



**To: FRCOG Council**  
**From: Sub-Committee Chairs and Linda Dunlavy**  
**Date: October 25, 2016**

**Subject: Committee and Executive Director Updates for  
11/3/16 Council Meeting**

## **Council Chair Update**

### Next Council Meeting Dates:

FY17 Council meeting dates are:

January 26

April 20

All meetings will be held in the Transit Center. Please make every attempt to be at the January 26 Council meeting when the FRCOG's FY18 budget will be presented and hopefully endorsed.

### Transit Center Parking

First, congratulations to Mayor Martin for securing \$7.5m for the construction of a parking garage across the street!

New spaces have been created in the Transit Center parking lot, which should be available to visitors and guests in the coming weeks. Because of this, and because the Greenfield parking lot across the street will not be accessible during garage construction and will no longer have annual pass spaces, all FRCOG staff will be parking in the lot above the Transit Center. The three FRCOG visitor spaces will be reassigned to staff. The new Transit Center parking spaces will be free for the first 30 minutes and metered for longer use from 8:00 to 5:00. We apologize for any inconvenience this causes.

## **Executive Committee Update**

This quarter the Exec Com did the following:

- Considered whether it was prudent for the Council to take a stand on the marijuana legalization ballot question. The board decided that although other agencies have publically shared their opinion on several of the ballot questions, they felt doing so was not a role for the FRCOG Executive Committee or Council.
- Strategized ways to resolve the issue of mold growth at the Erving emergency communication tower site shelter which leaked for several years. The mold now poses

health problems for technicians and could easily be corrosive to the expensive equipment.

- Accepted the Trudell Bartlett Trust funds established for the Franklin County Commission in 1995 for \$5,000 (now \$6119.34) and discussed possible programmatic or charitable uses.
- Discussed and adopted a letter requesting Governor Baker's administration prioritize expenditure of the 2.8 million of DLTA funding and authorize DHCD to enter into FY17 contracts with the FRCOG and the Commonwealth's other twelve Regional Planning Agencies.
- Discussed changes in Transit Center parking and Greenfield town parking policies.

## **Executive Director Update**

### Chamber of Commerce Transition

After more than 40 years as President of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Ann Hamilton has announced her retirement which will occur at the end of 2016. The FRCOG, recognizing the importance of the Chamber to the region's businesses and economy, has been a long-time Board member of the Chamber and, this year, Linda D. is the Chair of the Board. Linda is overseeing this important transition and is helping the Chamber conduct a 6-month strategic planning process that will help guide decision-making for a new Chamber leader. The strategic planning process begins with a short survey about Chamber services. To participate in the survey, Council members should go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FCChamberSurvey>.

### Community Compact Projects

We continue to work on and complete the Community Compact projects previously reported on. In FY17, only towns that have not already participated in the Community Compact program can apply. In Franklin County, this is limited to:

- Bernardston
- Gill
- Monroe
- Northfield
- Shutesbury
- Warwick
- Whately

We encourage towns that have not yet applied to apply. Eligible best practices have been better refined and defined and the work product has been very useful. Joe Markarian is again available to assist communities with improving municipal financial practices.

### Communities That Care Coalition Substance Abuse Prevention

The Communities That Care Coalition has recently released the 2016 Teen Health Survey data, and included an analysis of the impact of race & ethnicity, income disparity, and sexual orientation on youth health in the region. The coalition's 20-minute press conference on this topic can be viewed at [www.gctv.org/videos/teen-health-survey-results-2016](http://www.gctv.org/videos/teen-health-survey-results-2016). The powerpoint, data tables, and survey report can be found at [www.communitiesthatcarecoalition.org](http://www.communitiesthatcarecoalition.org).

In addition, in September the Coalition worked with the state Bureau of Substance Abuse Services to organize an advanced teacher training in the evidence-based prevention program *LifeSkills* in Greenfield. Following the training the Coalition launched an online professional learning community for the LifeSkills Training Program, run through the FRCOG by Frontier Regional's health teacher, Kate Blair. For more information contact Kat Allen 774-3167 x 119 or [kallen@frcog.org](mailto:kallen@frcog.org).

