



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## COUNCIL — MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 25, 2017 / 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Location:	<b>William B. Allen Room, Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield</b>
Facilitator:	John O’ Rourke, Chair

### REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDEES

**Kayce Warren**, Ashfield; **Marguerite Willis**, Charlemont; **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **John O’Rourke**, Conway; **Carolyn Ness**, Deerfield; **William Bembury**, Erving; **Greg Snedeker**, Gill; **William Martin**, Greenfield; **Hussain Hamdan**, Hawley (5:48 p.m.) ; **Beth Adams**, Leverett; **Steve Ellis**, Montague; **Julia Blyth**, Northfield; **Jennifer Morse**, Rowe; **Bob Manners**, Shelburne; **Rebecca Torres**, Shutesbury (5:05); **Dawn Magi**, Warwick; **Michael Idoine**, Wendell; **Jim Basford**, FRPB; **Bill Perlman**, Regional; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regional.

**REGRETS:** **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately.

**ABSENT:** **Zachary Taylor**, Buckland; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **David Nash**, Monroe; **Wayne Hachey**, New Salem; **Ryan Mailloux**, Orange; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland.

**STAFF & VISITORS:** **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Pat Auchard**, Finance Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Admin Services Coord; **Phoebe Walker**, Dir. of Community Svcs; **Dan Nietzsche**, Emerg Prep Coord

<b>1. Roll Call</b>	Chair John O’Rourke
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The Chair convened the meeting at 5:32 p.m. Roll call was taken and a general quorum was met with 19 members. With (77.56 %) of the weighted vote of the total membership attending, a financial quorum was also deemed present. The late arrival of the Hawley Rep brought the attendance count to 78.172 %, before the FY19 budget vote.

John O. welcomed new Rowe representative, Jennifer Morse, and alternate representatives Marguerite Willis of Charlemont, and Becky Torres of Shutesbury.

<b>2. Adopt 7.20.17 minutes</b>	Chair John O’Rourke
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**William M. moved adoption of the 10.19.17 minutes. Bill P. seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

<b>3. Finance Committee Update</b> (Part I - Budget vote moved earlier for members needing leave early)	Pat Auchard and Linda Dunlavy
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Linda announced that after 18 ½ years Finance Director Pat Auchard is retiring March 30. This is her last Council meeting and final (18<sup>th</sup>) budget. Linda referred to the retirement cake with the budget summary and a COMPLETED stamp on it as a thank you to Pat for her years of dedicated service. Pat told the Council that working for the FRCOG and member towns has been truly an honor.

Pat and Linda walked the Council through the budget explaining changes and referring to the Budget Notes (handout) for specifics and explanations. Among these were the following discussed items:

- **Regional Assessment** — 2.47 % increase. Impact on town based on formula that takes into account population and EQV. (This resulted in Erving seeing a large increase this year.)
- **Statutory Budget** — Decreased.
- **Agency-wide Indirect** — Indirect rate will decrease on July 1, which resulted in less indirect revenue.
- **Regional Services** — Wages budget built on 2% “Competitive Market Increase” to staff.
- **Longevity** — Longevity bonus reduced from \$1K to \$500.
- **FRTA Lease** — With unpredicted expenses, FRCOG owed money at end of FY17 year. We have budgeted a rent increase for FY19 so don’t have to pay large lump sum at end of fiscal year
- **Group Insurance** — Budgeted at less than 5% increase per recommendation of Hampshire Insurance Trust.
- **Capital Reserve Fund Balance** — Budget proposes approximately \$30,000 for IT expenses.
- **Program Budgets** — All reflect a 2% pay increase.
- **Cooperative Public Health** — Assumes the cost of a family plan health policy for new Health Agent.
- **Town Accounting** — Shift between benefitted direct (staff) and part time people. Wanting to free up time of program managers from town accounting to do more program oversight.
- **Inspections** — Budgeted in FY18 for overlap of new and retiring inspector. No overlap for FY19.
- **FCECS** — Oversight committee has approved this budget in advance of Council review.
- **Retirement or OPEB** — If this line is not needed for retirement assessment, it goes into the OPEB trust. Have been putting 5% of payroll into our budget in case legislation passes and we’re required to pay an assessment to MSRS. If doesn’t pass we put it, with Council’s pre-approval, into our OPEB account.

Linda explained that part of the reason staff and Finance Committee have been so intent on getting OPEB funded is because it protects the towns in the future were we ever to fail and go under. In that case, we’d be able to pay our obligations, without leaving lingering debt for the municipalities.

Steve Ellis asked what the indirect rate percentage is currently. Pat explained that the planning rate is 1.2 %; so for every dollar of time staff spend on grant work, we have another \$1.20 for indirect. That covers benefit time and costs, facility and IT costs, insurance and audit costs and administrative costs.

