**Meeting Minutes: FCCIP QUARTERLY ADVISORY BOARD**

**Date:** October 18, 2018  
**Location:** JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St. Greenfield  
**Room:** Second Floor Library  
**Facilitator:** Brian DeVriese  
**Minutes taken by:** Chris Brothers

**AGENDA ITEMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda items</th>
<th>Discussion and Motions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Introductions, review of last meeting’s minutes</td>
<td>Tom H made a Motion to accept the minutes as written. Ray P seconded. Accepted. 7 yea 0 nay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Financial Report</td>
<td>2 spreadsheets were presented tonight. One for FY18 showing the final revenue figures. The FY18 revenues had a shortfall of $17,373, which was to be taken from the reserve account. The other spreadsheet was for FY19. It shows that our over all budget is slightly less than our FY18 budget. Our July revenue was above the projected revenue due to a large commercial fee paid in July. August and September revenues were under the projected amount.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Benefits of belonging to the FCCIP/FRCOG letter</td>
<td>The draft from the previous meeting was updated with additional suggestions from member towns. Language will be added concerning the stretch code and some wording to the chart. It was felt that information regarding how Greenfield uses the FCCIP should be added. Copies of the letter will be sent to the Selectboards and member town representatives. The Selectboards will also receive an electronic version as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Proposal to raise Building Permit Fees</td>
<td>Jim H believes that with skyrocketing construction cost that our permit values should be raised to bring us closer to the actual cost of construction. The Board feels that fees should be raised gradually each year instead of jumping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
up every several years. Waived fees should be raised as well. Jim H to clean up the proposal and have it ready for a vote at the next advisory board meeting. Contractors should be warned about the fees going up in the next several months.

5. Other Business

| None. Ray P made motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom H seconded. Accepted 7 yea 0 nay. Meeting adjourned 4:45pm. |

6. List of Documents

| Agenda for October 18, 2018 Advisory Board Meeting |
| Minutes from July 19, 2018 Advisory Board Meeting |
| FCCIP Benefits to Member Towns Memo |
| FY18 Permit Tracking Spreadsheet |
| FY19 Permit Tracking Spreadsheet |
| FCCIP Fee Schedule Proposed Changes as of 11-1-18 |
# Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program Advisory Board Meeting Agenda

**Date:** October 18, 2018  
**Location:** JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St. Greenfield  
**Facilitator:** Brian DeVriese  
**Minutes taken by:** Chris Brothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendees:</th>
<th>Regrets:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff:</td>
<td>Guests:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda items</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>Key Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introductions, review of last meeting’s minutes</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Brian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Financial Report</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Benefits of belonging to the FCCIP/FRCOG letter</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Bob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Proposal to raise Building Permit Fees</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Jim H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other Business not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Brian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parking at the Transit Center:** Limited FRCOG guest parking is available in the lot above the Transit Center (behind the brick building with the Loft Apartments sign). Visitor spot (# 24) are designated with a sign. Otherwise, a “pay to park” lot is on Hope Street at the upper end of Olive Street. Metered spots are available on Bank Row. Daytime meeting attendees may not use the short term parking in the Transit Center parking lot.

Thank you!

This meeting is wheelchair accessible. Please call the facilitator with any requests for accessibility.

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**Ensuring adequate attendance at summer meetings can be difficult, but we have important work to do -- PLEASE RSVP TO CHRIS BROTHERS AT x 109 or Chris@frcog.org to let us know if you can come!**
Meeting Minutes: FCCIP QUARTERLY ADVISORY BOARD

Date: July 19, 2018
Location: JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St. Greenfield
Facilitator: Brian DeVriese
Time: 4-4:45 PM
Room: Second Floor Library
Minutes taken by: Chris Brothers

ATTENDEES:
STAFF:
James Hawkins
Bob Dean
Chris Brothers

GUESTS:
Steven Gougeon, Ashfield
Jim Bonham, Buckland
Thomas Hutcheson, Conway
Ray Purington, Gill
Brian DeVriese, Heath
Janice Boudreau, Rowe
Chuck Washer, Shelburne

REGRETS:
James Hawkins
Jim Bonham, Buckland
Bob Dean
Thomas Hutcheson, Conway
Ray Purington, Gill
Brian DeVriese, Heath
Janice Boudreau, Rowe
Chuck Washer, Shelburne

Agenda items Discussion and Motions
1. Introductions, review of last meeting’s minutes
   We welcomed Selectman Steven Gougeon to the meeting. Ray P made a Motion to accept the minutes from the April 19, 2018 meeting as written. Chuck W seconded. Accepted. 7 yea 0 nay

2. Financial Report
   Chris reviewed the FY18 financial report. Our revenues for the last 3 months of the fiscal year did not meet Target so we had a shortfall of $17060. We will be using money from the reserve account to balance our FY18 budget.

