



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee —*MINUTES (Amended)*

Date & Time:	Thursday, December 8, 2016/ 5:00 p.m.
Location:	JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street Greenfield, MA – Shared Meeting Room
Facilitator:	Bill Perlman, Chair

Representatives Present:

- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected Rep
- Sam Lovejoy, Regional Planning Board Rep
- Kevin Fox, Colrain Rep

Guests:

- Marilyn Wilson, Rowe BOS
- Jim Basford, Planning Board Designate

Staff Members Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Administrative Services Coordinator
- Bob Dean, Director of Regional Services

Regrets:

- John Paciorek, Regionally Elected Rep
- Bill Martin, Council Ap'tee, Greenfield

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA:

1. Adopt 10.13.16 minutes

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

Sam L. moved adoption of the 10.13.16 minutes. Kevin F. seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Egypt Road, Whately, Road Action Continuation

Sam moved to reopen the Egypt Rd, Whately, Road Action hearing. Bill opened at 5:00 p.m.

Bob Dean reported that the town of Whately is not ready to proceed at this time.

Sam moved a continuation to the 5 p.m. February 9 meeting. Kevin seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Sam moved closure of the road hearing. Kevin seconded. Unanimously passed.

3. Discussion with Marilyn Wilson re. Tunnel Road in Rowe

Marilyn Wilson brought to the committee a summary of her research on the history of Tunnel Road:

In 1873, a resident of Rowe went to Selectmen requesting creation of a road from town center to the Hoosac tunnel, which selectmen denied. Residents then petitioned the County to create the road. The County Commissioners agreed with petitioners that public convenience and necessity required a new road and they laid out a detailed plan to extend it 2.1 miles from the town center. All Town documents Marilyn found say Tunnel Road is a "Town Way" as ordered by County Commissioners. The symbol on both the 1924 and the 1959 County Road map key indicating a County way does not delineate Tunnel Road as such. Bob Dean found the original docket info — an 1873 petition and the commissioners'

decision to order the town to build the road. Marilyn felt that the town could have refused to build the road, saying they couldn't afford the expense, but chose to build it, instead, without a vote.

Marilyn reported that a railroad-owned bridge spanning the Deerfield River and supporting tracks from the Town of Florida is currently the only egress for Tunnel Road residents. The bridge is in poor shape, is weight-limited, and has only another 6-10 years of useful life. A lawyer for a resident whose house is situated on Tunnel road claims it is a county road, not a town road. Marilyn assessed that the resident's property was purchased when the only egress was the rail-bridge (not Tunnel Rd) as most of the road toward the center of town was already overgrown and impassable in 1968.

A 1964 town meeting warrant article asked if the town should abandon the road, but the town tabled the article, and ceased to maintain it (without a vote to do so). Most of the road has been impassable to vehicular traffic since. Rowe legal counsel advises the town to formalize discontinuance of the road as a public way. A recent public hearing was packed with residents, including the residents of Tunnel Road with their own legal counsel. They want the road repaired and maintained, while the selectboard would like to discontinue the road.

Marilyn passed around copies of County Commissioner records (see handouts) — the 1924 and 1959 maps — which indicate that Tunnel Road is not a county road. She asked the Executive Committee to make a decision about whether Tunnel Road is a county road or a town way. All County Commissioners' records refer to the action taken as establishing a Town way.

The Executive Committee discussed the issue and, based on the information contained in County Commissioner records, determined that the road is likely not a county road over which they have any jurisdiction. Therefore, if a petition were submitted by the Town of Rowe to discontinue Tunnel Road as a county road, the board would not accept it, as they have no jurisdiction to consider the request.

4. Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS) Update and Issues

Bill reported that the radio system is again malfunctioning. One issue appears to be emanating from the use of two nonmatching antennae. Verification of this as the actual problem and then probable replacement of the improper antenna is needed. The other problem is one of timing. Although the entire system was retimed last year, issues related to old equipment remain. All of the old GPS units now need to be replaced with those that can handle new technologies which soon may be required.

A year-old quote finds the cost of the antennae to be \$70,000. GPS totals are estimated to be roughly \$67, 500. Currently, the FCECS has \$77,000 in its capital account. The FCECS oversight committee believes it may be possible to write a Homeland Security grant to fund the GPS units. That board plans to go to the Finance Committee for permission to use the capital reserve to fix the antennae. Bill reminded members that the FCECS has put away only \$5-10,000 annually — in lieu of a capital campaign — for a 14 million dollar system. This year they will consider asking towns to fund \$50,000 per year to replace the system, but repairs are needed now.

The committee discussed approaches to take for funding the equipment replacement now and in the future, with members expressing frustration with the entire capital reserve being eaten up by the current crisis; their sense of the vulnerability of the system with no financial net; the need to increase the reserve in both FY18 and FY19, and the possibility that services may be limited by financial strain.

The oversight board sent a proposal to the Homeland Security Council, which meets in two weeks. Thus, no formal action was needed by the Executive Committee.

5. FY18 Budget Overview

When staff created the budget development workbook, they realized 50% of FRCOG funding is federal, which puts the agency in a risky position, particularly given the rumored priorities of the new president. Linda believes federal budget cuts will likely impact finances next September and that FRCOG should craft the FY18 budget conservatively. She met last week with Congressman McGovern to talk about how to weather the coming storm; how to support other Franklin County entities, while not duplicating services; and how to determine what initiatives and services are worth fighting for.

FRCOG staff is considering a nonprofit start up, Linda reported. The previous nonprofit didn't have a good track record of grant awards and, after a period of nonuse and expense, FRCOG finally closed it down. Now Linda is in discussions with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Community Action, asking if they could assist FRCOG with a nonprofit organization, if we paid them a fiduciary fee.

The Finance Committee has suggested funding up to a 2.5% staff salary increase (like COLA) and as much of OPEB as possible, and to use the OPEB trust fund for upcoming retirements rather than increasing the statutory assessment. Staff has applied for a grant to pay for the needed accounting software replacement. The State responded with a request for staff to cut the budget proposed in that grant by 25%. Staff came back with 50% cut, which Linda hopes will make our application competitive. The Finance Committee will meet next Thursday to talk about the first draft of the budget. Staff will send the budget to Executive Committee soon.

6. Updates and Announcements

Linda announced that while he will continue to work with the FRCOG as an at-large member of the Franklin Regional Planning Board, it was Sam Lovejoy's last FRCOG Council Executive Committee meeting. Staff and the committee honored him with a 1941 Montague Topography Map, created by Ryan Clary to celebrate his years of service to the FRCOG Council.

7. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance

Kevin moved adjournment. Sam L. seconded the motion. The meeting closed at 5:53 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- 10/13/16 minutes
- Road Maps of Rowe, Massachusetts, dated 1924 and 1959 (*stored in the County Records room*).