



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## COUNCIL — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, October 15, 2020/ 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Location:	Open meeting accessed remotely on Zoom by video, or by telephone
Facilitator:	Trevor McDaniel, Chair

### COUNCILOR ATTENDEES:

**Jennifer Morse**, Ashfield; **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; **Heather Butler**, Buckland (5:42 p.m.); **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **Philip Kantor**, Conway; **Trevor McDaniel**, Deerfield; **Greg Snedeker**, Gill; **Patricia Duffy**, Leverett; **Steve Ellis**, Montague; **Wayne Hachey**, New Salem; **Bee Jacque**, Northfield **Jane Peirce**, Orange, **Robert Manners**, Shelburne; **Ellen McKay**, Shutesbury; **Michael Idione**, Wendell; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regionally Elected; **Bill Perlman**, Regionally Elected; **Jim Basford**, FRPB.

**REGRETS:** **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Janice Boudreau**, Rowe; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately.

**ABSENT:** **Roxann Wedegartner**, Greenfield; **Hussein Hamdan**, Hawley; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **Sarah Reynolds**, Charlemont; **Alice Houghtaling**, Monroe; **William Bembury**, Erving; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Larry Pruyne**, Warwick;

**STAFF:** **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Claire McGinnis**, Finance Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Admin Services Coordinator; **Dan Nietzsche**, Emergency Prep Coordinator. **VISITORS:** **Philippe Simon**, GCTV.

### 1. Call to order and roll call

Chair Trevor McDaniel

The chair convened the meeting at 5:32 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was met with 17 members and 54.477% of the weighted vote of the total membership in attendance. One member arrived after roll call (5:42 p.m.), bringing the number up to 18 members present and 56.946%.

### 2. Adopt 7/16/20 minutes

Chair, Trevor McDaniel

**Bill P. moved to adopt the minutes of the July 16, 2020 meeting. Ellen M. seconded the motion, which passed with one abstention and all other members voting in favor.**

### 3. Council Update

Chair, Trevor McDaniel

Trevor welcomed new Council members Philip Kantor, Conway Select Board member, and Barbara Jacque, Northfield Select Board member. He announced that all FY21 Council meetings will be held in Zoom until further notice. Remaining FY21 Council Meetings: January 28, 2021 and April 15, 2021.

A Zoom orientation session for new members outlining the responsibilities of the Council and reviewing our operations and finances is scheduled for Thursday, November 19 at 5:30 p.m. All members are welcome to attend the session. An invitation is forthcoming.

### 4. Executive Committee Update

Jay DiPucchio

Jay reported that since the last Council meeting, the FRCOG Executive Committee:

- Learned of the progress of the Franklin County’s emergency communication migration to the Commonwealth’s interoperable radio system (CoMIRS). The Committee reviewed and offered suggestions for edits for a Memorandum of Agreement between the state and FRCOG, regarding operations. The agreement indicates, among other things, that FRCOG will act as the contact between the towns and the state, as well as manage grants, assist the towns with procurement of radio equipment, and assess costs for system users. The committee also reviewed the MOAs between FRCOG and the 26 Franklin County municipalities.
- Learned of past negotiations and the future “High Ground” lease agreement between the state Department of Conservation and Recreation and the FRCOG for FCECS equipment. FRCOG leases land on behalf of the county’s emergency communication system users for placement of radio towers and equipment.
- Considered adding Juneteenth (June 19, the nationally recognized celebration of the end of slavery) as an employee holiday.
- Convened as the Economic Development District Governing Board to make a CEDS committee appointment.
- Received a petition and discussed public hearing logistics during the pandemic for relocation of Conway, Summer, and South Streets; and Conway Road in Buckland.

## 5. Executive Director Update

Linda Dunlavy

Linda briefed the Council on recent FRCOG programmatic initiatives (*See Council Updates for details*), including the following:

**Vaccination Planning** FRCOG Director of Community Services, Phoebe Walker was appointed to a seat on a state board that will plan how a vaccination will be distributed across the state.

**Organizational Assessment Study** Community Paradigm Associates is conducting the FRCOG Organizational Assessment to recommend a leadership and staffing structure that matches the agency’s evolution and structure, and prepares for upcoming retirements. The team is examining FRCOG documents; and interviewing staff, Council committee members, and community stakeholders, in its efforts to understand the agency’s historical arc and before making recommendations.

**Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Community Grants** Congratulations to Heath and Leyden for receiving MVP Planning Grants to complete the process to become designated MVP Communities! With the work currently underway and planned FY21 for Franklin County, 22 of our 26 towns will be MVP communities.

**Economic Development District Supplemental Award** FRCOG successfully applied for a supplemental EDA planning grant funded through the federal CARES Act. The two-year, \$400,000 grant, will fund an Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan, CEDS project technical assistance, local business technical assistance services, and the Public Water & Wastewater Critical Infrastructure Study

**Collective Purchasing** Pricing for road salt for the 52 participant towns was favorable this summer, primarily due to low fuel costs. Towns are starting to use “treated salt,” which is rock salt treated with liquid magnesium chloride (LMC) or LMC with a sticky organic byproduct added. Look for colorful distillery treatments of molasses, beet juice, and a xanthan gum on county roads this winter.

**Flu Clinics** The flu season is beginning, and during the pandemic, all of the clinics will be offered as a drive-through or held indoors with social distancing. Find the schedule on our website.

