



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

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

Date & Time:	Thursday, July 8, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Location:	Remote meeting using videoconferencing technology
Facilitator:	Jay DiPucchio, Chair

Executive Committee/EDD Board Representatives Present:

- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected
- Jim Basford, FRPB Appointee
- Kevin Fox, Colrain Representative (5:11 p.m.)
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected

Staff Members and Guests Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Phoebe Walker, Dir. of Regional Services
- Peggy Sloan, Planning Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Charlie Olchowski, Regional Planning Board

1. Review and adopt 6.10.21 Executive Com/EDDGB meeting minutes

Chair Jay D. convened the meeting at 5:03 p.m. **Bill P. moved adoption of the 6.10.21 minutes as presented. Jim seconded the motion, which passed with all present in favor by voice vote.**

2. Wild and Scenic River Designation for the Deerfield River

Charlie Olchowski visited the Committee as a Franklin Regional Planning Board (FRPB) representative to request that committee consider writing a letter to the Deerfield River Watershed Association supporting a feasibility study for segments of the Deerfield River. The aim of the study would be to determine if the river is eligible to be designated as a National Wild and Scenic River. Determinations are based on the quality of the water, scenery, recreational opportunities, fishery, history, prehistory, geology, and wildlife, among other attributes. Although the Deerfield has several hydroelectric dams, some segments may be suitable for the designation. All towns along the river in Vermont and New Hampshire have signed on with their support. Although it may take 10-15 years, the classification may bring with it funding of up to \$250,000 a year to help restore and conserve the Deerfield's beauty and recreational utility.

The committee looked over a letter Charlie offered for an example. To the question of whether this might assist with the decommissioning of dams along the river, Charlie felt strongly that would require a whole other level of study. Members clarified that their support for a feasibility study now, does not mean they necessarily agree to possible steps down the road.

Bill P. moved that the committee submit a letter of support for a feasibility study of segments of the Deerfield River, conducted to determine its appropriateness for a National Wild and Scenic River Designation. Jim seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by voice vote.

3. Public health system work in Massachusetts

Phoebe Walker, a member of the Governor’s Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health, presented a slide show on health system improvements resulting from the passing of the SAPHE (State Action for Public Health Excellence) bill, and the research and advocacy work of the special commission. The Commission’s recommendations to law and policy makers all fall into in the following “Blueprint for Excellence” categories:

- Ensuring minimum Public health Standards for every community.
- Increasing capacity and effectiveness, incentivizing cross-jurisdictional sharing of services.
- Creating a uniform data collection & reporting system.
- Establishing a sustainable state funding mechanism to support local boards of health and health departments.

Recent progress includes:

- \$1.7 M for the SAPHE Program in the FY20 and FY21 state budgets
- \$11.7 M in the FY21 State Budget, and a greater amount, in the not yet finalized FY22 budget
- Distribution of cross-jurisdictional sharing grants in FY20 and FY21.
- Filing of SAPHE 2.0 legislation, making Blueprint for Excellence strivings mandatory

The commission has been holding workshops every step of the way so regional boards can find out about SAPHE. Phoebe added that FRCOG held 2 Board of Health workshops that saw excellent participation. FRCOG has also been reaching out to clusters of communities and to help them write grants. Phoebe explained that this outreach has focused on the basics of the role and reach of health boards, how they responded during the COVID pandemic, and so on.

In another matter, the FRCOG’s Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) recently received two public health grants, allowing the agency to hire a regional public health nurse and a program manager.

4. Review of Organization Assessment Study

With many senior positions at the agency held by staff members with retirement in a 3-10 year horizon, FRCOG contracted with Paradigm Associates last year to “evaluate the current organizational structure, and make recommendations based upon findings and best practices to help ensure the Council is organized efficiently and effectively to meet current and future demands” (from the RFP).

Recommendations included:

- Involve new government leaders and town administrators
- Avoid growth for growth sake
- Begin succession thinking
- Create Deputy Director, Communications Manager, and Human Resources positions
- Strengthen the personnel management systems and programming
- Consider rebranding
- Create a new mission statement
- Conduct a self-assessment and update the strategic plan every 5 years
- Enhance the role of Council members
- Provide more staff enhancement and temporary advancement opportunities

Committee members responded to the study and recommended that we focus on recommendations that resonated and the study be concluded.

5. Review of Emergency Response Revolving Account definition

Claire reported that no reimbursement for vaccination clinics have come yet, but is expected in FY22. In a conversation held before the meeting, the Auditor told Claire she believes the vaccination clinic reimbursements should stay within Council budget and review. Possible actions:

- Rescind the full Council vote and reconceiving of the account
- Replacing the current name “Regional Emergency Revolving Account” with “Regional Emergency Reserve”
- Replacing (or removing) the spending authority language. (If changed to a “reserve” account, spending authority is outlined in the bylaws.)
- Defining the purposes for the emergency account’s use

The current spending authority language, requiring the full Council to approve of spending in excess of 75% of the fund balance, is not workable, Claire explained, because as the fund is spent down, Council would be required to approve to smaller and smaller amounts.

Members expressed concern that with the next Council meeting just around the corner, the Finance Committee might not have enough time to think through proposed changes. Linda suggested that at the very least they might be able to review terminology, perhaps putting off protocols until after the reimbursements start coming in. Claire asked members to think about possible changes related to the vote so that the Finance Committee might come to the Council meeting in July with definitions. Kevin cautioned that the agency should be careful with using strictly municipal terminology, arguing that less is more and use of “Reserve Account” is much cleaner than “stabilization.”

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

Jim Basford’s announcement that he will be leaving the FRCOG and moving out of state was certainly unanticipated. Members and staff expressed their gratitude for his work and sadness that he will be moving on.

In other business, the committee discussed the pros and cons of FRCOG hybrid, remote, and in-person meetings. Bill felt that remote or hybrid were the way to go, particularly with older attendees who find driving to be a challenge at night, and in the winter with weather threatening. Kevin felt okay with using any method management chose, but requested that staff consider group size, and the depth and length of the meeting, when choosing meeting type, in order to accommodate participation and focus.

Finally, members discussed succession planning for the Executive Committee, and members’ desire to begin thinking about recruiting a younger, more tech-savvy, and diverse set of replacements.

Bill P. moved committee adjournment. Jim B seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Jay D. adjourned the meeting at 6:26 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft 5.13.21 Executive Committee minutes

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd