Bd.; **Bill Perlman**, Regional; **John Paciorek**, Regional

### STAFF

**Pat Auchard**, Finance Director; **Rebekah Boyd-Owens**, Admin Services Coordinator; **Bob Dean**, Dir. of Regional Services; Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director; **Phoebe Walker**, Dir. of Community Services

### ABSENT

**Vaughn Tower**, Charlemont; **David Nash**, Monroe; **No Representative appointed for New Salem**

### REGRETS

**Randy Crochier**, Gill; **George Willard**, Orange; **Bill Martin**, Greenfield; **Carolyn Ness**, Deerfield; **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Dawn Magi**, Warwick;

**GUEST:** Scott Macpherson, GCTV

### Call to Order Meeting & Roll Call

John O'Rourke convened the meeting of the Council at 5:35 p.m. Roll call was taken (at 5:58, after everyone arrived, before any financial votes were taken). General and financial quorum present.

### Approval of October 16, 2014 Minutes

**Sam Lovejoy moved to discuss the 10/16/14 minutes. John Payne seconded the motion. No discussion. Bill Perlman moved to accept the minutes. John Paciorek seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

### Communications from the Council Chair, John O' Rourke

John O'Rourke encouraged reps to attend Sen. Rosenberg's Municipal Conference in Northampton, March 21, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Many workshops are offered and Attorney General (AG) Maura Healy will discuss open meeting law. Staff will present her with a list of issues generated later in this meeting.

### Communications from the Executive Committee (Ex Com), Chair Bill Perlman

Bill Perlman described improvements made to the Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS), the new procedure for reporting problems and efforts made by the oversight committee to address long term needs of the system by beginning to put money aside for equipment replacement.

County road discussions have been a regular part of the Exec Com's meeting, but no actions have been taken yet this fiscal year. *(See handout.)*

#### Communications from the Executive Director, Linda Dunlavy

Linda presented highlights of recent FRCOG initiatives and programs.

##### **Broadband**

The FRCOG has been asked by the Massachusetts Technology Corporation (MTC), parent of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), to assist with municipal technical assistance and last mile broadband planning. Progress is being made on all 3 Broadband projects:

- 1.) MBI identified 45 unserved towns in Central and Western MA. Of these towns, 30 have resolved to seek town approval to fund the building of a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network in their town. MBI and MTC met today and voted on how \$40 million of Bond funding for solving the problem in unserved towns will be allocated.
- 2.) Unserved towns that didn't pass the resolution will have ongoing tech help from MBI and FRCOG.
- 3.) FRCOG and MBI is assisting the towns that are less than 95% served by cable to expand their cable network. Negotiations with Comcast have begun.

##### **Governor's Budget**

Local technical assistance funding (DLTA) is used for planning and regionalization projects. Before leaving office Governor Patrick only released half of this grant funding. Linda surmises that the second half of the funding is at some risk of being cut. Staff has prioritized use of first half of money, and has a plan for second half if received.

##### **Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Project**

The FRCOG is working with towns to identify the assets of the many forests in the region. Project staff seeks to understand how to protect our forests and enhance their economic value for forest management practices and eco-tourism. FRCOG has helped to form a 19-town advisory committee which will oversee creation of a plan and project recommendations. This effort is Federally funded.

##### **Passenger Rail**

We have Franklin County passenger rail service for the first time since 1985, currently one daily round-trip. FRCOG is working to get commuter service between Greenfield and Springfield and beyond.

##### **VT Yankee Closure**

The economic impacts to the region and adjoining counties will be dramatic. FRCOG is working to come up with an economic recovery plan to overcome the serious impact.

##### **Natural Gas Pipeline**

Monday the FRCOG invited towns along both the originally proposed pipeline route, and the recently proposed second route to talk about the potential impacts. A Franklin County Open House, with information stations will occur February 5. Kinder Morgan will not be presenting formally.

Sam Lovejoy said that towns abutting pipeline-hosting towns may feel impacts of traffic, emergency services, town business, housing, etc., and may want to have these impacts studied.

