Council Chair Update

Nominations:
Since the FRCOG has a tradition, although not policy, of maintaining a slate of officers for 2 years, Jay and Linda propose that the FY20 slate remain the same as FY19, which is:

Council Chair – Michelle Giarusso, Leyden
Council Vice Chair – John O’Rourke, Conway
Secretary – Kevin Fox, Colrain

Council Appointment to Executive Committee – Kevin Fox, Colrain
Council Appointment to Executive Committee – Mayor Bill Martin, Greenfield*

* This appointment will be a 6-month appointment through the end of the Mayor’s term; the Council will need to reappoint a new member to the Executive Committee at its January meeting.

Next Council Meetings:
Meetings are held in the Transit Center.
Proposed FY20 meeting schedule:

   October 17, 2019
   January 23, 2020
   April 16, 2020

Executive Committee Update
In its meetings since January, the FRCOG Executive Committee:

• Learned about the state’s new short-term rental (Air B&B) law, focusing particularly on the ways in which towns/cities can benefit financially from the new law through taxation, and licensing and penalty fees; can choose to limit growth by creating a cap on numbers; and can make adjustments to zoning to meet each individual municipality’s needs and visions.

• Considered and subsequently appointed two candidates to 5-year terms on the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners.

• Learned of and discussed the progress of the emergency communication system migration to the state system. (See the Executive Director Update: Franklin County Emergency Communication System on page 6 for details.)
• Voted to draft a letter to FERC asking for intervener status and for further mitigation measures for the Bear Swamp Hydroelectric Project’s Final License Application.

• Learned of the Hampshire County of Government’s (HCG) imminent closing and considered the programs that FRCOG might reasonably adopt in order to improve services to Franklin County towns while also assisting Hampshire County municipalities. After hearing of favorable financial, risk, and benefits analyses, the committee was cautiously comfortable with the decision to take over portions of the HCG procurement programs, for at least a year, while staff determined if the program is financially viable, sustainable over the long term, and the benefit to Franklin County communities they believe it will be.

• Convened as the Economic Development District Governing Board to discuss and accept the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annual report, the last of the reports in the 5-year cycle. The EDD board also voted to approve changes to its structure and procedural rules, and appointed nominated members to the CEDS committee.

Finance Committee Update

FY19 Complete – Another Financially Stable Year

As the Finance Committee has not met since the last Council Meeting, Claire, McGinnis, Finance Director, offers the following report. The committee will meet on July 16th, and may have further information for the Council at the open session.

FY19 was another stable year for the FRCOG, preliminary results suggesting revenues will exceed expenses by a healthy margin. The expansion of the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) from 11 participating Towns to 13 resulted in the need for one significant appropriation increase at year end. New members paid partial year assessments, balancing the additional costs. We will once again ask to carry forward into FY20 the unspent capital amounts for the FCECS program, building a capital reserve fund for this equipment and tower system against future damage or replacement costs.

FY20 has been set up and launched with little fan-fare, other than a round of “Happy New Year” among the finance staff! CPHS needs a budget amendment for the New Year, due to the expansion, as will Collective Purchasing following FRCOG acceptance of a portion of the Hampshire Council of Governments Purchasing program.

Massachusetts State Retirement Assessment

As reported last month, we have been informed that the Massachusetts State Retirement System has drafted and submitted a bill to the legislature that would allow MSRS to assess all Regional Planning Agencies “normal costs”. Normal costs are a percent of payroll, usually 5-6%, paid to MSRS to help cover future retiree pension costs of current employees. The bill has been assigned to the Public Service Committee, of which Representative Blais is a member. Our interpretation of the language submitted is that the FRCOG is included in this proposed legislation although we are not specifically called out. A Hearing for this bill has already been held. The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, an affiliation group of the 13 RPAs, submitted strong written testimony opposing the legislation.
Executive Director Update

Advocacy, Boards, Commissions and Committees

- The FRCOG has led the development of the MA Rural Policy Plan. Draft chapters are available for public review at [https://frcog.org/rural-policy-advisory-commission-draft-ma-rural-policy-plan-available-for-public-review/](https://frcog.org/rural-policy-advisory-commission-draft-ma-rural-policy-plan-available-for-public-review/) and the draft Plan will be highlighted at the 7/18 Council meeting.