3. Benefits of belonging to the FCCIP/FRCOG
   Last meeting we were to create a letter to go to all the towns listing the benefits of belong to the FCCIP/FRCOG. A draft was presented to the Board. The Board is to review the draft and get back to Bob D with any comments. As a whole the Board believes the on-line permitting is great. Having the towns sign-off on the application makes it easier for the towns and the applicants. The letter would be a good thing with the boards in the towns changing all the time. Bob will incorporate any suggested edits and bring a final draft to the October meeting.
   Jim H is to prepare a proposal for raising permit fees to present at the next meeting.

4. Other Business
   None.
   Chuck W made motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim B seconded. Accepted 7 yea 0 nay. Meeting adjourned 4:45pm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Meeting Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting minutes from April 19, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• FCCIP Permit Tracking for FY18 spreadsheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Draft FCCIP Letter to Towns, dated 7/19/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FCCIP PERMIT TRACKING FOR FY18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PerMIT Revenue History</th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY13</th>
<th>FY14</th>
<th>FY15</th>
<th>FY16</th>
<th>FY17(projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY12</td>
<td>$325,344</td>
<td>$346,844</td>
<td>$366,864</td>
<td>$335,797</td>
<td>$424,380</td>
<td>$395,511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Permit Revenue Tracking FY18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Actual FY18</th>
<th>Target FY18</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>FY17 Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY12</td>
<td>36,948</td>
<td>36,948</td>
<td>33,765</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>$20,994</td>
<td>$26,268</td>
<td>$34,557</td>
<td>$28,725</td>
<td>$34,014</td>
<td>$24,243</td>
<td>$28,134</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY13</td>
<td>39,602</td>
<td>76,550</td>
<td>40,217</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>$32,933</td>
<td>$26,305</td>
<td>$36,861</td>
<td>$23,290</td>
<td>$48,390</td>
<td>$33,278</td>
<td>$33,510</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY14</td>
<td>34,708</td>
<td>111,258</td>
<td>47,101</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>$26,640</td>
<td>$52,651</td>
<td>$34,567</td>
<td>$27,158</td>
<td>$33,980</td>
<td>$60,477</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY15</td>
<td>42,705</td>
<td>153,963</td>
<td>42,908</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>$24,506</td>
<td>$34,906</td>
<td>$33,232</td>
<td>$41,582</td>
<td>$41,784</td>
<td>$38,503</td>
<td>$35,752</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY16</td>
<td>41,118</td>
<td>195,081</td>
<td>39,775</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>$41,185</td>
<td>$21,165</td>
<td>$25,297</td>
<td>$33,051</td>
<td>$29,294</td>
<td>$48,858</td>
<td>$33,142</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY17</td>
<td>39,915</td>
<td>234,996</td>
<td>26,761</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>$22,089</td>
<td>$9,651</td>
<td>$27,206</td>
<td>$21,170</td>
<td>$31,799</td>
<td>$21,873</td>
<td>$22,298</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Permit Revenue Summary Through 6/30/18

- **Target Permit Revenue**: $445,873
- **Actual Permit Revenue**: $428,500
- **Projected Shortfall**: $17,373

James Cerone:

1. The proposed town budget, excluding Greenfield (Greenfield's budget is evaluated yearly, based on time spent the previous year).
2. Total of town assessments (see assessment sheet).
3. The balance is the permit revenue needed to balance the budget.
4. On the right hand, top side is our Permit Revenue History.
5. The monthly average % of the total permit revenue is calculated below for the last 6 years.
6. And used to determine the target amount needed to keep on track.
   - Permit Revenue History By Month
   - Cumulative
   - Cumulative %
   - Cumulative

### Monthly Revenue History

- **Month**: July, August, September, October, November, December
- **Cumulative**: $20,994, $32,933, $26,640, $24,506, $41,185, $22,089, $18,388, $13,017, $27,206, $21,170, $20,001, $22,125, $31,253

### Monthly Revenue Summary

- **Total**: $428,500
- **Cumulative**: $335,797
- **Cumulative %**: 100.00%

Permit Revenue Needed for FY18 is: $100,000

Proposed Town Budget For FY18 is: $543,373

Town Assessment

- **FY12**: $325,344
- **FY13**: $346,844
- **FY14**: $366,864
- **FY15**: $335,797
- **FY16**: $424,380
- **FY17(projected)**: $395,511