**Hussain H. made a motion to approve the \$3,605,218 FY19 budget recommended by the FRCOG Finance Committee. Dawn M. seconded. The budget motion passed with all in favor.**

### 3. Council Update

John O’Rourke

The next 2 Council meetings will be held on April 19 and July 19, 2018, in the Transit Center. John thanked the heavily-weighted towns for attending tonight, and reminded towns to appoint an alternate if they haven’t already so towns can be represented.

John told members of Beth Adam’s proposal to create a FRCOG committee for climate change and clean energy policy. He reported that for this to happen, Beth will need to proceed according to FRCOG bylaws: She can form an ad hoc voluntary committee made up of council members, and before the

next quarterly meeting they can decide their purpose, number of people to sit on the committee, estimated time period needed by the committee, the charge of committee, and so on, so that Council members will have a chance to ask Beth and the volunteer committee questions before voting to create a special committee. He asked Council members to let Beth know if they're interested in being on that voluntary committee. Beth passed around a sign-up sheet and reported that the Leverett selectboard had just voted on a proposal to move forward.

#### 4. Executive Committee Update

Bill Perlman

Bill reported that since the Council's last meeting the Executive Committee has:

- Conducted a series of road discontinuance hearings for the town of Hawley.
- Assumed the role of the Economic Development District's (EDD) Governing Board, wherein they will follow the progress of the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) 5-year plan and oversee a shift in the CEDS committee's membership.
- Overseen the transfer of the OPEB Trust Funds to the SRBTF (State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund).
- Filed for Intervenor Status with the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) during their review of FirstLight's request for a temporary amendment to their current license.
- Reviewed a draft motion to intervene to be filed with FERC regarding the relicensing of FirstLight's Northfield Mountain Hydroelectric.
- Further advised Linda on the Finance Director search process.

Carolyn N. expressed her frustration that Deerfield and Connecticut River dam licenses transferred from TransCanada to Great River Hydro some time ago, yet have not provided emergency communication plans for communities along the river. She feels it's negligent on the part of FERC to transfer those licenses without stakeholder input and using maps which predate Hurricane Irene.

#### 5. Executive Director Update

Linda Dunlavy

Linda briefed the Council on the many FRCOG activity highlights, including:

**Local Government Workforce Skills Gap Task Force** — Linda is active in this statewide effort to strategize ways to attract and train a new workforce generation. By next quarter Linda hopes to have formal recommendations for the Council.

**Collective Purchasing** — Staff recently discovered that towns with old elevators not formally decommissioned, can be fined by the state, as has happened in Erving. Linda urged towns to formally decommission unused elevators.

**Flu Shots** — The Cooperative Public Health Service has overseen administration of 840 shots at 12 clinics across Franklin County, including in Shelburne Falls and Gill.

**DLTA Grants** — FRCOG will again help towns with regionalization and planning grants but needs to hear each town's project priorities. This year the contract requires that FRCOG helps towns pursue Housing Choice Designation.

**Electricity Aggregation** — Meetings are occurring as interested towns contact staff. The goal is for towns to collectively control the electricity supply purchase process, gain better pricing, and encourage the development of renewable energy resources across New England

**Local Officials' Workshops** — Paul Mark will appear here in April to talk about the census and statewide redistricting. It's critical that we get strongest count we possibly can.

**Green Communities** — Linda congratulated Orange and Shelburne as the latest Franklin County towns to be designated as green communities. 80 % of our towns are designated, surpassing the state's 60%.

**Adult Use Cannabis** — The Cannabis Control Commission will hold a public hearing here February 6. Staff have been reviewing regulations and responding with concerns and questions.

**Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership** — Staff has worked hard to address people’s concerns, and sincerely believe implementation of the legislation will not be detrimental to our region’s forests.

**Staff Changes** — Pat Auchard, Jim Cerone, Glen Ayers, and Mary Chicoine will all be leaving this year. That’s a 10% loss for FRCOG. We’re sad to see these longtime staff go and are in process of rehiring.

See *Updates* handout for more FRCOG initiative announcements and updates on ongoing projects.

### **Governor’s Budget**

Bob Dean reported the Governor’s FY19 \$40.9 billion budget was filed yesterday, which is a 2.6 % increase over last year’s. It includes \$9 million to state’s rainy day funds; a \$37.2 million increase to unrestricted general government aid; a 2.2% increase to Chapter 70 (minimum \$20 per student), and special education circuit breaker increase of \$9.9 million (underfunded by \$20 million). Charter school reimbursements are level funded, as are regional transportation and payment in lieu of taxes. The House will now create their budget, then the Senate, and then they will go to conference committee to hammer it out. Preliminary cherry sheets are available.

