Advocacy

Thanks to Senators Hinds and Comerford, a recently passed IT Bond includes a provision to study cell phone service coverage in counties with a population density of less than 500 people per square mile (Berkshire and Franklin Counties) and significant funding for capital improvements. The project is a primary goal from the Rural Policy Plan’s telecommunications chapter; we are working closely with both senate offices to move this project forward.

The FRCOG participates in a coalition working to pass legislation known as the Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community (SAPHE 2.0) Act, which responds to lessons learned in the pandemic by accelerating investment in and the modernization of the local public health infrastructure in MA, as recommended by the Special Commission on Local and Regional Health. The Bill is supported by Reps Whipps, Mark, and Blais and Senators Hinds and Comerford (lead sponsor). We encourage town officials and boards to sign on as members of the coalition here: https://mapublichealth.org/saphe2-0/.

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

Economic Development

**FDA Economic Development District Supplemental Award**

FRCOG successfully applied for a supplemental U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) planning grant funded through the federal CARES Act. The two-year, $400,000 grant will fund the following activities:

- **Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan** - Staff will develop a plan with strategic partners that focuses on experiences from the current crisis and prepares the region to withstand and recover quickly from future economic shocks.
- **CEDS Project Technical Assistance** - Staff will provide assistance to municipalities, non-profits, and other stakeholders to support the development, securing of resources, and implementation of projects consistent with the 2020 CEDS Plan.
- **Business Technical Assistance Services** - Direct business technical assistance to entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations in Franklin County that need support in responding to changing conditions due to the pandemic.
- **Public Water & Wastewater Critical Infrastructure Study** – A contractor will inventory public water & wastewater infrastructure and related systems across the county to identify gaps and barriers to development, and make recommendations.

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

Transportation

**Regional Pedestrian Plan**

The FRCOG is updating the regional Pedestrian Plan by examining infrastructure, related concerns, and potential improvements. It also provides information and recommendations to create an environment where walking is a practical and pleasant transportation option. The draft plan will be available for review on the FRCOG website.

More Information: Beth Giannini at giannini@frcog.org or ext. 125.
**Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness**

**Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS) Update**

We have made progress in our effort to migrate emergency communications to the state’s system before our regionally owned system fails. We anticipate transition activities to ramp up weekly; migration will begin in the January-February timeframe. Recent progress has included:

- The MA Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) announced the $2.7m grant process that will allow Franklin County public safety stakeholders to receive their per radio credit to offset the cost of migration. The grant application will be sent to the FRCOG once all memoranda of agreement between FRCOG and users have been signed.
- EOTSS expanded the funding that Franklin County will receive so that the county has funding to program all radios, and for radio installation.

**More information**: Dan Nietsche at DNietsche@frcog.org or ext. 105.

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**Climate Resilience**

**Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans**

FRCOG staff recently submitted Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans for Ashfield, Buckland, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, Leverett, and Whately to MEMA/FEMA for review and will submit plans for Bernardston, Colrain, Monroe, Shelburne, Sunderland, and Orange after the public comment period closes. Final approval of these plans by FEMA ensures towns maintain eligibility for pre- and post-disaster grant funding for the next five years.

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

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**Public & Community Health**

**Regional COVID Response**

FRCOG serves as a Massachusetts Regional COVID Emergency Response Affiliate. This has included distributing funds to support local public health response across the county in FY20, convening stakeholders, and bringing concerns and input back to the state. This work in the last quarter has included:

- A workshop on local COVID testing featuring presenters from Baystate Health Systems, Community Health Center of Franklin County, and Valley Medical Group.
- Regional meetings convening school nurses and public health nurses to work out good communication systems for COVID case investigations in school settings.
- Printing of new signage for distribution (let us know if you want some by calling the FRCOG at 413-774-3167 ext.1)
- Bi-weekly COVID Coordination Roundtables open to all municipal officials to discuss the latest state guidance and share concerns and best practices with each other. Click here for a flyer for the series.
- Gathering and distributing information on the municipal role in approving Remote Learning Enrichment Programs. Click here to view.

**Flu Clinics**

The Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) is offering influenza vaccines (with no insurance co-pay) to all area residents at 12 flu clinics in member towns. All of the clinics are either pivoting to a drive-through mode, or are indoors with a great deal of social distancing. District Nurses Lisa White and Melanie Zamojski are deeply grateful for the many teams of board of health members, EMDs, EMS, police, Medical Reserve Corps and other volunteers that are making it possible to meet the enormous demand and the significant challenges of flu clinic season this year. To see the full schedule, visit www.frcog.org/flu-clinic.

**More information**: Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.
Land Use & Natural Resources

**Housing Access Grant**
FRCOG was awarded a 5-year grant from the Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds to implement a multi-faceted Housing Access project in the region. The Housing Access project falls within the MA DPH’s priority to work on long-lasting, community-driven policy, systems, and environmental changes that will make it easier to lead healthy lives and which will reduce health inequities. FRCOG Planning staff’s role in the project will be to provide in-depth and sustained support to municipalities to help move housing initiatives forward such as addressing abandoned housing, utilizing CPA funds for housing, and passing zoning changes to support a diversity of housing options.

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

Finance & Municipal Services

**IT and Cybersecurity Services Feasibility Study**
Over the summer, IT firm Novus presented the results of the Regional IT and Cybersecurity Services Feasibility Study to the 10 towns who had participated earlier this year. The study maps out a 3-phase approach to building a regional IT and cybersecurity program. The FRCOG is currently seeking funding to implement Phase 1 of the study, which will consist of a series of capacity building workshops for municipalities. The full study and a condensed version of the report, are available upon request.

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

**Annual Report**
The FRCOG’s 2019 Annual Report development was hindered by the pandemic, and as a result, this year’s Annual Report is less robust than in prior years. The 2019 Annual Report is now available on the FRCOG’s web site, but hard copies were not made this year. We intend to be back on our game for the 2020 report.

Training & Education

**Local Officials Workshops**
Up next: FinCom 101 on November 5th; OSHA for Town Administrators on November 12th; and a collaborative webinar with the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative. Keep an eye out for registration emails going out shortly!

Materials from all municipal workshops are available at: https://frcog.org/program-services/municipal-resources/. Have ideas for the upcoming workshop series? Let us know by contacting Amanda Doster, Regional Projects Coordinator, at adoster@frcog.org or ext. 120.

Staff Updates

We welcome **Lauri Solomon** as a member of the Emergency Preparedness Program team. Some of you may know Lauri from her role several years ago on the Communities That Care Coalition (at that time, her name was Turkovsky). Lauri has worked in public health for over twenty years and became involved with emergency preparedness while working for the Washington State Dept. of Health where she chaired the state’s Security and Emergency Management Committee. She will work on many projects within the Emergency Preparedness Program, and will be the primary point of contact for the Mohawk Area Public Health Coalition. You can reach Lauri at LSolomon@frcog.org or ext. 110.

We also welcome **Sage Shea**, newest member of the Partnership For Youth team. Sage joins the staff as the Coalition Technical Assistance and Evaluation Coordinator, working on the teen health survey and evaluating Communities That Care projects and as part of a team that provides coaching and support to youth prevention coalitions across the state. They (Sage uses they/them pronouns - click here if you’d like to learn more) come to us with a wealth of data analysis, web design, and graphic design skills. Sage can be reached at sshea@frcog.org or ext. 107.

Have a safe and happy fall from all of us at the FRCOG! www.frcog.org