



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## COUNCIL — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 24, 2019 / 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Location:	<b>William B. Allen Room, Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield</b>
Facilitator:	John O’ Rourke, Vice Chair

**REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDEES:**

**Kayce Warren**, Ashfield; **Marguerite Willis**, Charlemont; **John O’Rourke**, Conway; **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **Kip Komosa**, Deerfield; **William Bembury**, Erving; **Greg Snedeker**, Gill; **Hussain Hamdan**, Hawley; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **William Martin**, Greenfield; **Beth Adams**, Leverett; **Steve Ellis**, Montague; **Wayne Hachey**, New Salem; **Julia Blyth**, Northfield; **Gabriele Voelker**, Orange; **Elaine Puleo**, Shutesbury; **Michael Idoine**, Wendell; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately; **Bill Perlman**, Regionally Elected; **Jim Basford**, FRPB.

**REGRETS:** **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; **Zachary Turner**, Buckland; **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Jennifer Morse**, Rowe; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regionally Elected;

**ABSENT:** **Alice Houghtaling**, Monroe ; **Bob Manners**, Shelburne; **Larry “Doc” Pruyne**, Warwick.

**STAFF & VISITORS:** **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Claire McGinnis**, Finance Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Administrative Services Coordinator

<b>1. Roll Call</b>	Vice Chair John O’ Rourke
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The chair convened the meeting at 5:34 p.m. Roll call was taken and a general and financial quorum was met with 20 members and 83.36 % of the weighted vote of the total membership in attendance.

<b>2. Adopt 10/18/18 minutes</b>	John O’ Rourke
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**Bill P. moved to adopt the minutes of the October 18, 2018 meeting. Bill M. seconded the motion, which passed with two abstentions.**

<b>3. Council Update</b>	John O’ Rourke
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John welcomed Gabriele Voelker & Elaine Puleo, new reps from Orange and Shutesbury, respectively. The next Council meetings will be held **April 18, 2019** and **July 18, 2019** at the Transit Center.

John explained that the Executive Committee appoints members to the Boards of the Franklin County Community Development Corporation and the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). The HRA Board of Commissioners, particularly, needs new Board members. Commissioners govern the HRA in its role as a public housing authority and in other activities, including community development and housing consumer education. Candidates with expertise in finance, law, construction or management are of particular interest. John asked that if any of the counselors might like to serve on a board or could recommend a candidate, to please let staff know.

#### 4. Executive Committee Update

Jay DiPucchio, Committee Chair

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

- Convened in their role as The Greater Franklin County Economic Development District Board to consider and provide input into the new CEDS committee bylaws.
- Considered and consented to easements on East River Street in Orange, MA.
- Heard updates on the status of the FCECS and discussed strategies for informing state officials and legislators about the challenge of keeping the system operational.
- Learned of the desire of two towns situated in other counties to join the FRCOG.
- Considered the idea of using a flat-fee billing business model for some of the Partnership For Youth's services in an effort to retain the program's staffing at current levels.
- Voted to draft a letter to FERC asking for intervenor status and for a 90-day comment period for FirstLight's recently filed license transfer application.

Linda explained that FRCOG has no working policy for accepting towns outside of the county at this point. One town wants to join because they feel the town's character is more similar to that of Franklin County than that of Worcester; the other town is looking for services not offered by their council. Staff have spoken to interested towns and are talking internally to determine practical and legal mechanics.

Regarding the intervenor status request letter to FERC, one councilor encouraged the staff to address the fact that there was a wrap-around 90 days from the date at which the government reopen.

#### 5. Executive Director Update

Linda Dunlavy

Linda highlighted FRCOG's recent work, including:

**Rural Policy** The RPAC heard from residents of 170 rural communities before initiating the writing of the rural policy plan. Top 7 rural issues were: housing, school costs, transportation, broadband access, climate resiliency, small business support, and aging population/loneliness. The commission is working with representatives to legislate the creation of an office of rural policy, which might help with such things as examination of a carbon sequester value/payment to towns with state and chapter 61 land.

**Census** FRCOG will work with towns and agencies to assure we have an accurate census count in 2020. A complete count is necessary for determining legislative districts, and funding distribution.

**Heavy Equipment Use** FRCOG has signed a fixed-price contract for town rental of emergency heavy equipment use, which can be FEMA reimbursed. We need towns to return the agreement.

**DLTA Grants** Get your project forms back to us so we can help with projects focused on housing, economic development, regionalization and Community Compact project.

**Drone Services Available** FRCOG signed on with 3 vendors for municipal drone use, now commonly used for planning/engineering projects to collect data and to visualize proposed changes.

**FCECS** FRCOG hired Kurt Seaman, radio communication expert, to help keep the system functioning. A decision-making FCECS meeting will occur 1/31, at 7 p.m., at GCC.

**Cooperative Public Health** More than 1000 flu shots were given this year; food service trainings have been popular; use of a new tablet system will improve FRCOG inspections; Short-Term Rental Legislation is the topic of the March Municipal Officials training as legislation has passed. Towns should adopt the hotel/motel local option tax, for short term rentals revenue.

## 7. Personnel Committee

Bill Perlman, Committee Chair

Bill P. reported that the committee recently discussed staff salary levels, and in anticipation of budget talks, recommended to the Finance Committee a 2.5% increase in staff salaries. The committee's primary concern is competition with other planning orgs to attract new staff and maintain new staff.