### Communities That Care Mass in Motion

Next Mass in Motion Steering Committee meeting: Thursday, November 10 from 9-11 am 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](mailto:rstoler@frcog.org)

Walkability Assessments: Walkability is a measure of how friendly an area is to walking. Walkability has health, environmental, and economic benefits. These assessments provide a guide to observing the walking infrastructure and environment in a given location, and can lead to specific recommendations for improvements to make it more walkable. Towns and groups interested in walkability assessments may contact Rachel Stoler [rstoler@frcog.org](mailto:rstoler@frcog.org), Beth Giannini [Giannini@frcog.org](mailto:Giannini@frcog.org), or Jessica McMillin [jmcmillin@frcog.org](mailto:jmcmillin@frcog.org)

Food Access Focus Groups: Over the summer, FRCOG staff conducted 10 focus groups with seniors, young people, and residents of housing complexes to learn more about how and where people access food, barriers to access, and factors that facilitate food access. A report on the results of the focus groups will be available on the FRCOG website in November. For more information contact Rachel Stoler 774-3167 x 121 or [rstoler@frcog.org](mailto:rstoler@frcog.org) or Jessica McMillin 774-3167 x 136 [jmcmillin@frcog.org](mailto:jmcmillin@frcog.org)

### Complete Streets Funding Program

The Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program continues to provide opportunities for communities to access funding for planning and implementation of projects that support a transportation network for all users, not just cars. A number of towns in Franklin County have passed Complete Streets policies, and several are currently pursuing technical assistance funding to compile Complete Streets Prioritization Plans. In addition, more MassDOT conducted workshops on the Program have been scheduled to help towns get started. If you would like further information on the Program or are interested in participating, please contact Elizabeth Giannini at [giannini@frcog.org](mailto:giannini@frcog.org).

### Cooperative Public Health Service

The health district's Public Health Nurse reports that flu season is well underway. The last few flu clinic dates are:

Nov. 8 -- Leyden Town Hall, 7-9:30 AM and 5-7 PM

Nov. 15 – Mohawk Trail Regional School 6—8 PM

The district is now able to accept all insurances and supports the vaccination program through those revenues.

Through our FDA Food Safety grant, CPHS is holding low-cost food safety training for residents and food service employees of member towns, and others. A three-part session will be held on the evenings of 11/3, 11/7 and 11/9 at the Deerfield Elementary School and a final all-day session will take place on January 27. These trainings allow participants to receive all three required food safety certifications (ServSafe, Choke Saver, and Allergen Awareness) at once for a greatly reduced price. Residents of district member towns get preference for registration, but anyone is welcome.

### Cooperative Purchasing Program

Our prices for winter road sand are comparable to last year, but there were two new companies vying for our winter road salt contract and that competition has driven down the prices for this typically expensive product by \$6-8/ton which should result in a good savings for this year.

The recently enacted Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2016, *An Act Modernizing Municipal Finance and Government* has changed the requirements for certain Ch. 30b (supplies and services) and Ch. 149/30, 39M (construction) procurements. Town administrators and department heads should be aware that bids that open on or after November 7, 2016 will be subject to the changes, the most notable being a new requirement to post bids on the CommBUYS website (formerly CommPASS), but also changing the ways in which "Quotes" are solicited. New procurement charts have been issued by the Inspector General's office summarizing the changes and you can link to them on the FRCOG bid website <http://frcog.org/bids> under "Related Links" on the right side of the page. Contact Andrea Woods at ext. 104 if you have any questions.

### DLTA Local Technical Assistance Program

DLTA is the state grant funding that allows the FRCOG to help towns with traditional planning projects and projects that promote regionalization. We remain concerned that this invaluable funding will be cut if and when the Governor makes 9C cuts. It is our understanding that Lt. Gov. Polito and EOHED Secretary Jay Ash are supportive of the program and its continued funding so perhaps it will survive. We will keep you informed.

### East County Transit Study

Staff has recently completed a study that examined the feasibility of initiating fixed route transit service in the communities of Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Wendell. Currently there is no fixed route transit service to or from this area of the county, nor are

there connections to other transit routes or providers. A survey was conducted of all households in the 4-town area, with a very strong response rate. While it does appear that there is potentially sufficient demand for service to and from the area, current funding levels do not support start-up at this time. However, should additional funding become available in the future, the completed study would make it possible to revisit the idea at that time.

