



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## COUNCIL — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, July 19, 2018 / 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Location:	<b>William B. Allen Room, Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield</b>
Facilitator:	John O’ Rourke, Outgoing Chair; Michelle Giarusso, Incoming Chair

**REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDEES:**

**Kaycee Warren**, Ashfield; **Zachary Turner**, Buckland; **Marguerite Willis**, Charlemont; **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **John O’Rourke**, Conway; **William Bembury**, Erving; **Greg Snedeker**, Gill; **William Martin**, Greenfield; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **Beth Adams**, Leverett (5:34); **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Michael Nelson**, Montague; **Janice Boudreau**, Rowe; **Ellen McKay**, Shutesbury; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Larry Pruyn**, Warwick; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regional; **Bill Perlman**, Regional; **Jim Basford**, FRPB.

**REGRETS:** **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; **Julia Blyth**, Northfield; **Michael Idoine**, Wendell.

**ABSENT:** **Kip Komosa**, Deerfield; **Hussain Hamdan**, Hawley; **Wayne Hachey**, New Salem; **Jane Pierce**, Orange; **Bob Manners**, Shelburne. **VACANT:** Monroe

**STAFF & VISITORS:** **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Claire McGinnis**, Finance Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Administrative Services Coordinator; **Phoebe Walker**, Director of Regional Services; **Maureen Mullaney**, Transportation and GIS Program Manager.

<b>1. Roll Call and Reorganization; Report of Nominating Committee</b>	Chair John O’Rourke
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The Chair convened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken and a general and financial quorum was met with 19 members and 69.083% of the weighted vote of the total membership attending. At 5:34 p.m. the member from Leverett brought the count up to 20 and 72.173% of the weighted vote.

**Reorganization**

Bill Perlman announced that the nominating committee is recommending the following officer slate: **Council Officers:** Chair – Michele Giarusso, Leyden; Vice Chair – John O’Rourke, Conway; Secretary – Kevin Fox, Colrain. **Executive Committee Appointments:** Kevin Fox, Colrain; Bill Martin, Greenfield

**With no nominations from the floor, Bill P. motioned to close the nomination. Ellen M. seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor. Bill P. moved the slate of officers. Ellen M. seconded the motion and the officers and appointees were elected to their positions unanimously.**

<b>2. Adopt 4/19/18 minutes</b>	Michele Giarusso
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Newly elected FRCOG Council Chair, Michelle Giarusso thanked outgoing Chair, John O’ Rourke, for his efforts and service to the Council. She thanked all other officers and committee members for their time and energy over the past year on the budget, personnel policies, advocacy, road actions, and so on.

**Bill P. moved to adopt the minutes of the April 19, 2018 meeting. Bill M. seconded the motion, which passed with 7 abstentions.**

### **3. Council Update**

Michele Giarusso

The new chair, Michele Giarusso welcomed Larry Pruyne, the new Warwick representative. He noted that he'd like to be called "Doc."

The next Council meetings will be held October 18, 2018 and January 24 at the Transit Center.

Michelle announced that Beth Adams, who proposed a Climate Change Committee arm of the Council, has not met with other volunteers since our last meeting in April. We will hear from Beth in October.

### **4. Executive Committee Update**

Bill Perlman

Bill P. reported that since the Council's last meeting the Executive Committee has, in its new capacity as the region's Economic Development District Board, approved the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2018 Update. Other actions include reviewing and/or approving advocacy letters related to:

- FERC's gas pipeline review and approval processes
- The Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health's work
- Support of an E-911 surcharge increase for the overhaul of the Commonwealth Radio System

In other action, the board accepted a county road petition for alteration of the layout of 38 East Main Street in Millers Falls, Montague; conducted a view and public hearing; and ordered the layout amendment. Having heard the frustration of the Council member from Hawley regarding a recent road action, the committee adopted a county road petition protocol for entering formal objections to the committee to clarify the process. Going forward, objections must be presented in person at the time of hearing or be sent by certified letter so it may be read during the proceedings. Phone calls, emails, and discussions will not represent formal objections.

