



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee & Franklin County

Economic Development District Board — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.
Location:	Remote meeting using videoconferencing technology
Facilitator:	Jay DiPucchio, Chair

Executive Committee Representatives Present:

- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected
- Jim Basford, FRPB Appointee
- Roxanne Wedegartner, Council Appointee
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Kevin Fox, Council Appointee (phone)

Staff Members Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Bob Dean, Director of Regional Services
- Phoebe Walker, Director of Community Services
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator

1. Review and adopt 4.9.20 Executive Committee Minutes

Jay convened the meeting at 5:03 p.m. **Bill moved adoption of the minutes of the 4.9.20 meeting as presented. Jim seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.**

2. Convene as Economic Development District Governing Board for 2020 Franklin County CEDS plan discussion

Jessica reported that the 5-year 2020 Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan has been generated. Created using the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) framework, the plan maintains the region’s eligibility for select federal EDA grant programs. It serves as a roadmap for strategic partners to advance policies, programs, and projects that support economic opportunity for all and contribute to the well-being of Franklin County communities.

The Plan reflects the best information and strategies available at the time of its creation. As datasets are often released with a one- to two-year lag time, the plan does not reflect the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. However, when possible, monthly or quarterly data is included to present the most current information available. Thus, the plan includes findings from a business survey conducted in late March 2020, to provide an understanding of the pandemic’s economic impacts. The Action Plan describes the projects and activities to be pursued over the next five years to meet the goals and objectives identified. Projects and activities were identified by program partners and/or submitted through an open proposal process. More than 30 proposals were submitted.

The 30-day public comment period closes June 7. The CEDS plan is available for review on the FRCOG website and anyone can comment via email or phone call. The plan will be considered for

endorsement on June 11 by the EDD board. The regional planning board will review it June 25, and the final plan will be submitted to the USEDA by June 30, 2020. Members commended the work of Jessica and the other planners. Linda explained that time was short this year Jessica drafted and redrafted the CEDS within two weeks!

3. COVID Activity Update

Linda described a regional initiative for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) procurement FRCOG and other regional agencies have been considering. The county's reopening will require safety precautions, and employers must have adequate PPE, which the state will likely not help them acquire. Could or should FRCOG do a collective PPE purchase for Franklin County?

With the FC Chamber of Commerce and FRCOG's Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) staff, Linda surveyed all Chamber members asking if they needed help buying PPE. Of the 75 survey responses, 72 asked for help. Along with the individual input of Bill and Jay, staff discussed a FRCOG collective PPE purchase and distribution to businesses to help the region open safely. To do so would require funding up front, and thus, approval of the full FRCOG Council.

In a recent call, the legislative delegation said they believe that the system for certification of reopening businesses, and statewide standardization and enforcement will be challenging for small, rural communities. They suggested creating a rural reopening board to provide assistance and guidance to the four western MA counties to make sure the 413 opens safely. Legislators want to be on the board to advocate for small rural communities. Jay said the FRCOG is seen as a convener of collective boards, who could serve in some capacity in neighboring regions.

Linda suggested the FRCOG convene an emergency Council meeting to discuss with municipalities a possible PPE purchase and forming a re-opening guidance board, an initiative that partners public health workers and businesses figuring out how to reopen. Phoebe and Bill both advocated for cross-town and cross-county standards. Jim wondered if the FRCOG might be at cross-purposes, endeavoring to get the equipment businesses need to survive, but doing so without guidelines for the region. Jim felt the reopening seemed designed for failure, with businesses opening, people complaining, health agents coming and closing them. Phoebe reminded the committee that health agents have experience, and that communication systems are set up to push for clear guidance and clear standards. The legislative reopening board has a variety of leaders working together, not just boards of health. There is a support structure, said Linda.

With Executive Committee approval, Linda said FRCOG would try to take a lead in the collective purchase for businesses. Upfront funding will require a Council meeting. The quicker the purchase, the better, she said, adding that if the committee's not ready, they could wait until next week to decide.

Jay said because there have been many positive responses and there is strong interest in FRCOG accessing money for an initial purchase, as long as the businesses are paying for the goods we are buying, the Council will be on board with that. It's a good opportunity to bring everyone on board with our purpose. Bill said he had no problem with FRCOG purchasing, but doesn't want the FRCOG to do the job of the Chamber. Linda said the Chamber had reached out, not only to its members, but also to the broader community, with help from the Franklin County Community Development Corporation

(FCCDC) and the Communities Involved in Sustainable Agriculture (CISA). Members felt comfortable with scheduling a remote FRCOG Council meeting next week.

4. COVID time use update and FY20 year-end budget projections

Claire reported that staff are using the “COVID time” benefit primarily for release of work, because they can't be productive for reasons related to the pandemic. Staff have appreciated the benefit and have been respectful. Projections for the amount of funding needed for this benefit are holding.

Fin Com was advised to expect end-of-year budget amendments — not to the general fund, which would require approval of the full Council — but to municipal programs. The finance committee will make these amendments.

5. FRCOG use of state emergency response funding

Phoebe reported that FRCOG was named one of six crisis response affiliates for the state and received \$150,000 for response. FRCOG hired two new nurses, provided case management for 14 Cooperative Public Health Service member towns, plus four other towns (Northfield, among them, plans to join CPHS in July).

Over the last two months, the CPHS helped improve the statewide contact tracing collaborative; interpreted application and response to the Governor’s executive orders for various people and organized entities; ran public health newspaper ads; met frequently with the MA COVID command center, all health districts and boards of health, MA COVID response affiliates, the MAPHCO emergency prep coalition, and the MA coalition for local public health; and conferenced weekly with the healthcare stakeholders, MACC partners, and local public health nurses and agents who are part of the re-opening working group.

The FRCOG distributed funds to towns with their own PH Nursing programs, including \$40,000 to Greenfield, and various amounts to Wendell and Leverett. Future CARES Act funds will go directly to the towns. The CPHS will begin to stand down now as the state has evolved its contact tracing structure. The whole crisis response process revealed the workings of the state’s health systems and gave partners great insight into what needs to be done to change it, Phoebe added.

6. FCECS update

The COMIRS project of transferring the emergency communication system to the state was stalled while EOTTS did a capacity study that found that Franklin County needed a new system channel. The state has since funded the channel and is moving forward with the project. Barnstable and Franklin County will be the first to migrate. Recent modeling of existing coverage and upgraded coverage find it to be comparable. Although we know the service will likely be better, we need to make sure towns understand some communities will be without 100% coverage, even with the transfer, said Linda.

Radio purchasing begins in early FY21. EOTTS said grant funds will go to the FRCOG, who will do an inventory of types of radios and accessories and be responsible for the logistics of the radio purchasing. Bill added that staff will create a website for towns to use when ordering. This is delayed

because staff are swamped with HMCC activity during the coronavirus pandemic. The order sheet will be developed and prototyped soon.

Members wondered what the long-term continuing role of FRCOG will be as the transition is made. Linda said staff and FCECS oversight committee members are asking the same question. Likely, EOTTS will require each town department to have an MOU, and demand that FCECS use their protocols. EOTTS is hoping for a single point of contact. The FRCOG role might be that of the single point of contact for all departments. Discussions start in early June.

7. Business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance

Phoebe announced that four of the grants focused on policies systems and envisioning change were awarded to FRCOG to address social determinants of public health.

Bill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the April 9, 2020 meeting
- Slides: Draft CEDS Plan Overview
- Slides: COVID Emergency Funds for Franklin County