



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee — *MINUTES*

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Date & Time: | Thursday, November 14, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. NOTE: Road Action Hearing at 5:00 p.m.; Regular Meeting to Follow |
| Location: | FRCOG, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield MA, Second Floor, Room 221 |
| Facilitator: | Jay DiPucchio, Chair |

Representatives Present:

- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected
- Jim Basford, FRPB Appointee
- Kevin Fox, Council Appointee
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Bill Martin, Council Appointee

Staff Members Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning
- Bob Dean, Director of Regional Services
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director

Additional Attendees for the Public Hearing:

- Marlo M. Warner II, City of Greenfield

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jay D. convened the Road Hearing at 5:00 p.m., welcoming attendees.

2. Public hearing for a petition to discontinue Court Square in Greenfield, with transfer of the road to the City of Greenfield

Bill P moved to dispense with the reading of the Notice of Public Hearing. Bill M. seconded. Motion passed with Mayor Martin abstaining.

Referring to the discontinuance petition received at the Committee’s previous meeting, Jay D. asked if attendees had any questions or comments. There was none. Jay D. asked if there were any formal objections. There was none. In the matter of the discontinuance and transfer of a portion of the 1889 county layout of Court Square to the City of Greenfield, (Petition No. RA-2019-02), and after due consideration, and there being no objection:

Bill Perlman moved that public convenience and necessity requires that the prayer of the petitioner be granted and we hereby discontinue and transfer a portion of said layout, between its northerly intersection with Main Street and its southerly intersection with Clay Hill (now Bank Row), as shown on the plan titled *Plan of Land, prepared for the City of Greenfield, Located in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Prepared by Daniel L. Werner, P.L.S, September 4, 2019*, under the provisions of Chapter 82, Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and agree to sign the Order of Discontinuance and Transfer for this docket, that grants no monetary damages to any party. Transfer

of the portions of Woodard Road from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, as successor to the Franklin County Commission, to the City of Greenfield becomes effective upon the City of Greenfield's official acceptance of the road. Until such acceptance, the subject road shall remain a county way. Kevin F. seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 in favor, with Greenfield's Mayor Martin abstaining.

Bill P. moved to adjourn the Public Hearing. Jim seconded. The motion passed with all in favor. The public hearing adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

3. Review and adopt 10.10.19 Executive Committee Minutes

Bill P. moved to adopt the 10.10.19 minutes. Jim seconded. The motion passed with all in favor.

4. Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership update

Peggy Sloan reported to the committee that after 5 years of work, 14 towns (7 from Franklin County) have voted to participate in the activities of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP), which includes supporting forest conservation and use of sustainable forestry practices on private lands, increasing natural-resource-based economic development, and improving the fiscal stability and sustainability of the municipalities. Once legislation was filed and adopted, municipalities could begin to "opt in," Peg said. Now FRCOG is helping towns form the governing board and staff hope to transition the responsibility for the project to a non-profit organization that the MTWP Board would select if funding can be secured.

Next Thursday, Nov. 21, at 1 p.m., at Berkshire East in Charlemont, the MA Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary, Kathleen Theoharides, and the USDA Forest Service Chief, Vicki Christiansen, will sign a shared stewardship agreement to provide technical support to the MTWP. A U.S. Forest Service liaison will provide technical assistance on natural-resource based tourism and forest management research and plans.

The MTWP governing board will include local representatives from each town, regional representatives, and, among other professionals, a scientist doing research on climate change. (Utilities are not included on the board). Towns that have opted in will have grant programs made available to them if funding is secured. Grant awards may go to a variety of uses, determined by the governing board, but no funding may be used for wood heat pellet manufacturing.

Some critics of the MTWP project exist, but towns have designed a balanced approach and are interested in proceeding given the economic and environmental benefits of the MTWP project. Bob noted that the MTWP was raised in a recent FC Energy Committees meeting, confusing its establishment with a bill filed that would stop forest management on state-owned land. Peggy remarked that the MTWP supports private ownership and conservation of forestland and landowners determine how their forests are managed whether it is for carbon storage, wildlife habitat or wood products.