#### Economic Development Planning Program

FRCOG received its eleventh planning partnership grant from the US Economic Development Administration to fund staff work on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program. As part of this program year, staff and the CEDS Committee will work on a new Economic Resiliency chapter to include in the 2017 CEDS Annual Report. This chapter will look at how the region can be better prepared to recover quickly from, withstand and avoid economic shocks.

FRCOG continues to participate in a tri-state region economic initiative with southeast Vermont and southwest New Hampshire agencies. Earlier this month, the CEDS Committee and local officials participated in an asset mapping exercise on the green economy, led by the Brattleboro Credit Corporation. This information will be part of Ecovation Hub initiative to enhance the green building cluster in the tri-state region. FRCOG also participated in the creation of a white paper that examines the lessons the tri-state region has learned from the closure of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear facility and its impacts. Later this fall, FRCOG will be part of a report that compares the three CEDS Plans of the tri-state region to identify common challenges and opportunities for collaboration. For more information, contact Jessica Atwood, Economic Development program Manager at [jatwood@frcog.org](mailto:jatwood@frcog.org) or (413)774-3167 x123.

#### FERC Relicensing of Five Connecticut River Hydropower Projects

Two of the five hydropower projects are in Franklin County – the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project and the Turners Falls Dam. On October 14, 2016, FirstLight Power Resources, the owners of the two projects, released the remaining Study Reports for the 2016 field season including the three volume, 1,200+ page *Northfield Mountain/Turners Falls Operations Impact on Existing Erosion and Potential Bank Instability* (the so-called “erosion causation” study). FRCOG and members of the Connecticut River Streambank Erosion Committee are working closely with stakeholders to carefully review the 2016 Study Reports related to bank erosion, cultural resources, and recreation resources since the new FERC license for the projects will be valid for 30 to 50 years.

Funding will be requested to hire consultants to help with the review of this highly technical material to ensure that the new FERC license has adequate environmental safeguards and provisions to protect cultural resources and recreational amenities for current and future Franklin County residents.

We will provide comments to FERC by December 14, 2016. For more information, contact Kimberly Noake MacPhee, P.G., CFM at 774-3167 x130 or [kmacphee@frcog.org](mailto:kmacphee@frcog.org) . Copies of all

the study reports can be accessed at FirstLight's relicensing website <http://www.northfieldrelicensing.com/Pages/default.aspx> .

### Intercity Rail Expansion

FRCOG and PVPC have been working with MassDOT to expand intercity passenger rail service between Greenfield and Springfield (the Knowledge Corridor) with connections to New Haven and beyond, and on 10/26 presented a status report to Congressmen McGovern and Neal. Our goal is to add 4 new round trip - two a.m. and two p.m. - trains per day between Greenfield and Springfield that align with the route schedule expansion of CTRail commuter service. CTRail currently expects to initiate expanded commuter rail connecting New Haven-Hartford-Springfield by 8 trains per day beginning in early 2018. It is our current intention to initiate a 3-5 year pilot program to assess schedule, ridership, operation model and value. Amtrak as operator using rehabbed MBTA equipment is the most feasible, economical, and quickest model to implement. Annual operating subsidy, established preliminarily by MassDOT, is estimated at \$3m per year. PVPC and FRCOG will each ask its MPO to support the subsidy cost of the pilot program using the region's allocation of federal congestion mitigation funding starting in FY18 or 19. MassDOT will soon begin the procurement process to rehabilitate seven retired MBTA train sets for intercity routes in the Commonwealth. MassDOT has preliminarily agreed to dedicate three sets to the Knowledge Corridor pilot project.

### Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Project

The intent of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Project (MTWP) is to bring recognition and additional financial and technical resources to the 21 municipalities in northwestern Massachusetts, primarily via special designation by the U.S. Forest Service and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs 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. For more information, contact Peggy Sloan at [psloan@frcog.org](mailto:psloan@frcog.org). The Plan is available on our website ([www.frcog.org](http://www.frcog.org)).