- Staff drafted the aforementioned letter regarding an assessment to the Massachusetts State Retirement System sent on behalf of MARPA.

- Economic Development Program Manager Jessica Atwood was appointed to the MassDevelopment New Market Advisory Tax Credits Advisory Board. The Board provides input on the allocation of New Market Tax Credits for projects that benefit low income communities.

- Land Use & Natural Resources Program Manager Kimberly Noake MacPhee was appointed to the Franklin Conservation District (FCD) Board of Supervisors. The FCD supports the local work of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a Federal program, and recently completed a project to map the River Corridor of both branches of the North River in Colrain and Heath.

- The Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health, on which Community Services Director Phoebe Walker sits, released its draft report and filed a bill with a budget request to begin implementing its recommendations. Information is available here: [https://www.mass.gov/orgs/special-commission-on-local-and-regional-public-health.](https://www.mass.gov/orgs/special-commission-on-local-and-regional-public-health.)

- The Cannabis Control Commission released draft changes to Massachusetts’ adult use and medical use of cannabis regulations on July 2, 2019. Copies of the filings are available for download at: [MassCannabisControl.com/Documents/](https://MassCannabisControl.com/Documents/). Public hearings on the drafts will be held next month and a public comment period will be open through **August 15, 2019**. The Public Hearing in Western MA will be held on **Thursday, August 15th, 2019 at 10 a.m.** at the Western New England University School of Law, Moot Court Room, 1215 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01119. You can view the **Notice of Public Hearing and Comment** and email public comments on the drafts to **CannabisCommission@mass.gov**. After August 15th, the Commission will reconvene to consider the public’s feedback and vote again on the final changes before new regulations are issued by the State. The FRCOG is reviewing the Draft regulations, which include changes to allow Marijuana Social Consumption Establishments (aka Marijuana Cafes) and Retail Delivery Services of marijuana products to consumers. For more information contact **psloan@frcog.org** for Planning and Zoning related questions and **walker@frcog.org** for Health related questions.
A Framework for Resilience: Responding to Climate Change in the Deerfield River Watershed

Last quarter, FRCOG released A Framework for Resilience: Responding to Climate Change in the Deerfield River Watershed. The first step towards implementing the report’s recommendations is to convene a Resilient Deerfield River Watershed Coalition (Resilient DRW). Members of Resilient DRW will work with FRCOG to prioritize recommendations and seek funding for implementation projects. FRCOG hopes to have at least one representative from each of the 14 towns in the watershed serve on Resilient DRW. The goal is for towns to work with their watershed neighbors to build resiliency at the local and watershed scales. The complete report is available on FRCOG’s website. More Information: Kimberly Noake MacPhee at kmacphee@frcog.org or ext. 130.

Census 2020 Preparations

The Franklin County Complete Count Committee held its kick-off event on June 5. At the meeting, there was a discussion of how best to implement an awareness campaign so every household knows the importance of responding to the 2020 Census survey. Also discussed was how to establish access points for respondents who need support in responding to the survey online. This summer staff will develop these strategies further and forge relationships with partners. Funding for this effort is from a Mass Census Equity Fund grant. More information: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The 2019 CEDS Annual Report was finalized and submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) at the end of June. The Report is the fourth and final update to the 2015 CEDS Plan, and may be downloaded from our website.

Next, we launch a planning process to create a new five-year CEDS Plan. The 2020-2024 Plan will be developed using the EDA framework that incorporates a review of economic conditions, a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis, and strategic goals and actions. It will also include a new listing of important economic development projects in the region. The Plan will be created under the guidance of a restructured CEDS Committee. In the coming months, member municipalities will be notified of opportunities to provide input into the Plan’s development. More information: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.
Brownfields

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a $200,000 Brownfields grant to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to assess sites potentially contaminated by hazardous materials in June 2019. One of four grants awarded to towns or regional planning commissions in Massachusetts, the Brownfield work is anticipated to begin in October 2019. If your town has a site that needs a Brownfields assessment, please submit it to Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org. More information: Peggy Sloan at psloan@frcog.org or ext. 133

Procurement Program Expands

The FRCOG has stepped in to assist Hampshire County towns who will no longer have a Collective Purchasing Program through the Hampshire Council of Governments after their closure this summer. Their full time Procurement Officer, Ellen Batchelder, has joined FRCOG as of July 1. Combining the purchasing volume of their 24 towns with ours will greatly increase our “buying power”. Their Highway, Fuel, and a few other miscellaneous bids will be merged with FRCOG in a phased-in approach over the next year. FRCOG and HCOG already had a relationship with some bids, most notably our large Road Salt bid, so expanding it in this fashion is not completely new territory. Ellen is a certified MCPPO and will be a great asset to our staff.