John Payne asked how loud the natural gas compression stations will be. Sam said the motor capacity is 80 thousand horsepower. Linda said it's also an issue of air quality, and that the noise is even greater than that of a train. *(See the Updates handout for details about other FRCOG activities and initiatives.)*

Communications from the Personnel Committee (PC): Gordon Fretwell and Bill Perlman

**Personnel Policy Review**

Bill Perlman told the committee that the PC is recommending a consultant be hired to review the personnel policy. A personnel policy review is consistent with understanding that any organization is a changing animal, he said. We're considering spending roughly \$7,500 to hire the UMass Collins Center to give recommendations. The Finance Committee is in favor of seeking outside help.

Stanley Garland asked if the FRCOG could use Google for the study rather than hiring a consultant. Staff and the PC believe the job must be done professionally in order to bring the policy into compliance with federal and state law. Our final product might be used as a template for towns.

**Grade Changes**

The PC has also approved grade changes for a number of staff, after assessing changes in level of responsibility for some positions, among other factors.

**Staff Salary Review**

After examining staff salaries, the PC conducted a wage study to determine how well or badly FRCOG staff is being paid compared to those in similar positions in agencies similar to ours. The wage study discovered many were underpaid comparatively. The PC has discussed at length strategies for how best to go about changing the salary structure.

Bill spoke about our lack of a step system, and pointed out that staff have received merit raises only once in nine years. Using only COLA and a very occasional bump raise to reward performance are largely what caused employees at FRCOG to fall behind those in similar positions. The PC feels equity raises are necessary to bring positions in line with that elsewhere. Salaries that match the responsibility help to keep and hire new employees. People are our product, he said. We have a high standard and want to be effective competing on a salary basis.

Some staff been here a long time, but their salaries have not increased, added Gordon Fretwell. Some people are seriously underpaid. The PC felt this couldn't be fixed in one budget year, so came up with a 5-year approach to try to bring employees in line with other organizations and with respect to each other. We plan to hire an outside consultant to give suggestions for efficient ways to correct this.

John Payne remarked that the PC's issues have become extremely complex, and although it looks like an expensive cost, it's like buying an insurance policy to make sure we will be in compliance.

Finance Committee (Fin Com) Update and Presentation of FY16 Budget , Chair Lynn Sibley

Lynn reported that the Fin Com has been working diligently to create a fair budget for FRCOG and towns. They support the idea of bringing someone in to create a new salary structure and support funding for this consultant in their FY16 budget and from the FY15 budget to get started earlier.

Lynn walked the Council through a PowerPoint presentation examining the myriad of the FY16 Budget. (*See PowerPoint handout.*) Council Chair John O'Rourke commended Lynn and the Fin Com, who, with Linda's and Pat's help, created a good comprehensive budget with savings to all the towns.

Becky Torres asked how slated cuts to the state budget impact the FRCOG. Linda explained that cuts can mean lost grants or only partial grant funding, which, in turn, can result in cutting staff. The model created by FRCOG members in 1997 has been to keep assessment to towns low, which has required we diversify our funding between state, Federal, and foundations.

John Payne said that meant we have flexibility — can lose grants and still stay in balance. Sam said if we lost all grants, we'd have only 8-10 employees. Bill Perlman added that we get grants because we do very good work. Lynn felt assured that staff was conservative with grant revenues in the budget.

**Bill P. moved acceptance of the budget. John P. seconded. The motion passed with 56.796% of the Council's total weighted membership present voting yes (59.628% of weighted vote present at the meeting).**

#### Special Open Meeting Law Discussion

Bob Dean presented a Mass Municipal Association (MMA) summary of their proposed reforms to open meeting laws to Council (*see handout*). Representatives would like clarification around email, deliberation vs. brainstorming, when executive session minutes can be released, agenda detail requirements, and strategies for how best to reign in attendees so a board can get its work done.

#### Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of Meeting

No Topics. **Bill P. moved to adjourn. John P. seconded. Passed unanimously. Adjourned at 7:11 p.m.**

#### Documents Distributed:

- Minutes of October, 2014
- Agenda
- FRCOG Updates
- Budget memo.
- Draft Budget
- Open meeting law handout
- Budget PowerPoint (print-out)