



NEWSLETTER: SUMMER 2020

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Advocacy & Administration

Organizational Assessment Study of FRCOG

The FRCOG hired Community Paradigm Associates to conduct an organizational assessment and recommend a leadership and staffing structure for the FRCOG that prepares for retirements of long-time staff. The team is currently reviewing several FRCOG documents; future work will include a staff survey, one on one meetings with staff, Council members, and partner organizations, as well as focus groups with Town Administrators. If you would like to be interviewed or part of a focus group, please let Linda know.

More Information: Linda Dunlavy at lindad@frcog.org or ext. 103.

Municipal Support Requested for Strengthening Local Public Health System

The ability of Massachusetts boards of health and health departments to respond to the pandemic has been hampered by a fractured and underfunded system. Unlike nearly every other state, each Massachusetts municipality operates its own board of health and receives no direct state funding for core functions. This contributes to inconsistent messaging, interpretation, data sharing, and capacity to enforce state COVID-19 guidelines and orders.

The FRCOG and the Cooperative Public Health District encourage select board members, mayors, and town administrators to advocate for accelerated state investment in our local public health system. Please join the state's professional public health nursing, health officer, environmental health, and health board associations' efforts by reviewing and signing-on to a letter to the Administration by clicking [here](#). Board of health members, nurses, and health agents/directors can sign on [here](#).



Economic Development

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The new five-year [2020 Franklin County CEDS Plan](#) was submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in June. To support implementation, FRCOG was awarded an EDA annual planning grant and invited to apply for a supplemental grant funded by the CARES Act. The application requested funds to address regional economic resilience, critical infrastructure, business technical assistance and project development support.

More Information: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.



Finance & Municipal Services

Water & Sewer Issues

On March 9th, Sen. Jo Comerford and the FRCOG facilitated a follow-up meeting to last November's water & sewer forum. The conversation focused on three main areas: aging and over-sized systems; limited/no infrastructure; and operator issues. Since then, FRCOG has been working to address the regional shortage of water operators by increasing access to pre-certification trainings; 10 Franklin County residents received a fee waiver to attend a virtual training, and additional trainings are being planned for the fall. The FRCOG continues to work to pursue funding and solutions for a number of the priority areas identified in the March and November meetings.

More Information: Amanda Doster at adoster@frcog.org or ext. 120.



Public & Community Health

Cooperative Public Health Service COVID-19 Response

FRCOG's [CPHS Health District](#) has worked diligently since the pandemic began. Two additional nurses were hired to assist with the contact tracing, isolation and quarantine work for the 14 member towns and three additional towns. As the numbers have slowed in the region, nurses have begun to plan for disease response when schools and colleges re-open. Staff are also planning drive-through flu clinics in many towns, which will also serve as drills for COVID vaccination clinics.

The district's health agents have been working with boards of health to educate business owners and the public about the ever-evolving [state reopening guidance](#). Restaurants, summer camps, and many workplaces are among those with numerous questions and need for support and information.

More Information: Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.



The CPHS helped develop signs promoting mask usage in the region.



Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness

COVID-19 Response

The [Emergency Preparedness Program](#) has worked since early March to assist municipal, public health and healthcare entities fight COVID-19. [Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition](#) (HMCC) staff worked on obtaining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from the Strategic National Stockpile and distributing it across western MA to frontline workers. As of June 30, we processed 531 PPE requests. In late May, EPP staff began helping local businesses and municipalities get the PPE and other supplies they needed to reopen through a bulk purchasing program. [MAPHCO](#) provides [risk messaging](#) that towns can use to get COVID messages out to their residents. And the [Multi-Agency Coordinating Center](#) (MACC) became operational for the first time. The MACC issued situation reports twice a week until the worst of the crisis was over. It is now operating virtually and ready to stand up at a moment's notice.

More Information: Tracy Rogers at emergencyprep@frcog.org or ext. 118.



The Bill Allen meeting room of the JWOTC served as our staging area for distribution throughout our regional PPE procurement initiative.



Transportation

Shared Streets and Spaces

MassDOT launched the Shared Streets and Spaces Program to provide cities and towns with funding to improve sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces, and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. Every city and town is encouraged to apply. The grants range from \$5,000 and \$300,000 for "quick-build" projects (can be completed within 15-30 days). Eligible projects should advance one or more of the following goals: increase safety and enable social distancing while walking and/or biking; complete roadway, sidewalk and/or street modifications to better support curbside/sidewalk/street retail and dining; support safer and more reliable bus transit; create safer routes to school, daycare and/or programs for children; or complete another type of innovative project. The projects can be temporary modifications or pilots of potentially permanent changes. Further information on the program can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>.