### Most Hazardous Intersection in Franklin County

Staff recently completed a year-long study to review crash data in the County over the most currently available 3-year time period, 2011-2013. This study identified areas with multiple crashes, as well as the types of crashes and their severity. Using formulas that take into

consideration the amount of traffic moving through an intersection, the top 50 most hazardous locations in Franklin County were determined. This information is used to help prioritize locations for safety improvements. The full report can be viewed on the FRCOG website.

#### Proposed Kinder Morgan-TGP NED Gas Pipeline Project

Staff worked with the FRCPG Regional Pipeline Advisory Committee, the Franklin Regional Planning Board Executive Committee and the FRCOG Executive Committee to identify specific changes to the FERC process that are necessary in order for the gas pipeline permitting process to be responsive to community and regional concerns related to environmental impacts and public health and safety. A letter containing suggested changes to the FERC process was sent to our Federal legislative delegation on August 23, 2016 and we have received positive response from our federal delegation. For more information contact Linda Dunlavy at [lindad@frcog.org](mailto:lindad@frcog.org) or Peggy Sloan at [psloan@frcog.org](mailto:psloan@frcog.org)

#### Regional Brownfields Program

With its sixth Brownfields grant from the U.S. EPA, FRCOG has conducted environmental site assessments in Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Greenfield, Heath and Monroe. This work can include historical research and reconnaissance of a site to assess its potential for contamination, assessing the impact of potential contamination through testing of soil, groundwater or building material samples, and if contamination is found a remediation plan to clean-up the site. Completed this past quarter was a Phase I assessment of 130 Charlemont Road in Buckland and a Phase II for a former sawmill property on Martindale Road in Bernardston. Work has continued to support the Town of Monroe with the wood structure of the former Ramage Paper Mill. The Town of Monroe, FRCOG and other partners including TransCanada and state agencies are working together to confirm funding sources to fund abatement and demolition of the structure. As part of this funding, Monroe was awarded a FRCOG Brownfields Clean-up RLF subgrant for up to \$100,000 to support the clean up of hazardous materials from the structure, pending the Town's acquisition of the site. For more information about the program, please contact Peggy Sloan at 774-3167 x133 or [psloan@frcog.org](mailto:psloan@frcog.org).

#### Regional Preparedness Program

Regional Preparedness staff have spent much of this first quarter of FY17 preparing to provide 24/7 on-call support for hospitals, local boards of health, community health centers, emergency medical services, and long term care facilities under the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC). We go live on October 21<sup>st</sup>.

In order to have contact information for the 500+ HMCC stakeholders at our fingertips, to send emails, mailings, electronic newsletters, or alerts through the Health and Homeland Alert Network, the HMCC hired a database programmer last summer. The whole agency now benefits from an agency-wide Access database that contains contact information on all town officials in Franklin County and beyond. Any staff member can ask the database to provide a list of, say, all highway superintendents in Franklin County, and the database will open a Microsoft Outlook

email window with the email addresses of all of those highway supers in the blind carbon copy line of the email.

The REPC ran a joint Franklin-Hampshire County full-scale hazmat exercise at the Whately Elementary School in early September. Approximately 30 responders, ranging from firefighters to members of the regional hazmat team, the Northwest MA Incident Management Team, and environmental health officers from Amherst College learned how to identify an unknown liquid, plan an evacuation radius, and get the word out to residents that they need to leave. There was a nice mentoring component built into this exercise for the first time—experienced firefighters and hazmat members guided lower ranking officers through the process, introducing them to managing an incident under the Incident Command System without making them stand in the spotlight alone. It's something we will likely build into future exercises.

#### Rural Policy Commission

Linda D. has been appointed as the Franklin County representative to the Massachusetts Rural Policy Commission. The role of the Commission is to identify policy, programming and funding opportunities that will help rural areas prosper. The Commission has created 4 subcommittees: Demographics and Workforce; Economic Development; Infrastructure; and Housing. The FRCOG is providing GIS assistance to map demographic and socioeconomic data and changes over time. At a future Council meeting, Linda will provide a briefing of the Commission.

