Council Chair Update

Reorganization
July is the Council’s annual reorganizational meeting. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of officers for the following seats:

- Council, Vice Chair and Secretary of the Council
- 2 Council-appointed members to the Executive Committee

Thank you to Bill Perlman, Jay DiPucchio and Lynn Sibley for serving on the Nominating Committee.

Remaining 2018 Council Meetings:
October 18, 2018. Meetings are held in the Transit Center.

Nominating Committee Update

Proposed Slate
As of this writing, not all member towns have informed the FRCOG of their Council appointments so the Nominating Committee has delayed meeting. A slate of officers will be proposed at the Council meeting on July 19th or sent by email in advance, if possible.

Executive Committee Update

Summary of Executive Committee Activities This Quarter

- In its new capacity as the region’s Economic Development District Board, approved the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2018 Update.
- Reviewed and/or approved 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
- Accepted a county road petition for the layout of East Main Street in Millers Falls, Montague, and conducted the view and public hearing for the action.
**County Road Hearing Objection Protocol**

At the end of the April Council meeting, Hussain Hamdan expressed frustration of the Executive Committee’s decision to close a road in Hawley. The Committee spent time reviewing the decision and discussing future protocol for “objections”.

In regard to the decision to discontinue a road in Hawley, the Committee noted that the Town of Hawley did not object to the road action itself but was asking the Committee to wait before taking action, which the Committee did for several months and then used its adjudicatory authority to rule on the petition received.

The Committee then discussed the protocol for an objection. To avoid future uncertainty about the formality of an objection and the objection process, the consensus of the committee is that an objection can only be made by attending the hearing or by sending a certified letter to chair of executive committee. If an email comes in as an objection we will send a letter asking that it be presented in person or by certified letter. They agreed to remain flexible about how long a petition can be continued but noted their authority to rule on a petition.

**Personnel Committee Update**

**Disaster Service Leave**

The Personnel Committee has received no comments since the First Reading of the Disaster Service Leave policy in April, and no changes have been made to the policy. The Committee will recommend the policy for adoption.

**Other Personnel Policy changes**

The Personnel Committee has received no comments since the First Reading of the minor changes to the Salary Adjustments, Longevity and Personal Leave sections of the policy in April and no changes have been made to the policy. The Committee will recommend these three policy changes for adoption.

*All recommended policy changes are included as separate attachments.*

**Finance Committee Update**

**FY18 Close**

The Finance Committee is meeting just prior to the Council meeting to address minor year-end closing issues and to consider carry forward requests.

**FERC Relicensing Reserve Approval**

In January of 2018, the Council approved $15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund Balance for FERC relicensing advocacy for staff time, consulting services to help draft a River Management Plan framework, and legal review services, if needed, for the FERC process or the MassDEP 401 Water Quality Certificate. As discussed in April, the relicensing process has slowed down significantly. No reserve funds were spent in FY18 and there was no justification to request a carry forward of the funding into FY19. The reserve closed out to the General Fund on June 30. The need for the project remains and will reactivate once the power company submits its application to DEP for a Water Quality Certificate. Staff are hopeful that the Council will again vote to reserve $15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund Balance for FERC Relicensing work and advocacy.
Executive Director Update

Advocacy, Boards, Commissions and Committees
In the last quarter staff submitted or drafted on behalf of the FRCOG Executive Committee and/or Franklin Regional Planning Board the following advocacy documents:
- Lengthy comments on FERC’s gas pipeline review and approval processes
- The work of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health’s
- Support of an E-911 surcharge increase for the overhaul of the Commonwealth Radio System to DTC during the Public Hearing period

Linda Dunlavy has been nominated Chair of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission. The Commission will be working on the development of a Massachusetts Rural Plan over the coming year. RPAC members also had the opportunity to meet with one of Governor Baker’s Deputy Chiefs Of Staff to discuss the Housing Choice Initiative and how the state could help rural communities with economic development and housing production.

