



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Joint Executive & Finance Committee —*MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 5:00-6:30 p.m.
Location:	Remote meeting using videoconferencing technology
Facilitator:	<b>Jay DiPucchio, Lynn Sibley; Chairs</b>

### Executive Committee Representatives Present:

- Jay DiPucchio, Chair, Regionally Elected
- Jim Basford, FRPB Appointee
- Dani Letourneau, Greenfield Representative
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected (5:08 p.m.)
- Kevin Fox, Colrain Representative

### Finance Committee Representatives Present:

- Lynn Sibley, Chair, Whately Representative
- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected
- Kayce Warren, Deerfield Representative
- Ellen McKay, Shutesbury Representative
- Kevin Fox, Colrain Representative
- Michele Giarusso, Leyden Rep., (5:10 p.m.)

### Staff Members and Guests Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Kimberly Noake McPhee, Land Use & Natural Resources Program Manager
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Peggy Sloan, Planning & Economic Dev Director

<b>1. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Review and adopt 12.10.20 minutes</b>	Jay
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Jay convened the Executive Committee meeting at 5:03 p.m. **Jim moved adoption of the 12.10.20 minutes. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.**

<b>2. FINANCE COMMITTEE: Review and adopt 12.10.20 minutes</b>	Lynn
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Lynn convened the Finance Committee meeting at 5:04 p.m. **Jay moved adoption of the 12.10.20 minutes. Ellen seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor.**

<b>3. Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC) relicensing and budgeting</b>
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Staff members Peggy Sloan and Kimberly Noake McPhee reviewed FirstLight Power’s application for a 50-year license renewal for its hydroelectric facilities in Northfield and Turners Falls. They explained that the company did not propose any mitigation measures for streambank erosion, which FRCOG and other partnering agencies have recommended in the past. Water quality and critical habitat impacts are also a concern, which FRCOG staff and the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) have filed with FERC after years of monitoring. The proposal for enhancement of recreational areas was minimal, and the power company offered no plans to make them American Disability Act (ADA) compliant, although at the Northfield Pumping station, they plan to move the boat ramp to install a net and pipe. FRCOG plans to file for intervener status, with Executive Committee approval. Staff will work with towns, the CRC, and the legislative delegation to press for the needs of the region. Lawmakers have

hired a consultant to review the erosion studies. Stakeholders will meet with the state Department of Environmental Protection next week. Staff feel confident that their continued advocacy has scientific underpinnings and that FERC has proven reason to issue a robust license. Bill requested that staff seek help from ADA, and look into state ADA laws that might assist them in their work.

Linda reported that \$10,000 was included in the FY22 budget so FRCOG can continue its now 17-year leadership role in FERC relicensing and erosion control related to the hydroelectric facility. Depending on town feedback, DLTA grant funds might be used in FY21. She estimated the need for \$7000 this fiscal year and another \$10,000 in FY22. Kimberly explained that staff will file for intervener status, and once FirstLight files for their 401-water quality certificate, the 1-year clock starts ticking, when staff will be fully engaged in the project for the remainder of FY21 and into FY22.

Members questioned why FirstLight is asking to increase the pumped storage capacity, but not acknowledging river impacts. The company has burnished their image as a clean energy alternative, staff reported, ignoring the evidence, and calling erosion a result of "high-flow events." Stakeholders have asked the corporation to explore the feasibility of using a closed-loop system, but FirstLight is resistant. Members of both committees expressed approval for FRCOG's continued advocacy and invited Peg and Kimberly back for an update.

#### **4. Commonwealth Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS) developments and migration budgeting**

Linda reported that the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) has agreed and staff have submitted an application for upgrades to dispatch centers in Greenfield and Montague.

A \$62,000 firefighter grant recently applied for may help with the seven departments asking to participate in that grant.

Staff are working to be sure that Town Administrators and emergency response departments are on the same page and that all towns send orders to FRCOG. Once received, FRCOG will place radio orders with the vendors and communicate the contents of those orders to EOTTS. EOTTS will then reimburse FRCOG the base cost of the radio units. FRCOG will bill municipalities for add-on radio units and add-on options.

The EOTTS grant currently states that the equipment must be in hand by June 30, but staff understand some towns will not have the funding until the next fiscal year.

Michele explained that in Leyden, the Motorola and Kenwood were not tested everywhere, putting the police department on edge about which to order. Linda directed Michele to FRCOG staff Dan Nietzsche, who has radios the town can use for testing. She added that Leyden's order could be among the last placed so there is time for testing. Towns with already appropriated money will be included in the first radio order, and with close attention paid to town meeting dates, FRCOG will prioritize the other towns. After hearing that one town requested a multiyear, 0% interest loan from FRCOG for radio costs, members discussed what they felt would be prudent for FRCOG. Some felt 60 days should be sufficient time to reimburse FRCOG.