On the topic of elevator decommissioning, Steve Ellis told Council members that tax title ownership of mills is a big issue for towns. He asked if FRCOG sees itself as having a role in not only building awareness around abandoned building responsibilities and laws, but also one of advocacy. If so, Steve would like to be involved. Linda agreed to pursue.

### **3. Finance Committee Update (Part II)**

Pat Auchard and Linda Dunlavy

Staff request for funding to Enable FRCOG Participation in the FERC Relicensing Process. This item is a carryover from the October FRCOG meeting when there was no financial quorum. (*See Updates.*)

Linda reminded the Council that they’ve talked about this at each Council meeting in the past year. They have discussed the Councils’ pleasure at the idea of allocating funding that would allow us to more closely work with relicensing to ensure that the license renewal is taking care of our river, our towns, and our economy. One thing FRCOG staff are most concerned about is the utility’s erosion causation study. FirstLight’s found the erosion to be a “result of naturally recurring flows” and not that of the dam. This counters our research of the past 20 years. Staff would like to use \$15,000 from the unrestricted fund balance for consulting services, legal review, and especially for a Massachusetts Water Quality Certificate, to force FERC to listen. The unrestricted fund account balance is \$640,320.

**Steve E. moved that the Council appropriate \$15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund Balance to the Regional Services budget for work related to FERC relicensing. Carolyn N. seconded.**

Steve E. said he felt it was important, that he doesn’t hear people talk about the dead rivers below dams, and would like to make this an opportunity to restore and reconnect the river of Turners Falls with the town. Hussain H. said he will abstain from vote; while he doesn’t know enough about advocacy to put money into it, he does know there are very strong anti-hydro electric energy camps and feels it’s a great energy source. Marguerite echoed his opinion. Greg S. wants to rebut FirstLight’s claims that their processes do not cause erosion. Steve E. added that he and the Town of Montague

are in no way anti-hydro, but rather, would like to find a reasonable balance between corporate profits and a community's ability to benefit from and sustain river ecology.

**The motion to appropriate passed with all in favor, one abstention HH.**

**6. Franklin Regional Planning Board (FRPB) Update**

Jim Basford

Jim reported that the FRPB Executive Committee continues to work with staff on FERC relicensing of Northfield Mountain and hydroelectric projects. Planning staff applied for state funding to get clean energy and energy incentives and rebates for low income households. Staff applied for funding to work on increasing affordable housing in Buckland, Sunderland, and Shelburne.

**7. Personal Committee**

Bill Perlman

The Personnel Committee met jointly with the Finance Committee to discuss personnel-related budget issues.

In a separate meeting, the committee discussed changes to the Longevity and Disaster Volunteering policy (*See Updates.*)

**8. Special Presentation:**

- **FCECS Status and Decision Points**
- **Housing Choice Initiative Program**

Dan Nietsche  
Linda Dunlavy

Dan Nietsche presented on the Franklin County Emergency Communication System status. (*See slides of FCECS PowerPoint.*) Members discussed Homeland Security's advocacy for interoperability throughout the country; the need for more towers to cover the state; the need to test the full system as is; the idea of talking with Berkshire County, which has experience with similar topography; the federal First Net program; the question of whether or not we should be talking with cellular companies; our current 68% coverage; and the fact that key towns haven't been tested yet.

Linda said that staff feels that that there are no easy answers in this, but that we should continue to pursue the idea of migrating to the state 800 MHz system to relieve the region of the burden. We want to make sure we have consensus of this group. The Council agreed there was not enough info to vote.

**The Housing Choice Initiative**

This initiative, announced by the Governor a few weeks ago, is a housing production incentive program. At its root is the desire for towns to produce new housing. Communities that can prove they are producing housing will earn bonus points on discretionary grants. Over 5 years, the community must have increased housing by 5% or 500 units, or 3% or 300 units plus adopt 4 Best Practices established by the state. The Rural Policy Commission completed a data analyses and found once again that one-size-fits-all is not good for much of the state, and certainly not for towns with small populations. They will consider a revision, and the commission is trying to determine what those revised thresholds should they be.

Members expressed frustrations. Greg S. commented that first the state asks towns to put land into APR, now asks us to grow. Steve E. asked how dramatic priority scoring is. If I don't believe I can adequately complete the Complete Streets application, I'll stop pursuing it, and stop taking plunge into DLTA housing, he said. They are disincentivizing one of the things they want, he added.

**9. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance**

**Hussain H. made a motion for adjournment, Kayce W. seconded. Adjourned at 7:28.**

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes of October 19, 2017
- April 2018 Updates of FRCOG Initiatives and Projects
- FY19 Budget
- FY19 Budget Notes
- FCECS Situation Report and slide show
- Housing Choice Initiative Program and slide show
- Housing Choice Initiative Designation
- Vacant and Abandoned Buildings Flyer
- Beth Adams' Proposal for FRCOG Clean Energy Policy