FRCOG Highway Contracts are in place as of July 1. Highway Superintendents have been provided with a summary of their contracts and MassDOT provided with data needed to process Chapter 90 requests. This summary is available to the public at https://frcog.org/bids.

Regional Animal Control Officer

Staff wrapped up our work with Northfield, Gill, Colrain, Heath, Monroe, Buckland, and Shelburne and the Franklin County Sheriff’s office on a shared Animal Control Officer through the FCSO Dog Shelter. The shared position between these seven towns and the FCSO has been posted, and interviews are this week! The current plan is for the regional ACO to begin work summer of 2019. More information: Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.
Emergency First Aid Training Equipment

The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) is supporting local training efforts through the purchase of equipment which can be utilized by trained personnel to provide CPR and hemorrhage/bleeding control training to civilians and first responders.

WRHSAC purchased CPR training mannequins and a hemorrhage control training kit which are housed and managed by Western Mass Emergency Medical Services (WMEMS). The mannequins, which include adult, child and infant models, are equipped with feedback devices as required by the American Heart Association. The feedback devices provide performance level information to trainees. This equipment is available through WMEMS to certified training instructors in first responder departments.

Stop the Bleed training kits will be purchased to be managed by Baystate Health. The Stop the Bleed Campaign is a national initiative to build resilience by preparing the public to save lives by raising awareness of basic actions to stop life threatening bleeding following emergencies. This training was motivated by the 2012 tragedy in Sandy Hook. To date, Baystate Health has trained more than 3,000 civilian/medical personnel in Stop the Bleed. The goal is to train more than 800,000 people in western Massachusetts. The kits will be available to any Stop the Bleed certified trainer. More information: Raine Brown at raine@frcog.org or ext. 138.

Franklin County Emergency Communication System Update

Since the last Council meeting, responsibility for upgrade and expansion of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS, the statewide emergency communication system) was transferred from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to the Executive Office of Technology Safety and Security (EOTSS). This change was beneficial to the FRCOG because EOTSS Secretary Wood is very familiar with the FCECS issues. Since then, FRCOG staff and the FCECS Oversight Committee completed and submitted an equipment needs inventory. The inventory was conducted by and with all departments using the system. At the request of EOTSS, a draft migration plan was also developed that proposed a 4-stage migration from the FCECS to the state’s CoMIRS system. After submission of both items, FRCOG staff met with EOTSS officials regarding the project to transition Franklin County to CoMIRS.

Five criteria have been assessed by EOTSS to ensure that Franklin County can and should move to CoMIRS:

1. Coverage — EOTSS has spent time modeling our existing coverage and comparing it to anticipated CoMIRS coverage. More than 96 % of the FC region gets marginal coverage or better with the existing CoMIRS coverage, even before upgrades are made; Franklin County is now at 87% marginal or better coverage. The transfer will result in better overall coverage for our towns.
2. Capacity — The CoMirs engineering study is nearly complete and it is clear that CoMIRS has adequate capacity to absorb Franklin County.
3. Subscriber units — Radios will need to remain compatible with the existing CoMIRS and after the completion of the state-wide project. There are two radios that meet the requirements – a lower cost Kenwood option and more expensive Motorola option. EOTSS is thinking about providing an allowance
to each department based on the equipment inventory submitted at the price of the Kenwood model. Towns/departments would be allowed to upgrade to Motorola but would be required to pay the cost differential; at roughly a $400 to $600 difference in price. FRCOG has offered to assist with procurement.

4. Functionality — EOTSS will require that we maintain FCECS until paging and all other issues have been resolved and the full migration has occurred. FRCOG staff are redrafting the soon-expiring FCECS agreement between towns and the FRCOG now to reflect this requirement. The draft will be brought to the FCECS Oversight Committee for approval and then sent to all towns.