Adult Use Recreational Marijuana
FRCOG staff continue to assist town to conduct Public Education and/or prepare zoning bylaw changes related to adult use recreational marijuana. FRCOG also has template Board of Health regulations for adult use cannabis, and can assist towns in implementing them. Erving and Whately have adopted zoning bylaw revisions to address Adult Use Recreational Marijuana which were approved by the Attorney General’s Office. More info: Peggy Sloan at PSloan@frcog.org or ext. 133 or Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program
To participate in this new state-funded program, communities first apply for MVP Planning Grants, which are used to identify key climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities and strengths, and prioritize next steps to address climate change impacts. Once the planning process is completed, a town is designated as a MVP program community. MVP towns are eligible to apply for MVP Action Grants to implement key priorities and projects identified through their planning process. These projects can include engineering design, local bylaws, redesigns and retrofits, natural infrastructure and storm protection, and education/outreach.

FRCOG staff helped the towns of Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, and Montague complete the MVP planning process and request MVP designation. Erving was recently awarded a MVP Planning Grant and
will be working with FRCOG staff to complete the designation planning process and update their Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. In June, Montague was awarded $33,750 for design and permitting for their Montague City Road Flooding Protection Project while Deerfield received $47,325 for MVP Plan Implementation. The FY19 MVP grants will be available soon and we encourage more towns to participate in this program. More info: Kimberly Noake MacPhee at kmacphee@frcog.org or ext. 130.

**Economic Development**

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Related DLTA Projects**

The 2018 CEDS Annual Report was approved by the CEDS Committee and adopted by the FRCOG Executive Committee and Franklin Regional Planning Board at their respective June meetings. With these endorsements, the Report was submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration, so as to maintain the region’s eligibility for select federal funding programs. This Report is the third update to the 2015 CEDS Plan. The Annual Report provides updated socio-economic data and updates on key economic development projects and programs in the region. It is available to view or download from the FRCOG website.

Under the DLTA program, economic development projects in Orange and Whately are underway. For Orange, a mapping-based project will support efforts to increase the reuse of vacant commercial space in the Downtown. For Whately, a community discussion was held on June 27 to discuss the Town’s vision for economic development in the future. A report with the data collected and discussion highlights will be submitted to the Select Board later this summer. More info: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.

**Monroe Ramage Paper Mill – Overlook Park**

Last year, the former Ramage Paper Mill’s wood structure was remediated of hazardous materials and demolished. The Town of Monroe, with support from FRCOG staff and funding from the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, is having an overlook park constructed on the site. Northern Construction’s bid was selected through an IFB process, and they have commenced work on the site. The park is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2018. More info: Peggy Sloan at PSloan@frcog.org or ext. 133.

**Opportunity Zone Application Assistance**

As part of the 2017 federal tax plan, a new program was established to encourage greater private investment in economically distressed areas. The Opportunity Zone program allows private investors to defer federal capital gains tax obligations over time by investing in Opportunity Funds, which then invest in businesses and development projects located in certified areas. For an eligible Census Tract to be certified, the Baker-Administration had to first nominate them to the federal government. The Administration required interested municipalities to submit an application for consideration.
FRCOG assisted all Franklin County municipalities interested in the program and that had eligible Census Tracts with the application process. The Administration selected seven eligible Census Tracts that encompass all or part of twelve Franklin County municipalities. On May 18, it was announced that the U.S. Treasury Department had certified all the Opportunity Zone designations in Massachusetts that were nominated.

More info about the Opportunity Zone program: https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx

**Regional Brownfields Program**
Under the FRCOG’s current EPA contract to conduct environmental site assessment activities on properties potentially impacted by hazardous substances or petroleum products, Phase I assessment activities were completed on sites on Caldwell Road in Northfield, Brattleboro Road in Bernardston, and Canal Road in Montague. All grant resources have been obligated, so no additional sites can be assessed under this current grant, which ends in September 2018. An application submitted by FRCOG last fall for the 2018 round of EPA brownfields grants was not successful. FRCOG anticipates applying again this fall for the next grant round. If a community has a site that may be appropriate for the Brownfields Program, they should contact staff to have it be considered for the program’s waiting list. More info: Peggy Sloan at PSloan@frcog.org or ext. 133.
WesternMA Developers Conference
With over 450 people in attendance and Gov. Baker as the luncheon keynote speaker, the 2018 Western MA Developers Conference was held on June 12th at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. FRCOG staff played a key role in coordinating this biennial Conference. In the exhibit area, FRCOG promoted the advantages of the region for business development, and highlighted development opportunities, such as the First National Bank Building in Greenfield, the former Strathamore Mill in Turners Falls, the former IP Millers Falls Papermill in Erving, and parcels in the Randall Pond Industrial Park in Orange. Other ways Franklin County was represented at the Conference include Gary Bogoff of Berkshire Brewing Company on the CEO Panel, and lightning round presentations by John Waite of FCCDC, and Brianna Drohen and Sean O’Donnell of LaunchSpace Inc. in Orange. More info: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.