Permit Revenue Needed for FY18 is: $445,873

James Cerone:
FCCIP PERMIT TRACKING FOR FY18
### FCCIP FY19 Budget (Greenfield Excluded)

- **Approved Town Budget For FY19 is:** $534,109
  - **Town Assessment:** $97,500

### Permit Revenue Needed for FY19 is:
- **$436,609**

### Permit Revenue History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY13</th>
<th>FY14</th>
<th>FY15</th>
<th>FY16</th>
<th>FY17</th>
<th>FY18</th>
<th>Monthly Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>$20,994</td>
<td>$26,268</td>
<td>$34,557</td>
<td>$28,725</td>
<td>$34,014</td>
<td>$24,243</td>
<td>$36,948</td>
<td>$29,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>$32,933</td>
<td>$26,305</td>
<td>$36,861</td>
<td>$23,290</td>
<td>$48,390</td>
<td>$33,278</td>
<td>$39,602</td>
<td>$34,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>$24,506</td>
<td>$34,906</td>
<td>$33,232</td>
<td>$41,582</td>
<td>$41,784</td>
<td>$38,503</td>
<td>$42,705</td>
<td>$36,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>$41,185</td>
<td>$21,165</td>
<td>$25,297</td>
<td>$33,051</td>
<td>$29,294</td>
<td>$31,873</td>
<td>$34,281</td>
<td>$32,015</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>$22,089</td>
<td>$9,651</td>
<td>$27,206</td>
<td>$21,170</td>
<td>$31,799</td>
<td>$21,873</td>
<td>$39,915</td>
<td>$24,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>$22,089</td>
<td>$13,017</td>
<td>$19,366</td>
<td>$12,936</td>
<td>$25,285</td>
<td>$14,600</td>
<td>$22,928</td>
<td>$19,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$159,966</td>
<td>$9.7%</td>
<td>$25,297</td>
<td>$33,051</td>
<td>$29,294</td>
<td>$48,858</td>
<td>$41,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$12,468</td>
<td>$16,559</td>
<td>$27,079</td>
<td>$41,233</td>
<td>$36,413</td>
<td>$32,985</td>
<td>$25,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$30,385</td>
<td>$6.7%</td>
<td>$26,943</td>
<td>$51,053</td>
<td>$33,462</td>
<td>$32,985</td>
<td>$29,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$37,929</td>
<td>$8.7%</td>
<td>$27,079</td>
<td>$51,053</td>
<td>$33,462</td>
<td>$32,985</td>
<td>$29,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$341,814</td>
<td>$12.2%</td>
<td>$27,079</td>
<td>$51,053</td>
<td>$33,462</td>
<td>$32,985</td>
<td>$29,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$395,042</td>
<td>$5.5%</td>
<td>$36,740</td>
<td>$36,463</td>
<td>$38,696</td>
<td>$36,149</td>
<td>$32,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$141,715</td>
<td>$436,609</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>$33,783</td>
<td>$33,783</td>
<td>$33,783</td>
<td>$33,783</td>
<td>$33,783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Permit Revenue Summary Through Sept. 2018
- **Target Permit Revenue:** $117,713
- **Actual Permit Revenue:** $141,715
- **Projected Surplus/(Deficit):** $24,002
**Proposed FCCIP BUILDING PERMIT FEE SCHEDULE AS OF 11/1/18**

**VALUE OF PROJECT:** In order to keep the fees equitable for the towns in our building program, the cost of construction is determined as follows. This valuation procedure does not affect taxation by your town assessors.

- All new construction for dwelling units/additions $\text{150/sq.ft. to 160/sq.ft.}$
- Sunrooms $100/sq.ft.$
- Basement renovations $\text{50/sq.ft. to 75/sq.ft.}$
- Res’l acc’y bldgs., garages, basements & non-living space $\text{30/sq.ft. to 50/sq.ft.}$
- Mobile Homes $50/sq.ft.$
- Conversion of non-res’l space to living space $120/sq.ft.$
- Agricultural barns $\text{30/sq.ft. to 40/sq.ft.}$
- Commercial/Industrial new construction/additions $\text{200/sq.ft. to 250/sq.ft.}$
- Commercial acc’y bldgs & unfinished space $\text{50/sq.ft. to 75/sq.ft.}$
- Pre-engineered metal comc’l buildings $\text{75/sq.ft. to 100/sq.ft.}$
- Conversion of non-comc’l/indus’l space to comc’l/indus’l space $150/sq.ft.$

If project is not related to new sq.ft., the fee will be based upon a sound estimate of the cost of construction.

**FEES:** Once the cost of construction is determined, the fee is based on $6.50 per $1,000 of value. There is a minimum permit fee of $55.