## 5. FRCOG COVID-19 Vaccination involvement and budgeting

Reminding the committees that plans at all levels change daily, Linda outlined the current thinking regarding FRCOG vaccination involvement. Although the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) serves only some towns comprehensively, people in all towns need vaccinating, so FRCOG is serving all towns. CPHS and Emergency Prep budgets will be used, with hopes for federal grant to further fund the initiative. Staff estimate it will cost \$200,000, with a maximum FRCOG expense of \$40 to \$50 K.

**During Phase 1** – (Vaccinate essential workers, Jan- Feb)

**FRCOG will:**

- Work with private providers, pharmacies and doctors' offices as well as UMASS, to determine the best vaccinating sites and the logistical issues for use. (The thought is that 60% of all vaccinations will be handled by these groups).
- Encourage local boards of health to get involved with assisting with the next phase
- Look for three locations across the county where FRCOG can vaccinate, while considering the storage and use particulars of each unique vaccine when planning
- Recruit volunteers and get them CORI and SORI checked

**During Phase 2** – (Vaccinate elders 75+; then 65+ with 2 medical conditions, Feb-March)

**FRCOG will:**

- Assist with regional clinic coordination, which could include scheduling, logistical planning, finding volunteers (primarily medical reservists), and networking

**During Phase 3** – (Vaccinate the general public, April-June)

**FRCOG will:**

- Vaccinate residents indoors with Greenfield and others, using pre-scheduled appointments
- Open 3 outdoor/drive-thru sites
- Dispense vaccine to up to 10-30K Franklin County residents

Members discussed Greenfield's experience with the First Responder Vaccination Clinic; the possibility that some towns might donate what's left of CARES act money to the effort; use of FEMA's 75% reimbursement; the need to remain flexible with constant state and federal response changes; and the need to work together as one and to think as a county. Linda said 2 weeks before the Council meeting would afford staff time to gain a better sense of logistics and cost.

## 6. Brief overview of Organizational Assessment study and budgeting

Linda explained that the Organizational Assessment Report was delivered, and having read it thoroughly, discussed the ways staff would like to see it improved upon before publication. Major takeaways include recommendations to hire a public relations/communications person; to engage in thoughtful strategic planning more frequently; to have a more focused mission statement; and to hire a Deputy Director to handle internal affairs, while the Executive Director focuses on external operations. The latter hire would require restructuring the way the administrative budget is funded.

## **7. Budget scenarios and FY22 Draft Budget**

At its last meeting the Finance Committee asked to see a summary of possible changes to the draft Council budget. Under consideration are 1.) A reduction to Regional Services Assessments, 2.) Moving small portions of the three directors' salary expenses into the programs in which those Directors work, and 3.) The addition of a Public Information Officer position.

Claire shared a table outlining at the top a basic FY22 projection that includes a second year of funding for the employee recruitment reserve, modest salary increases, a 3% increase in group health costs, and funding for FCECS migration. The next rows show changes incorporating the budgetary items under consideration. Other special projects included in the budget are FERC relicensing support, funding for COVID-19 vaccination planning, and a website revision.

Claire explained that conservative projection methods were used to create the budget. The change to the general fund is 4.1%. The finance committee reviewed the budgetary requests. They discussed keeping the health insurance increase at 3%, to allow for flexibility if someone in the agency suddenly must bump up to a family plan from individual, and the level of comfort with the COVID-planning projection, despite many unknowns.

**Michele moved that the Finance Committee recommend to the full Council a FY22 FRCOG budget of \$4,252,144. Kayce seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by a roll-call vote.**

## **8. Discussion of next steps and need for additional meetings**

The Finance committee agreed to schedule a meeting on Thursday, Jan 28, before the full Council meeting, if changes regarding vaccination efforts or other initiatives necessitated.

## **9. Business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting**

No unanticipated business was discussed.

**Bill moved adjournment of the Executive Committee, seconded by Dani. Motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.**

**Kayce moved adjournment of the Finance Committee, seconded by Michele. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.**

### **Documents Distributed:**

- Joint Executive & Finance Committees Agenda
- Draft 12.10.20 Executive Committee minutes
- Draft 12.10.20 Finance Committee minutes
- Memo from Claire McGinnis to the Finance Committee dated 1.7.21.
- FY22 Budget Proposal

*Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.*