Bill P. congratulated Peggy on a job well done, saying he knew she and the staff have worked very hard on this project, and put up with some uncivil behavior. Jim B. chimed in with his appreciation.

5. Consider signing the Order of Discontinuance and Transfer of Woodard Road, Greenfield

Jay asked that this item be passed over as the discontinuance has yet to be accepted by the town

6. FRCOG staffing changes

Linda announced that 10+ year FRCOG employee, Jeanette Voas, who held, among other jobs, the role of highly respected statistician for Partnership For Youth, has retired. FRCOG has hired **Allison Gage**, full-time Land Use and Natural Resources Planner; **Lisa Danek Burke**, part-time Regional Health Agent; and **Amanda Doster**, a former part-time Partnership for Youth employee who has taken our new Regional Projects Coordinator position. **Rachel Mason** is the new part-time Homeland Security Assistant, and Bob has hired two new town accountants, **Debbie Jones** and **Dara LaPlante**. Meanwhile, Randy Crochier and Lisa White have bumped up to full-time.

7. Water and Sewer Forum, and next steps

Linda reported that 100 Franklin and Hampshire County people attended the water and sewer forum organized by FRCOG, Rep. Blais, and Sen. Comerford. Highlights of the day's program included Greenfield's anaerobic digester presentation; staff member Bob Dean's talk about the region's aging water and sewer infrastructure; and FRCOG Councilor Kayce Warren describing the need for certified treatment plant operators. The USDA, DEP, RCAP, fielded grant-funding questions.

Members of the Executive Committee who attended agreed that the event provided ideas for opportunities for municipalities to work together on sewer and water issues, such as Greenfield accepting sludge from other towns, regionalizing aging infrastructure management, dealing with infiltration and sinkholes, upgrading collection systems, and so on. Linda said the EPA has given DEP close to \$1M to assist rural and disadvantaged communities with water and sewer problems. Next steps? Help the DEP to figure out how best to spend the money.

8. Budget expectations for 2021

Staff added this agenda item to keep the committee abreast of special projects planned for the year and to hear any ideas members might have. Claire said the agency has ended the last two years very strong, in part because staff have contained expenses, but mostly because we're very conservative on revenue projections. Because we ended FY18 and FY19 with surpluses of \$100,000, staff will present the finance committee with the idea of not increasing regional assessments.

Accounting Program. Staff plans to meet with all accounting towns mid-December to discuss options for changes to make the program more stable. It's been a constant challenge to find the correct staffing and keep the towns feeling good about the program. FRCOG was approached by a few towns that will soon be without an accountant. Bob will help them work toward sharing a non-FRCOG accountant, but staffing levels at this point prohibit FRCOG adding them to our program.

Purchasing Program Our program has, to date, successfully adopted the former HCG's purchasing program. Staff has been in touch with all Hampshire County towns and the early returns are good. Select Boards are signing the highway products and services contracts, though we may need to meet with some. HC towns will need to change how they've been paying for these bids in FY21. HCG charged vendors a 1.4% service fee on everything purchased by participating towns. Our model is to pay a single yearly assessment fee, but overall municipal highway budgets should be lower as comparison pricing indicates that vendors passed along the service fees to towns in their bid pricing.

Strategic/ Succession Planning Many employees are starting to think about retiring. Administrators are thus asking if the current staffing structure is the best structure and if simply replacing staff in the same roles makes sense or if we could shape the hiring/structure to evolve in a way that betters the agency. This will be an ongoing initiative, budgeted for, along with a website overhaul, in FY21.

9. Holiday Staffing

Because Christmas falls on a Wednesday, FRCOG will be announcing that the office will be open by appointment only on December 24 and 26. Staff will post this on the website.

10. Business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance

Bill P. moved to adjourn. Jim seconded. Meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- FRCOG Executive Committee Road Action Hearing Protocol
- Notice of Public Highway Hearing #RA-2019-02
- Order of Discontinuance and Transfer
- 10.10.19 Draft Executive Committee Minutes
- Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership communities list