5. Standards adherence — A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between EOTSS and munis/depts. will be developed and required before transition is made. The MOU will likely include the following:
   - Towns/Units will have no cost for initial radios and equipment.
   - Towns/Units will have no cost for sustainability of the new system until after the migration project has been completed in full. There may be some kind of sustainability assessment in the future, but the details are not known yet.
   - Towns/Units will maintain FCECS until full transition to CoMIRS is made, but FCECS will not be expanded.
   - Towns/units need to abide by all CoMIRS usage protocols.

Next steps will be: 1.) a public meeting in late summer; 2.) reauthorization of FCECS MOU between FRCOG and FC municipalities and drafting of CoMIRS MOU between EOTSS and municipalities; 3.) the rollout (possibly starting in September); 4.) equipment procurement and distribution.

More Information: Dan Nietsche at dnietsche@frcog.org or ext. 105.

Speaking of Radios...

A few Council members have asked recently what the entries on the weekly vendor warrant are related to purchasing radios with HMCC (Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition) funds. Through the MA Dept. of Public Health, the HMCC receives approximately $140,000 annually to support the nine acute care hospitals in western MA in preparing for emergencies. Often, hospitals choose to use this funding to purchase portable radios so their security teams can communicate amongst themselves and with the emergency department. Each hospital has its own frequency licensed by the FCC, which is not within the frequencies used by FCECS. These purchases are not at all related to the FCECS or the migration to CoMIRS.

Emergency Preparedness Nearly Concludes Its Strategic Planning Process

The Emergency Preparedness Program, with input from selectboards, town administrators, police, fire, emergency medical services, public health, and emergency managers, has drafted a report on the state of emergency preparedness in Franklin County. We are asking stakeholders to review the report and email us with your feedback by the end of August. The “Emergency Preparedness Program Future Plans” chapter, beginning on page 15, outlines how FRCOG Emergency Preparedness staff will focus their efforts over the next five years. You’ll find the State of Emergency Preparedness in Franklin County Draft Report on the FRCOG website’s Publications page under Emergency Preparedness. Please email any thoughts or recommendations to Tracy Rogers, program manager, at emergencyprep@frcog.org.
Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Project

The purpose of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Project (MTWP) is to bring recognition and additional financial and technical resources to 21 municipalities in Franklin and Berkshire Counties in northwestern Massachusetts, primarily via special designation by the State and the U.S. Forest Service. The goals of the MTWP are to:

- Increase natural resource based economic development
- Increase forest land conservation and sustainable forestry practices on private lands
- Improve fiscal stability and sustainability of the municipalities

State legislation to create a Special Designation for the 21-town region and formally establish the MTWP was passed as part of the Environmental Bond Bill and was signed by Governor Baker on August 9, 2018. At least 11 of the 21 towns must opt in by either Select Board or Town Meeting vote in order to establish the MTWP Board whose purpose is to coordinate and oversee activities of the Partnership. The FRCOG is pleased to announce that 11 communities in the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership region have voted to opt in. Consequently, the FRCOG is assisting with the formation of the MTWP Board that will assume responsibility for future activities of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership in accordance with the State legislation. In addition, funding to support the goals of the MTWP is being pursued.

More information: Peggy Sloan at psloan@frcog.org or ext. 133, or visit the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership Project at http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandspartnership.org.

Local Officials Workshops

The FY19 Local Officials Workshop series continued this spring with a lively discussion of municipal actions to increase affordable housing. Materials from all the municipal workshops are available at: https://frcog.org/program-services/municipal-resources/. Have ideas for the upcoming workshop series? Let us know by contacting Rebekah at admin@frcog.org or Phoebe at walker@frcog.org.
Erving joins Health District

A warm welcome to the Town of Erving, which became the thirteenth member of the Cooperative Public Health Service regional health district as of July 1, 2019. The Town joined the Public Health Nursing Program, and the nurse has begun working for the Board of Health on communicable disease investigation and follow up, scheduled a flu clinic for the fall, and started offering monthly wellness clinics at the Senior Center on the first Tuesday of every month. More information: Lisa White, Regional Public Health Nurse, at lwhite@frcog.org.