### **5. Executive Director Update**

Linda Dunlavy

Linda D. presented a brief orientation slideshow for new and recently joining members and encouraged all to step up to serve on the various committees, including the Bylaws Committee, which she suggests will be engaged in revising the bylaws this fiscal year. Referencing the *Updates* handout, she reported that FRCOG staff members' recent work includes:

- **Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness** The MVP program helps towns with climate resiliency, and funding for planning, engineering, design work, and public outreach. Unlike other programs which require towns to pay for some portion of the work, this grant offers all the needed funding. Linda encouraged participation of all member towns.
- **Electrical Aggregation** This project was completed in this quarter and thirteen Franklin County towns are now working with Colonial to procure electricity in bulk for cost savings.
- **Rail Expansion** The Governor announced that, as of June 2019, we'll enjoy two new train round trips in the morning, two more in the evening, and one more on the weekend. This is a 2 ¾ years pilot program. To retain it, we have to prove ridership. FRCOG will be monitoring ridership and customer satisfaction, and working on marketing to continue expansion.
- **Opportunity Zones** The U.S. treasury has approved zones, several of which are in Franklin County. The hope is that private companies attracted to tax incentives will invest in these areas.

- **Goodbye, Hello** With 3 retirements June 30, we're now getting to know Dave Roberts, building inspector; Evan Abramson, Land Use Planner; and Andrea Crete, Regional Health Director.

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

Jim Basford

Jim B. reported that the FRPB continues to discuss issues pertaining to the approved Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annual reports, and recently enjoyed a Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications presentation. The Executive Board worked with staff and the FRCOG Executive Committee preparing a letter to FERC regarding the pipeline process.

#### 7. Personnel Committee

Bill Perlman

Bill P. updated the committee on the changes personnel committee is proposing (see policy handouts).

#### Disaster Service Leave

This is the policy that outlines guidelines and benefits for professionals taking time off to help with disasters. Leave will require prior approval by the Executive Director, is limited to staff taking 10 consecutive days and 20 days per fiscal year, while being paid by federal or state governments. Staff is ineligible for Worker's Compensation benefits during this time. FRCOG will continue to cover health insurance, and staff will continue to accrue benefit time. The committee has received no comments since the First Reading of this policy in April, and no changes have been made to the policy.

#### Other Personnel Policy changes

The Personnel Committee has received no comments since the First Reading of the minor changes to the Salary Adjustments (the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee Chair, may adjust salaries to retain staff and respond to the market); Longevity, (the proposed bonus of \$1000 was reduced to \$500, and is a fixed number); and Personal Leave (with changes to wording, not intent) sections of the policy in April. The Committee recommends these three policy changes for adoption.

**Bill P. moved adoption of the Compensation, Personal, Longevity, and Disaster Service Leave policies. Kayce W. seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

#### 8. Finance Committee Update

Lynn Sibley

Lynn S. reported that in January, the Council approved \$15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund for FERC relicensing work (staff advocacy time, consulting services for drafting a River Management Plan framework, and legal assistance, if needed). Since then, staff discovered that the funds would not be used in FY18 because the licensing process slowed. The reserve closed out to the General Fund 6/30, but the need for the project remains and will reactivate once FirstLight submits its application to DEP for a Water Quality Certificate. This action is not a carry forward because there is, as yet, no specific expense. Thus, the committee recommends funding the project from undesignated fund balance again.

**Ellen M. moved to allocate \$15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund Balance to FERC relicensing work. John O. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### 8. Special Presentations

- **FRCOG Transportation Planning over 20 years**
- **Discussion of RPAC Rural Plan for MA**

Maureen Mullaney

Linda Dunlavy

Maureen Mullaney presented an impressive slideshow of 20 years of FRCOG transportation initiatives.

## **Discussion of Rural Policy Advisory Committee (RPAC) Rural Plan for Massachusetts**

Linda reminded members that the RPAC was formed by legislation in 2015 with a mission to grow and retain economic vitality in rural Massachusetts. The population is declining in most rural areas, and only 5% of FC is less than 5 years old. The state's population is growing, however, mostly by foreign-born residents not moving to western Massachusetts. In these rural areas, incomes are lower and houses are cheaper, but food and gas prices are the same as in the cities — and we drive longer. We have less capacity to pay for municipal services. Mapping shows we're getting closer to our 2.5 top cap because revenues are slowing and EQVs are declining. These facts concern the RPAC.