Finance & Municipal Services

Electricity Aggregation
The FRCOG concluded its work to help organize a multi-town effort to aggregate the purchase of residential and commercial electricity. The goal of this project is for towns to collectively control the electricity supply purchase process and to take advantage of economies of scale to realize better pricing and/or encourage the development of renewable energy resources across New England.

Interested town select boards from thirteen towns appointed a representative to a Selection Committee that drafted an RFP, issued by the FRCOG, to choose one electricity aggregation consultant to work on behalf of all participating towns. The Selection Committee chose the Colonial Power Group (CPG) to be the aggregation consultant. FRCOG staff put Town staff and CPG in touch with each other to begin the contracting process.

The FRCOG has now ceased its direct involvement in this project and CPG will guide towns the rest of the way through the aggregation planning and electricity supply bidding process.
More info: Bob Dean at bdean@frcog.org or ext. 108.

Regionalizing IT
Ten towns have expressed interest in pursuing the feasibility of regionalizing municipal IT networks. FRCOG staff have met with staff from the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS and formerly MassIT) to discuss the concept and secure their assistance. It is anticipated that staff from EOTSS will come out to Franklin County in the coming months to discuss the project with interested municipalities. We will also determine whether the municipalities can jointly pursue Community Compact funding for a feasibility study.

Highway and Other Spring Bids
Springtime is highway bid time. Nineteen highway bids from pea stone to paving were opened in May. Thirty two resulting contracts have been issued. Towns have received a summary of the awards and have been sent electronic copies of all the contracts. In addition to the highway bids, FRCOG assisted the Towns of Northfield,
FRCOG recently assisted the Town of Northfield with bids for their Elementary School's 1910 historic entryway which needs painting and glazing restoration.

Sunderland, Deerfield and Erving with additional bids for school renovations, Complete Streets construction, landscaping and a historic monument refurbishment.

All bids can be found on at [https://frcog.org/bids](https://frcog.org/bids). Links to Prevailing Wage Schedules and Summary pricing for collective contracts can also be found on the bid webpage.

Contact Andrea Woods at bids@frcog.org or ext. 104 for further information.

---

**Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness**

**Active Threat Integrated Response Training**

First responders from western and central Massachusetts participated in an intensive three-day training focused on integrated response to an active threat/shooter incident. Police, fire and emergency medical services (EMS) responders were immersed in rescue task force operations and tactics through classroom study and high action drills in a simulated environment.

A rescue task force (RTF) is a response team, often five people, comprised of law enforcement for team protection and medically response trained fire and EMS to provide point of wound care to victims while there remains the possibility of an active threat. The team objective is to treat, stabilize and rapidly remove casualties from the incident, in an effort to increase victim survivability. Students learned and drilled the following skills:

- priority actions in direct threat environment
- active threat RTF response tactics
- establishment of on-scene command
- advanced pre-hospital treatment techniques
- tactical emergency casualty care
- triage and patient assessment
- patient lifts, carries & evacuation
- staging response personnel and resources
The training was taught by the National Center of Biomedical Research and Training of Louisiana State University. The course was hosted and coordinated by WRHSCA/FRCOG, and held at Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, MA.

Responders practice Rescue Task Force Operations including point of wound care and victim evacuation.

Franklin County Emergency Communication System Update

Current System Operations:
In the past quarter the FCECS Oversight Committee has completed the following repairs to the system.

- Repaired the microwave link between Borden Mt. and Charlemont tower sites.
- Realigned the microwave link between Mt. Grace and New Salem tower sites.
- Repaired the generator at Borden Mt.

In addition to the above repairs the radio system manager has responded to fourteen individual trouble tickets. Fourteen is slightly below the average number of calls per quarter.

