



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee, Franklin County Economic Development District Governing Board, & Finance Committee —*MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, June 11, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.
Location:	Remote meeting using videoconferencing technology
Facilitator:	Bill Perlman, Exec Com Chair; Lynn Sibley, Fin Com Chair

Executive Committee/EDD Board Representatives Present:

- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Jim Basford, FRPB Appointee
- Danielle Letourneau, Council Appointee (alt.)

Finance Committee Representatives Present:

- Lynn Sibley, Whately
- Michelle Giarusso, Leyden
- John O’ Rourke, Conway
- Ellen McKay, Shutesbury

Staff Members Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Jessica Atwood, Econ. Dev. Program Manager

1. Review and adopt 5.14.20 Executive Committee and 5.20.20 Finance Committee minutes

Lynn Sibley convened the Finance Committee meeting at 5:06 p.m. **John moved adoption of the 5.20.20 minutes as presented. Ellen seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.**

Bill Perlman opened the Executive Committee meeting at 5:44 p.m. **Jim made a motion to adopt the minutes of 5.14.20. Bill seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.**

2. Executive Committee Convene as Economic Development District Governing Board for 2020 Franklin County CEDS Plan review of final draft and vote to adopt

Before the CEDS presentation, Jessica alerted the group that FRCOG had submitted an US Economic Development Administration (EDA) application for non-competitive, supplemental funding made available through from the CARES Act for up to \$400,000 for EDD planning. If awarded, this funding could assist the EDD with such initiatives as an economic recovery and resilience plan; business technical assistance; a water/wastewater critical infrastructure plan; and CEDS Project technical assistance.

2020 Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan

Jessica reported that comments received during the 30-day public comment period were incorporated into the plan. Revisions involved fixing minor typos and making clarifications; fixing the 2018 Average

Annual Pay by MA Counties chart; adding updated COVID-19-related information, adding photos, and doing final formatting. Substantive content changes included:

- Updating COVID-19 timeline and adding Reopening Massachusetts phases graphic and photo
- Updating monthly labor force, unemployment, and UI Claimant data
- Noting the importance of seasonal guest workers in the Agriculture industry section
- Adding a section on child- and elder-care services as factors which impact economic performance
- Incorporating more info from the original proposal profile into the Action Plan description
- Amending project information in the Action Plan table
- Adding the Greenfield anaerobic digester and the food security infrastructure projects to the Action Plan table
- Highlighting 13 projects of the total 50 as those with the greatest potential for transformative regional impact
- Adding town-level demographic data tables

Regarding COVID-specific updates to labor force data, the CEDS reports that in March and April the region suffered an 11% decline in labor and a 330% increase in the number of unemployed. The greatest number of unemployment claims came from those who work in food services, healthcare and social services, retail, manufacturing, and construction.

Jessica explained that, the final CEDS Plan was approved by the CEDS Committee at their 6.8.20 meeting. If adopted by this body, the Franklin Regional Planning Board will vote to endorse the CEDS Plan on 6.25.20, and the Plan will then be submitted to the US EDA by June 30. Bill said it was an outstanding piece of work and that he learned a tremendous amount.

Jim moved to adopt the final draft of the CEDS Plan. Danielle seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3. Review of COVID time and extension discussion.

The cost of the COVID-19 benefit over the past 12-weeks was \$16,000 and the estimated projection for remaining time to spend the approved \$30,000 is 10 more weeks. Claire asked if the committee wished to extend the period for staff use into FY21.

Linda explained that the benefit was originally created for use by staff with remote-work childcare issues; for those who might have trouble staying busy while working at home, inspectors among them; and for staff who became ill or needed to quarantine, making it hard to do their work. She reported that the benefit predominantly is used by staff with children.

Ellen moved to extend the previously approved COVID-time benefit (release from work for reasons related to the pandemic) into FY21, capped at the originally approved \$30,000. John seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

4. Review PPE purchases and clarify meaning of full Council's motion

Linda reminded the committees that the Council approved a multi-round collective procurement of personal protection equipment (PPE) for local businesses, non-profit agencies, and municipalities, to help them with reopening. The first round has been purchased and was distributed yesterday. FRCOG could not buy taxable products, so the county Chamber of Commerce funded a \$5150 purchase for 13 taxable entities and FRCOG funded the \$33,330 purchase for 28 tax-exempt entities. Invoices for round one are to be sent this week and FRCOG is now accepting orders for round two, as towns have firmed up their town meetings and election needs.

Linda asked members of both committees to clarify the meaning of the May 21 Council vote approving use of up to \$50,000 for PPE. She asked: Was the Council referring to a \$50,000 *spending cap*? Was \$50,000 *the upper limit of money due to FRCOG at any time*? Or did it refer to a \$50,000 *potential impact to the general fund -- a total loss*?

Lynn said she interpreted the vote as a mandate that FRCOG never have a financial investment of more than \$50,000. Members agreed on this, feeling that the full Council understood that FRCOG would use the money received from first-round invoicing to buy the next round of equipment -- that the \$50,000 was intended to be a cap on expense outstanding. Linda reported that \$33,330 of the \$50,000 has been spent so far, and as of 3 o'clock this afternoon, \$10,000 worth of equipment has been ordered for round two. The balance today is \$43,330, but because round two ordering ends tomorrow, it may not be an issue, she said. Invoices will go out this week.

Both the Finance and Executive Committees agreed that the Council vote meant that the FRCOG should not have more than \$50,000 due to it from the entities ordering PPE at any time. Members expressed frustration with the limitations of the Council amendment, which halved the original \$100,000 motion. Linda added that the FRCOG would continue to do a PPE collective purchase until there is no longer an interest, or there is evidence that pricing is not improved with FRCOG involvement.

5. Regional Services Assessment discussion

Anticipating local aid cuts in the state budget, five or six towns have asked if FRCOG is making changes or reductions to the regional service assessment. Towns are feeling the budget pressures as they navigate into FY21. Currently the regional services assessment is a 1% increase. Claire asked the Finance Committee if FRCOG should take action and reduce the assessment now, or look ahead to FY22, which may be worse. She suggested a commitment to level funding FY22 could happen now.

Linda reported that the finance department anticipates a very strong end to FY20. Possible options for assisting towns include a rebate, which is limiting for towns; doing nothing now and seeing how FY21 goes, possibly reducing assessments down the road; or reducing them now by more than 1%.

Michelle offered that the committee wait-and-see what happens to local aid, as there are rumors of 20 to 25% cuts. The consensus of Finance Committee members was to come back to the idea of exploring a reduction in regional services once more is known about the state budget impacts.

6. Business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting

Ellen moved Finance Committee adjournment. John seconded the motion. Danielle moved Executive Committee adjournment, Jim seconded. Both meetings adjourned at 6:08 PM.

Documents Distributed:

- **Agenda**
- **Draft 5.14.20 Executive Committee minutes**
- **Draft 5.20.20 Finance Committee minutes**
- **Slides: Draft CEDS Plan Overview**
- **Slides: COVID Emergency Funds for Franklin County**