**OTHER FEES:**

- Sheds less than 200 sq. ft $25
- Tents needing permit(with sides>400sq.ft, canopies>700sq.ft) $55
- Above-ground pools $55
- Inground pools $100
- Change-of-Use (no structural renov’s) $55
- Temporary Construction Trailer $55
- Chimney and/or Solid Fuel Burning Appliance $55 each
- Residential roofing, siding, windows $55 ea category
- Solar Installations (up to $8,000) $55 min
- (above $8,000) $6/per thousand
- Stop Work Order (to post or to remove) $55
- Reinspection Fee (each visit) $50
- Signs $55
- Fire/natural disaster repairs/reconstruction for 1-2-family $55
- Demolition (all) $55
- Annual Inspection fee for industrial bldgs (for small projects to be done by in-house maintenance personnel) $200-400
Program Overview

The Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program (FCCIP) provides state-mandated building, electrical, and plumbing/gas inspection services (or a subset thereof) to 16 Franklin County towns and is responsible for zoning enforcement in 15 towns. The program’s mission is to provide participating towns with professional inspection services by certified inspectors and to be a clearinghouse for information regarding building, zoning, plumbing, and wiring requirements.

The FCCIP operates like a municipal enterprise fund. All expenses are captured in the program budget, and those expenses must be covered by program revenues. Revenue sources include permit fees, town assessments, tickets for code violations and interest income.

In order to stabilize and provide predictability to the assessments for member towns, the FCCIP retains all permit revenues, which covers about 80% of program costs. The remaining 20% of the budget is collected through town assessments for program costs not covered by fee revenue, which includes zoning enforcement, program oversight, and software maintenance and support.

Program Budget

Like town budgets, the FCCIP’s budget is based on best estimates of expenses and revenues for the coming year. Permit revenue can be highly variable, depending on the local and national construction climates, financial markets, and real and perceived economic wellbeing of our area’s residents and businesses. To smooth the inevitable ups and downs of permit revenues, the FCCIP retains its own year-end fund balance. In years when permit revenue is higher than budgeted, the extra is credited to the fund balance. In years with slower-than-expected permit activity, money can be transferred from the fund balance to prevent a year-end budget deficit.

Staff regularly monitors permit revenue throughout the fiscal year to compare it to budget goals and to determine if budget amendments need to be made. The budgeting process and the use of fund balance are overseen and approved by the FRCOG Finance Committee, which is a subset of municipal officials appointed to the full FRCOG Council.
Budget and revenue data from the past few years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>FCCIP Town Budget</th>
<th>Permit Revenue</th>
<th>Town Assessments</th>
<th>Net To/(From) Fund Balance</th>
<th>Assessments as Percentage of Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>428,649</td>
<td>346,844</td>
<td>83,500</td>
<td>1,695</td>
<td>19.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>448,087</td>
<td>366,864</td>
<td>83,500</td>
<td>2,277</td>
<td>18.63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>463,964</td>
<td>335,797</td>
<td>83,500</td>
<td>(44,667)</td>
<td>18.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>459,135</td>
<td>424,380</td>
<td>83,500</td>
<td>48,745</td>
<td>18.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>493,011</td>
<td>429,854</td>
<td>97,500</td>
<td>34,343</td>
<td>19.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>543,373</td>
<td>428,813</td>
<td>97,500</td>
<td>(17,060)</td>
<td>17.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>534,109</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>97,500</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>18.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits of Belonging to the FCCIP:

- **FRCOG Employs Staff**: The FRCOG hires and manages all FCCIP staff. Towns do not need to worry about hiring, training and retaining qualified staff, or about administering and paying for employee expenses, such as health insurance and retirement.

- **Certified Inspectors**: The FCCIP has two building officials, one certified at the commissioner’s level and the other as a Local Inspector. The wiring inspector is a Master Electrician and the Plumbing/Gas Inspector is a Master Plumber. Smaller towns may have trouble finding qualified and certified inspectors who are willing to forego working as a contractor in the town to become an inspector. State law requires building inspectors to be certified.

- **Quick Response**: There is almost always an inspector and/or clerk to answer phones and assist walk-ins. Zoning and code questions are answered promptly and inspections are scheduled immediately. Inspections are generally performed within two days of call. Plan reviews and applications are processed generally within a week.

- **Accurate Records and Procedures**: The FCCIP has had forty-three years to fine-tune permit record keeping and internal procedures for handling zoning, code, and office-related issues. Our files are kept up-to-date. Twenty-six years of computerized permitting records gives the FCCIP the ability to track permit activity and produce valuable reports for town officials.