System Replacement Project:
FRCOG met with Daniel Bennett, Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), to discuss how we can be proactive in helping EOPSS secure the necessary funding to complete the Commonwealth Radio Upgrade Project and how to position Franklin County’s needs as a state priority. The Secretary noted that on July 9th the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunication and Cable (DTC) will decide on EOPSS’ request for an increase to the 911 surcharge. He suggested that FRCOG submit a letter of support for the surcharge. Approving the surcharge will increase the amount paid by telecommunication users across the Commonwealth by fifty cents per month and that additional funding would go towards the Commonwealth Radio Upgrade Project. The FRCOG submitted a support letter. The DTC approved the surcharge. Funding will begin to roll out to EOPSS in January 2019.

Our next steps are to meet with EOPSS to discuss the financial, technical, and schedule implications of Franklin County migrating to the Commonwealth System. Once FROCG has the needed information from EOPSS, a public information outreach campaign will commence. The purpose of the public meetings will be to determine if the region wants to migrate or rebuild the current system.

FCECS Budget:
There will be unused funds left in the FCECS budget. This was to be expected as the purpose for increasing the Long-Term Capital Replacement line item from $10,000 to $75,000 a year was not only to make repairs but to have enough money available when a large system overhaul would need to happen. Once the towns decide on
the future of the FCECS, the Oversight Committee will look to those funds to finance the next stage, e.g. for an engineering study. All modelling indicates that a new system will cost millions of dollars. The reserve being collected will not fully fund a replacement system.

**Passenger Rail Emergency Response Training**

Amtrak Police and the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) partnered to bring Passenger Rail Emergency Response training to first responders from western Massachusetts and beyond. Through this unique partnership, two full weeks of discipline specific trainings were held. Amtrak Police and Corporate Safety including their Special Operations Team and Emergency Management facilitated the trainings and provided several passenger rail cars for a realistic training environment, while WRHSAC/FRCOG coordinated location logistics, participant communications and event management support.

Participating disciplines included Tactical Special Response Teams, Law Enforcement, K-9 Explosive Ordinance Disposal Teams, Bomb Squads, Massachusetts State Police (MSP) Collision Analysis & Reconstruction Section (C.A.R.S.), Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). A [full photo essay](#) detailing the training can be found on WRHSAC's website.

Members of the Franklin County Special Response Team participate in the Passenger Rail Emergency Response Training.

Bomb Squads and K-9 Explosive Ordinance Detection teams inspect passenger rail cars during training.
Western MA Patient Placement Coordination Plan Exercise
The Western MA Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) participated in the MA Dept. of Public Health’s (DPH) Patient Placement Coordination Test in April. DPH recently finished writing a plan to address how patients will be moved from one hospital to another should one need to evacuate. The scenario involved Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton becoming inundated with water from a heavy rain event. Surrounding hospitals, such as Baystate Medical Center, Berkshire Medical Center, and Fairview Hospital interacted with DPH officials indicating how many of Cooley Dickinson’s patients they could take on. As expected for a freshly written plan, there are a lot of improvements to be made, including an indication of where the HMCC fits into the process. One place where our involvement would be helpful that became clear was providing a local perspective on geography and specific hospital capabilities.

Staff from the FRCOG/HMCC and the MA Department of Public Health Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management participate in a exercise led by the Harvard School of Public Health.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Project
The MTWP is a community-driven project of 21 towns in Western Franklin and Northern Berkshire Counties begun in 2013 to support forest conservation, a recommendation of the 2013 Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. Community input expanded project goals to include natural resource based economic development and improved financial sustainability of participating towns. The MTWP Advisory Committee participates in all aspects of the project and has representatives from 20 of the 21 towns. The region is unique because of the convergence of several types of forests, resulting in great diversity and many opportunities ranging from recreational tourism to research on the effects of climate change.

State legislation has been filed to formally establish the MTWP, which will enable the 21-town region to pursue State and Federal funds to implement MTWP goals. The legislation was reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture and was passed by the House. Senate
approval is also required. If adopted, federal legislation will also be needed to allow the U.S. Forest Service to provide financial and technical resources to the region. The MTWP’s guiding principle is to support forest conservation and natural resource based economic development that sustains the region’s ecosystems while improving the financial viability of towns. More info: Peggy Sloan at psloan@frcog.org or ext. 133.

Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition
The Communities That Care Coalition continues to work with school, town and agency partners to implement effective strategies for reducing youth substance use and improving youth health, and will be updating their Community Action Plan this year. All of the public middle schools in Franklin County are working on implementing the LifeSkills substance use prevention curriculum with support from CTC, and CTC expects to host a LifeSkills training at the Transit Center in the fall, encouraging schools to consider having peer leaders trained to co-lead the curriculum with teachers. A local health teacher is working with the coalition to update the curriculum to include the latest information on vaping, juuling, and electronic cigarettes.

