



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee/Economic Development District Governing Board —*MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Location:	Remote meeting using videoconferencing technology
Facilitator:	Jim Basford, Vice Chair; Jay DiPucchio, Chair

Executive Committee/EDD Board Representatives Present:

- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected (5:09 pm)
- Jim Basford, FRPB Appointee
- Kevin Fox, Colrain Representative
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected

Staff Members and Guests Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Bob Dean, Dir. of Regional Services
- Jessica Atwood, Economic Dev. Prog. Manager
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator

1. Review and adopt 5.13.21 Executive Com/EDDGB meeting minutes

Vice Chair Jim Basford convened the meeting at 5:03 p.m. **Bill P. moved adoption of the 5.13.21 minutes as presented. Jim seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by voice vote.**

2. Legislative Advocacy Updates

Redistricting

Linda met with former Rep. Steve Kulik just before the Congressional redistricting hearing to discuss what to present at the hearing. She later testified that our legislators serve communities with similar interests and asked that districts stay as close to what they are now as possible. She told the Executive Committee that because of population declines, we now have 5 senators for Western Mass with only 4 ½ districts of people. All will need to move east to pick up more people she explained. She plans to follow up with written testimony.

Rural School Commission

Linda, as Chair of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission, has been asked to sit on a legislative Rural Schools Commission co-chaired by Senator Hinds and Representative Blais. The Commission will examine conditions in rural school districts such as declining enrollment and higher per pupil costs and will seek to make recommendations that help our struggling districts. At the last meeting, DESE presented some data about rural school trends. Linda will forward the DESE paper to the Committee.

American Rescue Plan

First, municipalities will receive their funding distribution, and then billions of dollars more will go to the state. Currently there is a disagreement about whether it is under the governor’s or the legislature’s control. Linda said the Rural Policy Advisory Commission will be writing a letter, and that

she will write a letter on the Executive Committee's behalf, asking the state to please be aware of rural issues and to use some of the money to promote regional projects.

MA FY22 Budget

Current funding earmarks include:

- \$100,000 for Long Term Economic Development Planning for the Deerfield River Corridor
- \$100,000 to help communities with police reform costs
- \$40,000 for Lyft, Uber, or the like to provide rides for social services at a discounted price. (This initiative was put on hold during the pandemic and now may need to go out to bid again, as Lyft reports a serious shortage of drivers.)

Bill reported that Uber and Lyft have changed their business approach, no longer need financing, and have increased their prices by 50% in NYC. They may not offer much in the way of discounts, he added.

3. CoMIRS and pandemic After Action Report Updates

CoMIRS

The first order of Motorola radios have been programmed and distributed. Second order processing has begun (initially waylaid because 4 delivered palettes were of the wrong radio). Staff expect to see the Kenwoods received, and programming begun, before the month is out. Linda commended Claire for her meticulousness in managing the \$1.6 m of invoicing and spending on the precipice of a new fiscal year. Bill reported that the reception quality of the radio he received was excellent.

After Action Report

Emergency Prep staff are drafting a scope of work for a COVID-19 response after-action report. The goal is to assess not only how the FRCOG performed in response to the pandemic, but also how the county and region responded, and what the thinking is regarding future readiness.

4. Convene as Economic Development District Governing Board

New CEDS Appointments

Jessica Atwood requested a vote to appoint 3 new members to the CEDS committee: Jennifer Gross, local realtor and Franklin Regional Planning Board rep; Judy Raper, Greenfield Community College Associate Dean of Community Engagement; and Alec Wade, Community Development Director for the Town of Orange.

Bill P. moved that the committee appoint the new members presented. Kevin F. seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

2021 CEDS Annual Performance Report

Jessica reported that since the committee last met, she has posted and shared the 2021 annual report, and has incorporated the EDA's new guidance regarding formatting, along with comments. Substantive information added to the report includes:

- Section on childcare situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated an already fragile system
- Section on impacts to manufacturing, which had a large drop in employment with some recovery but not to pre-COVID levels

- A summary of the socio-economic data chapter with some discussion of anticipated changes coming in the next year, such as the return of in-person events like the Green River Festival and the new Treehouse Brewing location
- A description of the challenges for economic development projects, such as limited project management capacity and access to match funding.

Jessica noted that the FRCOG was awarded an EDA grant to work on a Franklin County Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. The work on this plan could be incorporated into the FRCOG’s After Action Report.

The board members discussed the report’s lack of information regarding local employment and growth in the cannabis industry, currently legal in Massachusetts but not federally approved. Jessica confirmed that the cannabis industry cannot be included in the CEDS report. She suggested that perhaps a future (state) DLTA task of the FRCOG could be to analyze the development of the industry and its needs, which may be impacted as the industry becomes legal in other neighboring states.

Bill P. moved adoption of final draft of the 2021 CEDS Annual Performance Report. Jim B. seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. CPHS and new public health updates

As Phoebe was unable to attend, Linda provided a brief update.

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

Remote Meetings

Linda asked the committee to consider how to comply with state Open Meeting Law when the MA State of Emergency is lifted in five days. Bob Dean explained that the state Senate passed language allowing a continuation of virtual meetings until March of 2022, soon to be debated in the House. Jay suggested that unless the House and Governor reject the continued allowance of remote meetings, the Executive Committee carry on with its current policy, adding that, if something arises that requires in-person attendance they can reconsider. Bill suggested road hearings might be an example of such an instance. Bob felt it was likely that the House and Governor will pass the language.

Organizational Assessment

Kevin asked about the progress of the FRCOG organizational study. Linda reported that she had just received the draft last week and will potentially ask the consultant to attend the July meeting.

Bill P. moved committee adjournment. Kevin F. seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Jay D. adjourned the meeting at 5:49 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft 5.13.21 Executive Committee minutes

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.