#### South River Restoration Project

Work was completed on September 29, 2016 for the South River Restoration project in Conway Center. This project included the installation of boulder deflectors and woody debris (tree tops and root wads) to stabilize eroding river banks and the reconnection of the river to a portion of its abandoned floodplain. This river restoration work will increase sediment storage and reduce flood flow velocities, which will improve water quality and habitat and help protect downstream infrastructure. Improving access to floodplains is an increasingly important component of river management efforts that are focused on reducing flood damages and restoring ecological complexity along rivers heavily impacted by past human land use. Funding for the project came from a grant awarded to the FRCOG by MassDEP's s.319 grant program and \$100,000 provided by the Town of Conway's Community Preservation Act Fund. The river restoration plans are available on FRCOG's website. For more information, contact Kimberly Noake MacPhee, P.G., CFM, at [kmacphee@frcog.org](mailto:kmacphee@frcog.org) or 413-774-3167 x130.



Installation of woody materials along the eroding river bank.



Excavated and reconnected floodplain area. Hydroseeded with native wetland seed mix and stabilized with jute netting.

### Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC)

The following are some of the current WRHSAC projects for which FRCOG staff is providing program management and administrative support. Any questions can be directed to Raine Brown at [raine@frcog.org](mailto:raine@frcog.org).

- WRHSAC is continuing efforts to improve area readiness related to active shooter incidents. A full-scale exercise was held at Six Flags New England in September involving 250 participants from western MA. An After Action Report (AAR) is being finalized. WRHSAC will utilize the AAR to identify future projects and trainings.
- A Family Reunification Plan Template is being developed. Municipalities and agencies will be able to use the template to build their own family reunification plan. Best practices research has been completed and the first draft of the template is underway. WRHSAC anticipates publishing the template in later winter/early spring 2017. This work is being conducted by FRCOG Planning staff and staff from other western MA RPAs.

### Personnel Committee Update

#### Personnel Policy Update

Five policies were presented for First Reading in July. No changes have been made since then.

- Retiree Health Insurance – edits have been reviewed by legal counsel and the policy complies with current court cases.
- Domestic Violence Leave – this is a new state law that needs to be added to the Policy; law provides some discretion about type of leave that can be taken.
- Access and Use of Telecommunications System
- Social Networking Policy
- Mobile Devices Provided by the FRCOG

## Finance Committee Update

### Accounting Software

Finance and Town Accounting staff viewed two additional accounting software demonstrations, making it three in total. We had hoped to have a proposal for the October Council meeting but staff are still working with vendors to obtain more detailed information and cost.

### OPEB FY16

The FY16 Pooled Benefit budget had a line for state retirement assessment with a condition that if not needed, the funds would transfer instead to the OPEB Trust fund. Staff identified in late June that the benefit budget would not have sufficient funds to cover the entire OPEB obligation. The Finance Committee could have addressed a budget amendment but due to scheduling conflicts, we could not convene a meeting before the year had officially closed. At their September 15 meeting, the Finance Committee unanimously approved a recommendation to use FY16 surplus to allocate \$35,557 to the OPEB Trust Fund.

Suggested Motion: I move that the Council endorse the recommendation of the Finance Committee and allocate \$35,557 to the OPEB Trust fund from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

### Closed Grant in FY16

We received a health related grant that ended the year with a surplus of \$1,039. The funder would not extend the grant nor did they want the unused funds returned so the balance closed out to the Unassigned Fund Balance. Per the FRCOG Bylaws, any grant that closes with a balance in excess of \$1,000, the Council must be notified and an expenditure plan recommended. At their September 15 meeting, the Finance Committee unanimously approved a recommendation to fund a \$1,039 project for increased health activities in towns/areas with a demonstrated need. Pending Council support, staff will develop a simple mini-grant program to expend the funding in the coming month.

Suggested Motion: I move that the Council endorse the recommendation of the Finance Committee and fund a \$1,039 health activity project from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

### Budget Development Workbook

The Budget Development Workbook is intended to provide FRCOG Council members and municipal Finance Committee members with an understanding of the FRCOG budget. The Workbook provides detailed information about FY16 (which has closed and is poised for auditing), highlights any significant changes in the current FY17 budget, and projects conditions and needs in FY18. The Budget Development Workbook is the first step in the budget development process for the FRCOG FY18 budget. The Workbook will be reviewed at the Council meeting where copies will be provided. *The workbook is formatted for 11x17 paper so will not print legibly on 8x10.*