Food Safety Update

On April 26, the Cooperative Public Health Service trained dozens of restaurant and school workers and local residents in member towns in a low cost three-in-one food safety training -- ServeSafe, Chokesaver, and Allergan certifications. We will plan another training in the fall. Interested? Contact Randy Crochier, Food Safety Agent, at rcrochier@frcog.org.

Franklin County/North Quabbin Community Health Needs Assessment

The FRCOG’s Partnership For Youth was contracted to write Baystate Franklin Medical Center’s triennial Community Health Needs Assessment. This involved nearly a year of work and a great deal of data gathering to get a complete picture of the health issues facing residents of these thirty towns. The draft findings were released to a standing room only crowd of over 100 people in late June. The health assessment will provide guidance to many FRCOG programs other community entities as they plan and implement health improvement strategies. Final copies of the report will be available after approval by the Baystate Health Board in early fall.

Left: A packed audience for the release of the Franklin County Community Health Needs Assessment report. Right: Community Health Needs Assessment response panelists
**Efforts to Reduce Youth Substance Use**

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 is currently completing an update to their Community Action Plan. Staff are available to meet with towns interested in taking action to reduce youth substance use to share information about what municipal policy options exist. Staff are also available to share their presentation on Marijuana and the Developing Brain: Raising Youth in the Age of Legal Marijuana with interested audiences. **More information:** Kat Allen at kallen@fr cog.org or ext. 119.

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**Bicycle Safety Campaign**

Continuing the campaign to bring awareness to bicyclists on our roadways, ads have launched on some FRTA buses that showcase local riders and safety messages. Building on the success of our May billboards, the bus ads feature Franklin County residents from all walks of life with the common thread of being cyclists. The ads will be running throughout the summer and will promote tolerance and safety for shared space. **More information:** Beth Giannini at giannini@fr cog.org or ext. 125.

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**Expansion of Passenger Rail**

Expanded passenger rail service is coming to Franklin County late this summer. A 2-year pilot program will provide two additional roundtrips per day during the week between Greenfield and Springfield, with one more roundtrip on weekends and holidays. This additional service will make it possible to travel to New York City and back in the same day. The FRCOG has recently received a contract from MassDOT to develop marketing materials for the expanded service. Be on the lookout for a marketing and branding to campaign later this summer. **More information:** Maureen Mullaney at mmullaney@fr cog.org or ext. 129.

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**Scenic Byway Land Protection**

The Scenic Byway Land Protection Project ended on June 30, 2019. During this 11- year project staff worked with the Franklin Land Trust, MassDOT, the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife to permanently protect important scenic, natural, and agricultural landscapes along the Scenic Byways in Franklin County. At the conclusion of the project a total of 1,534 acres was permanently protected from future development in 12 towns and on 3 different scenic byways (Connecticut River Scenic Byway, Mohawk Trail, and Route 112 Scenic Byway). **More information:** Beth Giannini at giannini@fr cog.org or ext. 125.
Update to the Long Range Regional Transportation Plan

Staff has just completed updating the region’s Long Range Transportation Plan. Undertaken every four years, this plan assesses all modes of transportation, looking toward the year 2040 to make financially constrained recommendations. Some top recommendations of the newly minted Plan include increasing public transportation (including adding evening and weekend service), replacing the Schell Bridge in Northfield with an important bicycle/pedestrian link over the Connecticut River, expanding passenger rail service both north-south and east-west, rehabilitating the General Pierce Bridge, and improving traffic flow and safety in the area of Greenfield’s Big Y Plaza and Home Depot. An interactive summary of the Plan, as well as all of the final chapters of the Plan, can be found on our website. More information: Megan Rhodes at mrhodes@frcog.org or ext. 132.

Staff Updates & Changes

Staff Changes

- We welcome Ellen Batchelder to our Collective Purchasing Program. Ellen will help us expand our highway products and services and fuel bids to Hampshire County.

- We bid a fond adieu to Ann Dunne, who worked with us in both our Administrative Team and Town Accounting Program.

Staff Updates

Congratulations to CPHS Health Director Andrea Crete for her recognition as one of the few nationally certified FDA Standardized Food Safety Inspectors in the state. This national certification is part of a federal effort to increase food safety through ensuring that food codes are applied uniformly across the country, and involves many hours of course work and audited inspections.