More Information: Beth Giannini at giannini@frcog.org or ext. 125.

MassWorks Grant Round

The Commonwealth has opened its 2020 MassWorks round for public infrastructure improvement project grants. **Applications are due Friday, August 28, 2020.** For details go to <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworks-infrastructure-program>. While FRCOG cannot assist in writing the application, we've created a general tip sheet to address common questions, which can be viewed at <https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Tips-for-MassWorks-Applications.pdf>.

More Information: Laurie Scarbrough at lscarbrough@frcog.org or ext. 132.



Climate Resilience

Regional Energy Planning Assistance (REPA) Green Communities Activities

This winter and spring FRCOG staff assisted five communities with applying for [Green Communities Competitive Grants](#) for municipal energy projects including LED streetlight conversions, HVAC improvements in municipal buildings, hybrid police cruisers, and an EV charging station. Grant announcements are expected in July. Staff assisted multiple towns with completing FY19 Annual Reports, and continue to support new Green Communities with moving forward on energy conservation projects. In June, staff were trained on a new municipal energy data analysis tool developed by [UMass Clean Energy Extension](#), and will be assisting four towns over the next year with analyzing municipal energy use to identify priorities for continued energy reduction efforts. This work is funded through a Regional Energy Planning Assistance (REPA) grant from the MA Department of Energy Resources. In June, FRCOG was awarded an additional \$18,000 under the REPA program to supplement the current budget through May 2021.

More Information: Alyssa Larose at alarose@frcog.org or ext. 127.

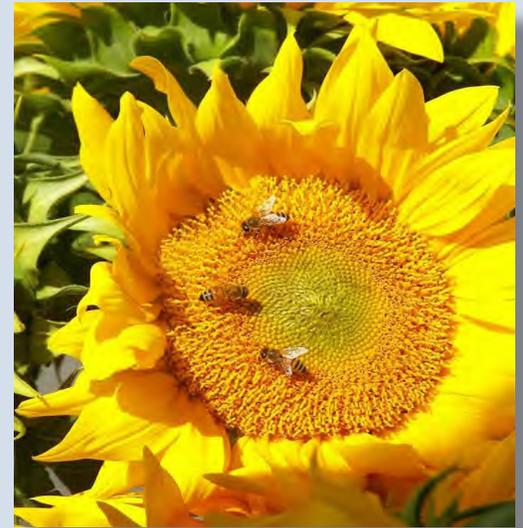


Land Use & Natural Resources

Regional Pollinator Plan

FRCOG has undertaken preliminary mapping and draft development of the Regional Pollinator Habitat Corridor Action Plan and has initiated outreach to stakeholders in the eight Franklin County towns that will be participating in the plan: Heath, Shelburne, Conway, Bernardston, Montague, Wendell, Greenfield and Orange. The stakeholder networks that we have reached out to are very actively working on this issue, have a lot of knowledge to bring to the table, and are excited to start the critical and creative planning work with us on this project. FRCOG staff will meet with town planning boards to update land-use regulations to foster more native plantings and pollinator-friendly management practices across Franklin County communities. Staff will meet with local and regional groups to inventory specific habitat resource areas and potential landscape strategies for each town to foster the resilience of native, wild pollinator species in Massachusetts as well as the sustainability of our local farms and food systems. A Pollinator Habitat Corridor Implementation Toolkit will be another key deliverable of the plan to help guide municipalities working independently to develop local level pollinator strategies that respond pro-actively to the stressors of climate change, pesticide use, and habitat loss.

More Information: Kimberly Noake MacPhee at kmacphee@frcog.org or ext. 130.



Nationwide, wild pollinators and managed bee varieties used for crop pollination have experienced challenges to their ability to survive and flourish.



Training & Education

Local Officials Workshops

Staff are currently planning for a limited series of virtual workshops in the fall, with topics and dates to be announced soon. Have ideas for the upcoming workshop series? We are particularly interested in topics suitable for a short & efficient virtual meeting, in light of the Zoom fatigue many people are experiencing.

Send suggestions & questions to: Amanda Doster at adoster@frcog.org or ext.120.



Staff Updates & Changes

The Partnership for Youth has hired a new Community Engagement and Programs Associate, **Keyedrya Jacobs**. Keyedrya will be helping to launch our new PEER (Parent Engagement, Enrichment, and Resources) Community Ambassador program, as well as helping with our new Advancing Racial Justice in Schools program and much more. We are excited to have this new position on our team and to have Keyedrya in this position. Welcome, Keyedrya!