## 8. Finance Committee Update

Lynn Sibley, Committee Chair

- Presentation and request for endorsement of FRCOG FY20 budget

Lynn presented to Council the budgetary priorities and programmatic changes discussed at Finance Committee meetings and contained in this budget (*see handouts*). These include:

- Funding for a website overhaul
- Funding for succession planning of key staff retiring within 7 years
- Financial support for administration and management services from each of the municipal programs' general funds; up from 10% to 11%, an amount all programs can afford
- A 2.5% Competitive Market Increase (CMI); A figure recommended by the Personnel Committee, and based on the conservative estimate that insurance will go up 5%
- Funding OPEB at \$205,000, mostly through grant revenues (not effecting town assessments)
- The \$43,973 salary for the new FCECS radio system manager
- A level-serviced Town Accounting program. This is not a final budget for them; they're having trouble filling a vacancy, working with state to figure out how to fund robust training.
- No fee increase for Cooperative Inspections
- No fee increase for Collective Purchasing
- A greater Cooperative Public Health budget with Shelburne now a full member of the service
- No significant changes to our lease in 2020, but have not yet received a long-term capital plan
- A level-funded membership assessment, aside from changes resulting from 2018 EQVs

Lynn explained that staff are as yet unclear about whether they'll be required to pay "normal costs" to the state retirement system, and are continuing to budget OPEB as in recent years. The Finance Committee has set a 5-year goal of attaining 80% of the total OPEB needed, which looks possible. In the budget the line item is labeled "retirement or OPEB." Bill M. asked about other options for the post-employment benefit account (OPEB). Lynn said not budgeting OPEB at all is another option. Linda listed the advantages to continuing to fund it this way: 1.) FRCOG is prepared if the state retirement system normal cost assessment they've threatened us with ever goes into effect. 2.) Our cognizant agency allows OPEB contributions to be included in the indirect rate, which means town assessments are not impacted. 3.) If the state retirement system does not charge us, the budgeted payment/amount helps to build the OPEB trust, making it so that if FRCOG ever fails we won't have to deny rightful retiree health insurance, or charge towns.

### FCECS Budget

The emergency communication system is frail and becoming obsolete, now at the end of its life. The Fin Com has retained the capital line item of \$75,000 in the budget to keep the system functioning for as long as possible. This along, with hiring of a Radio System Manager, results in a fairly significant budget increase. Fin Com has built a budget that recommends use of \$21,000 of undesignated fund balance, with the remaining \$11,517 added to user assessments.

Steve Ellis, asked if the apportionment will follow the same formula as FRCOG’s other assessments. Bill P. noted that the assessment formula was developed 10-15 years ago, based on unit cost. (For example, Hawley is a 1-unit cost, while other towns pay multiple unit costs depending on fire department, police department, etc., use.) A unit is not radio; a unit is emergency service — police, ambulance, fire, and so on. The assessment will go up by roughly \$70 per unit. Private Ambulance services are also charged, so it’s not simply split between the towns. Linda added that staff usually don’t calculate municipal assessments for municipal service programs and FCECS until after budget adoption in case changes to the budget are made at the Council meeting. But, she noted, that draft assessments could be calculated in advance to be part of the budget presentation next year if the Council would find that helpful. Councilors accepted her offer for assessment drafts.

Marguerite W. opined that FCECS complacency is unacceptable. Linda acknowledged the Councilor’s concern, pointing to the Jan. 31 forum as one of FRCOG’s many efforts to involve all stakeholders. More than 50 people are registered to date, she reported, and because of regular meetings with legislators, aides for US Sen. Warren and US Reps. Neale and McGovern, along with state legislators Hinds, Comerford, and Blais will attend, quite aware of the crisis of our failing system. The FCECS Oversight Committee currently deals with little else.

Bill M. asked about the capital account balance as it relates to system replacement cost. Linda said the plan is to add \$75,000 to the capital budget to maintain the existing system while trying to find a solution. System replacement options continue to be: 1.) *Push to be included in Commonwealth radio system*. If that happens, and the capital account balance is not needed for repairs or to make the transfer, FRCOG would return it proportionally to users. 2.) *Rebuild a new system*. With this option staff would pursue legislation to allow FRCOG to bond for the new radio system, then assess towns for the bond payment, maintenance, and funding to rebuild in 10 years.

The Finance Committee asked for the Council’s support of the FY20 budget.

**Kevin F. moved that the Council adopt the \$3,696,163 FY2020 budget as presented. Bill P. seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.**

#### **8. Special Presentations**

Megan Rhodes, Transportation & Land Use Planner

- Long Range Transportation Plan public input session
- Preview online GIS mapping tool

This program was cancelled; Megan was unable to attend.

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

**Bill M.** announced that Greenfield is now a city, with plans to build a regional anaerobic digester plant.

**Michael I.** is looking for support for legislators to write a bond bill to reimburse all broadband costs.

**Bill M. motioned for adjournment. John O. seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.**

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the October 18, 2018 meeting
- January 2019 FRCOG Programmatic Updates
- FRCOG Budget Proposal and Budget Proposal Slides
- CHIP Flyer