



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

COUNCIL — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, May 21, 2020/ 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Location:	Open meeting accessed remotely on Zoom by video, or by telephone
Facilitator:	Michele Giarusso, Chair

COUNCILOR ATTENDEES:

Stanley Garland, Bernardston; **Heather Butler**, Buckland; **Marguerite Willis**, Charlemont; **John O’ Rourke**, Conway; **Trevor McDaniel**, Deerfield; **William Bembury**, Erving; **Greg Snedeker**, Gill; **Danielle Letourneau**, Greenfield; **Hussain Hamdan**, Hawley; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **Patricia Duffy**, Leverett; **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Steve Ellis**, Montague; **Wayne Hachey**, New Salem; **Gabriele Voelker**, Orange , **Ellen McKay**, Shutesbury; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Michael Idoine**, Wendell; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regionally Elected; **Bill Perlman**, Regionally Elected; **Jim Basford**, FRPB.

REGRETS: **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **Robert Manners**, Shelburne; **Larry Pruyne**, Warwick. **ABSENT:** **Vacancy**, Ashfield; **Alice Houghtaling**, Monroe; **Alexander Meisner**, Northfield; **Janice Boudreau**, Rowe;

STAFF & VISITORS: **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Claire McGinnis**, Finance Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Admin Services Coordinator; **Tracy Rogers**, Emergency Prep Program Manager; **Bob Dean**, Director of Regional Services; **Phoebe Walker**, Director of Community Services; John Waite; Franklin County Community Development Corporation.

1. Call to order and Roll Call	Chair Michele Giarusso
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The chair convened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was met with 22 members and 83.842 % of the weighted vote of the total membership in attendance.

2. Adopt 1/30/20 minutes	Chair Michele Giarusso
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Ellen M. moved to adopt the minutes of the January 30, 2020 meeting. Lynn S. seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.

3. Discuss collective purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for Franklin County businesses, organizations and municipalities, and potential vote to use FRCOG funds for advance purchase	Linda Dunlavy
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Linda reported a recent state re-opening board meeting revealed that the Commonwealth would not be assisting towns or businesses with procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizing supplies, except to release a list of preapproved vendors. Linda had the idea that FRCOG’s procurement department and Health and Medical Coordinating Commission staff, experienced with disbursing medical equipment across 4 counties, might together be able to help the region safely reopen during the pandemic with a collective PPE purchase and distribution effort.

Staff gauged regional interest with a survey of Franklin County Chamber of Commerce (FCCC) members, asking if they thought that a.) their business or organization would struggle to find PPE, and

b.) a collective purchase could obtain equipment at a lower cost. Of 100 responses, 90+ entities felt a collective procurement would be very helpful. From the Governor's list of pre-qualified vendors, staff requested pricing. For assistance, FRCOG reached out to not only the FCCC, but also to Communities Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), and the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC) -- because they have direct contact with businesses in the region, unlike FRCOG, and because they, too, wanted to help.

Linda met with Tracy Rogers and her team last week to come up with a potential plan. Tracy told Councilors that the focus is on helping businesses, non-profit agencies, and the 26 towns, all opening soon in some limited capacity. Using the Governor's guidelines, staff matched these entities with the projected multiple rounds of procurement, prioritizing those deemed essential. Staff estimated the numbers of employees in towns using the FRCOG Wage and Salary survey, not including public safety employees (already outfitted) or committee and board members in the totals. They found one vendor that can provide everything for the initial purchase except cloth masks.

Asked about funding and reimbursement, Linda explained that this would not be a giveaway. All entities will need to pay for the PPE, but FRCOG hopes to be able to advance money for purchases to assist those reopening, and will need to move fast to do so. She asked if the Council will allow FRCOG to put up free cash for the first-round purchase. Acknowledging that fronting the money is not completely risk-free, Linda said that businesses and agencies must sign an agreement promising to pay back the PPE costs. Money paid back, in essence, would become a revolving account for more purchases in the future. Staff identified an initial PPE cost estimate of \$32,000 for the 26 municipalities. For this initiative, the finance committee approved use of up to \$100,000 from the undesignated fund balance, the current balance of which is greater than \$600,000.

If approved, staff would get order forms out to municipalities tomorrow, as would the FCCC to its members, allowing only a brief turnaround time for signing an agreement to the terms and conditions. Payment would be due in 30 days. Vendors will know that they need to use OSHA and CDC approved PPE, but the agreement states that FRCOG will not be held liable in any way. The transit center, closed to the public, can be used for storage and distribution. The product will be kept in a windowless room, and the distribution process will not require person-to-person contact.

Tom F. said the purchase was a great initiative. Marguerite W. suggested periodic reevaluation. Staff promised reassessment before every order to be sure that staff are finding needed products at good prices and that FRCOG is being reimbursed. Tracy said they hoped to get enough PPE for staff at places looking to open and for town meeting and election workers and participants. She explained that supplies -- masks, non-latex gloves, surgery masks, hand sanitizer and wipes, thermometers, and some Face shields -- can be had within a week. Jim B. expressed concern that the FRCOG might become a collection agency. Councilors and staff strategized payment mechanisms and methods. Linda reiterated that the goal of the initiative, optional for all entities, was to be effective and of service, but to achieve that, and to get town meeting supplies in time the FRCOG needs to move quickly.

Hussein H. suggested a motion to spend up to \$100,000 of the undesignated fund balance for a purchase of PPE for municipalities, businesses, and nonprofits in the region. Marguerite W. suggested halving the amount of the motion, and that the FRCOG use of up to \$50,000 for the purchase. She suggested that after 60 days, we would know more about what's needed.

Hussein H. made a motion to spend up to \$50,000 from the undesignated fund balance for procurement of PPE for municipalities, businesses, and nonprofits in the region. Ellen seconded the motion, which carried with all in favor (81.315%).

Jay D. thanked Linda, Tracy, and the staff for their quick thinking regarding the challenges of obtaining PPE, and for creating this tremendous proposal to assist the towns and others.

4. Discussion of other FRCOG activities and municipal needs.

Linda Dunlavy

Rental and Small Business Assistance

Greenfield Planner MJ Adams introduced the Mayor’s initiative to help towns access CARES Act funds for low and moderate-income rental assistance and micro-enterprise assistance during the pandemic. A letter went out to all towns and M.J. invited anyone interested to reach out for more information.

CEDS Plan

Linda told members that the draft 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Plan was available for public review, and encouraged Councilors and their colleagues to respond with comments or suggestions for changes by using the link on the FRCOG website.

Emergency Communication System Transition

Recent modeling confirmed concerns that capacity might be a problem for Franklin County once everyone transitions to the state emergency communication system, but the state is committed to adding a channel for Franklin County. The project was slowed by COVID, and radio purchases won’t begin until FY21, with priority given according to the migration plan. FRCOG staff are creating a web-based application, so towns may order what's needed online. Linda reminded Councilors that this initiative is funded through state cell phone bills. Thus, there’s no danger of losing funding for the transition or for the state’s promised purchase of radios for towns, as it is not in the state budget.

MACC

The Franklin County Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) is transitioning from being primarily an emergency response organization to a recovery assistance organization. It has expanded to include businesses and organizations and is assisting with safety precautions and other reopening issues. The MACC will not fold yet, in the event that reopening sparks a new flare-up of disease.

5. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance

Linda Dunlavy

No new business was discussed.

Stan G. made a motion to adjourn, Ellen M seconded. The motion passed with all in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:25 PM.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the January 30, 2020 meeting
- April 2020 FRCOG Programmatic Updates: The COVID-19 Response

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.