CTC is preparing for several funding sources to come to an end at the end of this fiscal year, bringing the Coalition’s budget down from $230,000 to $100,000 per year on the substance use prevention side, and from $266,000 to $50,000 on the nutrition and physical activity promotion side, unless we find additional and new funding sources. Staff have recently submitted applications for several federal grants in an effort to replace this funding and support the work in promoting youth health and well-being locally.

Local Officials Workshops
FY18 ended with an interesting workshop with the U.S. Census Bureau about the 2020 Census and how municipalities can ensure a complete count of their residents, and an update from the Cannabis Control Commission about the latest developments around adult use recreational marijuana regulations. Planning is underway for the FY19 series, which will commence in September. Please contact us with suggestions.
ADA Self-Evaluations and Transition Plans
FRCOG staff has completed three ADA Self-Evaluations and Transition Plans for the Towns of Charlemont, Gill, and Montague. Staff evaluated all town-owned structures, parks, sidewalks in addition to town policies and programs for compliance with the American Disabilities Act. The Transition Plans recommend ways to correct issues and prioritizes the actions. More info: Megan Rhodes at mrhodes@frcog.org or ext. 132.

ADA compliant bathroom in Montague Town Hall.

A non-compliant Street crossing: the curb cut and tactile strips are not aligned with the crosswalk.

Annual Bike Breakfast
The FRCOG hosted its 6th annual Bike Breakfast on May 15th, supporting close to 30 riders on their way to work, school, and other destinations.

Healthy breakfast foods along with grab and go snacks were provided. In addition, a raffle of useful bike gear like lights and locks was offered to those that arrived on bike. Riders enthusiastically discussed the bicycling routes and facilities in the region and offered suggestions on how to continue adding to the network.

Bicyclists at the 6th Annual Bike Breakfast at the John W. Olver Transit Center.
**Complete Streets**
FRCOG staff finalized Complete Streets Prioritization Plans for the Towns of Buckland and Whately, and continue to work on one for the Town of Montague that should be finished in early Fall. Complete Streets are designed for all modes of transportation, not just vehicles, and typically include improvements that make biking and walking safer and more enjoyable. A Complete Streets Prioritization Plan outlines the top projects a community would like to see implemented over the next 5 years. Once a prioritization plan is completed, a Town may apply for construction funding to begin implementation. The FRCOG is available to answer questions about the program, assist with securing MassDOT funding to participate in the program, and can work with your town to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. More info: Beth Giannini at giannini@frcog.org or ext. 125.

**Passenger Rail Expansion**
After several years of advocacy and work by the FRCOG and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Governor Baker announced a three-year passenger rail expansion pilot program on June 12th in Springfield. Slated to begin in May 2019, the expanded service will include additional morning, afternoon and evening round trips between Greenfield and Springfield, enabling a 1-day round trip to New York City. The FRCOG and PVPC will be responsible for developing and accessing performance measures to evaluate the success of the pilot program and its future, alteration or expansion. Prior to the May 2019 launch, the FRCOG will work with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce to develop a marketing campaign for the service expansion.

**Recreational Planning and Marketing**
The FRCOG is working with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce to develop a branding campaign for Franklin County recreational activities that includes a strong bicycling component. This effort dovetails with those of the FRCOG to promote bicycle tourism in the region. It includes categorizing recreational assets, brainstorming marketing tools, and identifying target audiences.

---

**Staff Updates & Changes**

**Staff Changes**
June 30 was the date of three staff retirements at the FRCOG:

- **Glen Ayers** retired as our Regional Health Agent.
- **Jim Cerone** retired from the FCCIP after serving as Local Inspector for more than 20 years.
- **Mary Chicoine** retired from the Planning Department.

Glen, Mary and Jim each contributed to the fabric and family of the FRCOG, will be missed, and we thank them for their service to the region. Meanwhile, we welcome two new staff members:

- **Evan Abramson** has been hired as a Land Use and Natural Resources Planner and will be starting on July 23, 2018.
- **Andrea Crete** has joined us as our new Regional Public Health Agent.