The RPAC is charged with developing a rural plan for the Commonwealth. The hope is that any state initiative will be viewed with rural lens before implementation — as was *not* the case with the \$57 million grant funded Housing Choice Initiative, which serves only 38% of municipalities.

## **Rural Plan Suggestions from Council Members**

Linda asked the Council what they thought should be included in the rural plan, what town's needs are, and how they'd like to be involved, knowing that she'll be advocating for them on the state level, and that FRCOG will be involved in implementation. Councilor and staff suggestions follow.

### *Health & Safety*

- Look at medicine differently for aging population. Use a rural model of door-to-door, just-in-time healthcare, rather than an EMT, which is so professionalized that we've regulated the human being out of the role. Town nurse knows everyone and use would eliminate ambulance calls and illness resulting from loneliness and lack of contact.
- We've made it too difficult for young people to be firefighters. Now many who might have interest are regulated out. State should have less regulation or layer it.
- First Responder training once took 8 hours; now 40. Extremely burdensome.
- Towns have long relied on mutual aid, but now there's an increasing reliance on professional forces, because there are no call (volunteer) forces. Larger towns are feeling the pressure. Need an aggressive and creative approach to regionalizing fire service and a commitment from the state to assist rural areas. It's not sustainable now.

### *Economic Development*

- To retain current residents and attract new ones, we need housing and young people. Need to get younger residents jobs, or become a retirement population.
- Still need Broadband in many of our towns.
- Consider a program like Vermont's Stay-to-Stay Initiative to encourage relocation to area.
- Tourism. Work cooperatively to create four-season tourism guides. Get people here and connect them to transportation made available.
- Communities could attempt to become immigrant friendly. Pilot a "Franklin County Learns to Speak Spanish" program, for example.
- Children's services needed for newcomers.

### *Transportation*

- Need transportation in some towns. Neither PVTA nor FRTA covers some towns. Transportation is needed for doing basic chores, medical appointments.

### *Land Use and Management*

- What makes us rural (and desirable for vacationing and visiting) is the number of APR chapter lands. Pushed by state, but now coming back to haunt us. No taxation, which makes providing basic municipal services challenging. (Ashfield is 60% protected land.)
- State needs to develop a financing method for reimbursing towns for setting aside old growth. Stand for Forests. Towns should be able to have money to set aside their forests for Forever Wild. Landowners need to have more than 61 A & B.
- More focus on land use needed. Have a lot of large acreage farms and all they do is hay.
- Land management issue. Land isn't managed well, quite a hazard for services, especially buyers.
- Money used to protect land is taken from economic development. Land can't produce enough money to provide services to towns. Western MA Towns have to get together to make change.
- We now have land that was once farmed, but not farmed anymore. Plenty of farmers would love to have land to farm on.
- Develop a Hemp industry, as in Connecticut. Things that are now plastic could be made out of hemp. Have to start thinking differently. Two farms have subscribed farmers who will produce agricultural hemp. Looking for a refinery. It's a new crop that could provide jobs and farming.

### *Education*

- Franklin County students are being treated as second class citizens. Expenditure by state for kids here pales in comparison to Newton and other parts of state.
- Our districts/towns don't have revenue to compete: 60 to 65% goes to education. "One size fits all" regionalization doesn't work on a large scale.

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

Phoebe Walker announced that a Hemp-Growing workshop is planned for September 18. It will include someone from MDAR to discuss rules for hemp, benefits, barriers to entry for farmers, and so on.

Tom Fydenkevez reported that a rep from the state education board says the Frontier Regional School District needs to change business practices. He feels the FRCOG/Franklin County community should write a letter to the state about the poor results of regionalization of schools.

**Lynn S. motioned for adjournment, Bill P. seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.**

### Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the April 19, 2018 meeting
- July 2018 Updates of FRCOG Initiatives and Projects
- Second and Final Reading of revisions to the FRCOG Personnel Policy's *Disaster Service Leave, Personal Leave, Longevity, and Compensation* sections, dated July 19, 2018.
- FY19 Council Membership Directory
- Roles and Responsibilities of the FRCOG Council and Its Committees PowerPoint slideshow.