### **Education Reform Bill**

Linda explained that legislators are reworking the school funding formula as part of an education reform initiative, and that among the changes being considered is elimination of the “hold harmless” provision. Because so much of the formula is based on enrollment, rural schools currently held harmless stand to lose funding. She shared a letter she is writing to DESE, DOR, and DLS, and asked for suggestions for additional commentary from counselors.

Town representatives requested that the state:

- Factor in the town’s true financial health
- Discontinue use of zip codes as a driving force in the formula
- Use a minimum contribution formula that allows for long-range education planning
- Create a more progressive formula

Counselors further asked the state to consider the financial hardship for small, rural towns created by the inadequate special education (sped) circuit breaker reimbursement and the unreimbursed costs of school transportation.

<b>6. Planning Board Update</b>
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Jim Basford
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Jim reported that in September the Planning Board learned of issues related to zoning for small homes and accessory dwelling units, some of which are impediments to the area providing affordable housing. The Board also discussed plans for and the impacts of large-scale solar facilities.

<b>7. Finance Committee Update – Fiscal Review Report</b>
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Vice Chair, Kevin Fox & Claire McGinnis
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Kevin acknowledged the diligence of FRCOG staff and its director to meet challenges during this difficult year. He reported that the Finance Committee took a dry run through the *Fiscal Review for FY22 Budget Development*, and gave it its approval.

Claire then walked the Council through the *Review* highlighting the following:

- FY20 ended with a \$200,000+ general fund surplus, in part due to additional unexpected grants and the indirect revenue generated from them.
- The Public Health (CPHS), Town Accounting, and the Emergency Communication System (FCECS) municipal programs ended the year in deficit, using some retained earnings with the approval of the Finance Committee, while Collective Purchasing and Cooperative Inspections both finished in surplus.
- FY21 is financially stable. FRCOG began the year with unaudited fund balance of \$1,148,186.
- Projections for FY22 are difficult to make. The state may have a budget deficit as the largest state revenue is payroll taxation and the pandemic has created a recession. The state had not yet approved a FY21 budget, creating uncertainty in state aid for FY21 and FY22.
- Staff anticipate either level-funding or only minimally increasing municipal assessments to towns.
- The Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) fund is projected to be 80% funded by FY25, with 5% of payroll budgeted annually as a contribution to the fund.

Claire offered her email, [cmcginnis@frcog.org](mailto:cmcginnis@frcog.org), for further feedback; FY22 budgeting will begin in earnest in November.

## **8. Personnel Committee Update**

Bill Perlman

Bill reported that the Personnel Committee is bringing the following proposed employment definition language to the Council for a first reading:

*Location: Unless specifically notated otherwise in an employee's job description, the primary work location for all employees is the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA.*

The rationale for the *FRCOG Personnel Policy* edit, Bill explained, is that communication abilities and efficiencies are sometimes lost when employees are not working in the same location. Formal and informal exchanges are primarily easier, particularly between mentor and mentee, when employees share physical spaces. Important details can be left off when technology is solely used to communicate, and morale suffers as well. This has always been the unwritten policy at FRCOG, but the COVID crisis made evident the need to formalize the policy.

Trevor M. and Steve E. both expressed their approval for the language, which signals with clarity, FRCOG's intentions to regroup fully in the Greenfield office, when the state of emergency restrictions are lifted. The Personnel Committee will bring the language to the January meeting for a second reading and Council vote.

## **9. CoMIRS (Commonwealth Interoperable Radio System) migration update and Q&A session**

Dan briefed the Council on recent steps taken towards migration. He explained that a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was created between FRCOG and EOTTS, stating that FRCOG will be the single point of contact for relaying user issues to the state. An MOA between FRCOG and the towns was crafted next, and to date, all but four MOAs have been returned.

When all MOAs are returned, EOTTS will supply \$2.7m in grant funding for equipment. EOTTS has completed statewide procurement for four different radio models. The agency will provide towns with base models, but towns can choose to upgrade, paying for their upgrades using state-contracted pricing. FRCOG will place radio orders for towns, and invoice the towns for any upgrades. FRCOG will hold a "show and tell" equipment fair at the transit center soon.

Councilors and staff discussed state and local radio preferences; concern that FRCOG will make the up-front payment for radio upgrades without town reimbursement; FRCOG's efforts to encourage police and fire chiefs to build the radio system migration costs into their FY21 budgets; the idea of conducting a municipal Finance Committee CoMIRS forum vs. the idea of crafting concise, clear messaging to help influence municipal finance committee decisions; the problem of coverage in public buildings and use of digital vehicle repeaters to expand poor coverage; and the possibility that FRCOG might obtain a portable repeater for towns to test in buildings to see if coverage issues diminish.

Linda explained that FRCOG has dedicated funding for Dan to oversee the migration and has begun a migration plan revision. Soon staff will survey the towns to determine financial readiness, a factor in the rollout order. Members felt relieved and encouraged by the CoMIRS migration progress, and expressed support for FRCOG's work towards that end.

No unanticipated business was discussed.

**Ellen M. made a motion to adjourn, Greg S. seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 6:54 PM.**

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the July 16, 2020 meeting
- October 2020 FRCOG Council/Programmatic Updates
- Personnel Policy First Reading: Work Location Language
- *Fiscal Review for FY22 Budget Development*

*Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.*