- **Coordinated Inspections**: There is a great advantage to have building, wiring, and plumbing inspectors in the same office where they can discuss problems and facilitate plan reviews, inspections, and certificates of occupancy. And the coordination benefits increase for towns that are part of the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) through the FRCOG. FCCIP and CPHS inspectors regularly coordinate responses to issues that overlap the boundaries between building and public health jurisdictions.
• **Free Public Building Inspections:** Permit fees of less than $500 are waived for municipal projects.

• **Education and Enforcement:** FCCIP inspectors are passionate about learning a complex code and disseminating this information via newsletters, training, and personal contact with builders and homeowners. It is very difficult for even full-time inspectors to keep abreast of an evolving code and all the associated reference standards. Building officials are required to complete continuing educational credits to maintain certification. Lack of knowledge and enforcement could be detrimental to public health and safety and result in increased liability to the town.

• **Online Permitting:** The change to processing permits electronically has improved the program’s efficiency and has been enthusiastically embraced by contractors. Applicants can access the software 24/7 and can pay permit fees online. Local officials can easily access the software remotely to run reports and to provide necessary sign-offs throughout the permit approval process. Staff is available in person or by phone to assist people with filling out the online forms, and a dedicated terminal is available at our office for applicants who lack access to a computer. We handle the processing of fee payments and deal with payment-related issues, including bounced checks and paying out refunds.

• **Zoning Expertise and Enforcement:** Zoning enforcement is a strong component of the program. Zoning review is integrated into the permit application process. The staff is experienced and well versed in MGL chapter 40 A (the Zoning Act), consults with legal counsel when necessary, and has years of experience in prosecuting difficult cases in Housing Court. There are no fees charged to the general public for use of the program as a zoning information center, as this is included in the assessment fee. Grandfathered lots and issues of non-conformance require extensive staff time to research. Time is spent in each town checking for and observing zoning violations for enforcement. We also field a significant number of calls from citizens who are making complaints about possible zoning violations and those investigations are conducted without charge. We provide feedback to towns regarding the practical application of local zoning bylaws and we offer amendment suggestions to make bylaws more understandable and user-friendly.

  - **Central Clearing House for Zoning Information:** Significant time is spent fielding zoning bylaw questions from town citizens, real estate professionals, developers, surveyors, town officials, zoning boards and planning boards. Coordination of zoning with town ZBA and planning boards is provided by the Commissioner writing letters of opinion to applicants whose permits are rejected, with copies sent to those boards. Most town boards will not act without the Commissioner’s letter.

  - **Zoning Expertise:** Most town zoning boards and planning boards use our services for opinions on zoning issues. We have spent considerable time researching legal issues, consulted our legal counsel, and have attended many educational seminars. Knowledge of case law and the Massachusetts zoning act, MGL chapter 40 A, is extensive.
Building Code Review: Staff regularly give hotline advice regarding building code compliance to homeowners and contractors. We provide assistance to architects designing projects, and we field complaint calls regarding possible building code violations. As building codes change yearly and the complexity of the codes increase, it is a valuable service to towns. The following individual codes constitute the entire building code: International Residential code, International Building code, International Energy Conservation code, International Mechanical code, International Existing Building code, 521 CMR, architectural access, and NFPA 72: the national fire alarm code. Adoption of the Stretch Energy Code by our Green Communities adds an extra layer of complexity to our building code review.

Coordination of Town Departments: As a service to the town, we coordinate our work with a number of town officials, including the Fire Chief, Board of Assessors, Treasurer/Collector, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Highway Superintendent, Town Clerk, ZBA, Planning Board and Select Board. Through our online permitting software, we provide convenient sign-off capabilities to many of these same officials because it is advantageous to the town and helpful to the applicant to do so.

Plumbing And Electrical Inspectors Provide The Same Advice And Professional Services To Town Citizens And Professionals: Both inspectors do site visits without charge before a permit is issued. Code questions are answered for homeowners, professionals, and architects. They offer emergency inspection assistance to fire departments, day and night, to ensure buildings are safe for emergency response personnel to enter. When boards of health request their inspections, those are done without charge. When buildings are foreclosed on, the power is turned off. Before the power can be turned back on an electrical inspection must be done and this is conducted without charge.

Abandoned/Unsafe Buildings: All FCCIP inspectors conduct inspections of these buildings, without charge, when requested to do so by the appropriate town officials.

FCCIP Advisory Board: Participating Town Select Boards may appoint a representative to the FCCIP Advisory Board. The Board meets quarterly and has direct input as to the yearly budget, setting permit fees, and advising staff on a host of other issues that impact the operation of the FCCIP.