



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Personnel Committee —MINUTES

Date/Time:	Monday, November 2, 2021/ 4:30 p.m.
Location:	Meeting held remotely using Zoom
Facilitator:	Bill Perlman, Chair

Representatives Present: (one vacancy)

- Kayce Warren, Deerfield
- Jane Peirce, Orange
- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Bryan Smith, Erving 4:41 a.m.

Staff Members Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Claire McGinnis, Director of Finance
- Bob Dean, Director of Regional Services
- Phoebe Walker, Director of Community Services

1. Adopt 7/12/21 Personnel Committee minutes

Bill P. opened the meeting 4:34 p.m. **Jane P moved approval of the minutes of 7/12/21, seconded by Kayce W. Motion passed unanimously by roll-call vote.**

2. FY23 Budget Development — Discussion of personnel-related issues

Salaries Bill reminded members that one of the committee’s primary tasks is recommending staff salary increases to the finance committee and council. Linda noted that the Northeast Region Consumer Price Index (CPI) is currently 4.6%. This index is the gauge used annually by the committee to make salary increase decisions, but members can’t remember it ever being this high.

Linda explained that FRCOG does not have a step raise schedule in place, and Council budgets discontinued merit raises in 2015. Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) were not allowed when MassDOT was FRCOG’s cognizant agency, but because the US Dept. of Commerce has stepped into that role, Linda and Claire assume COLA can now be considered. In recent years, cost-of-living-type increases were dubbed Competitive Market Increases (CMI). Without a step system or a merit system, and because salary ranges grow with COLA/CMI, the majority of FRCOG staff salaries have been stagnant in comparison to their peers across the state who regularly receive both COLA and merit or have a step system.

Members of the committee discussed staff COLA increases of between 4.5 and 5%. Staff felt fairly confident that these increases are affordable, without having to raise municipal assessments, particularly if group insurance rates are flat. Members agreed that the role of committee members in upcoming full council budget meeting will be one of explaining the need for these atypically high raises with a level-funded assessment.

Bryan S. moved recommendation to the finance committee, for budget building purposes, a salary increase that reflects the Consumer Price Index increase figure for the Northeast, without surpassing 5%. Kayce W. seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

OPEB Goals Claire reported that a recent actuarial projection that adds 11 employees (from 55 to 66) to our census, results in increased OPEB liability. However, FRCOG is still on track to have OPEB 86% funded in 5 years. The annual contribution is 5% of payroll, which approximates the assessment from the state retirement system should FRCOG ever be assessed. Consensus was to stick with that goal when budgeting.

Benefits Linda asked if the committee is interested in exploring the cost and value of staff benefits. Bill remarked that historically benefits have acted as a stand-in value when salaries couldn't be increased, and that in years past, staff and the committee searched for benefits programs to add. Members agreed to examine benefits at a future date.

3. Preparing for pending retirements

Salary Review Linda and Bill have discussed conducting a salary survey of sister-agencies to determine competitive salary ranges for positions left empty by retiring FRCOG staff, particularly managers, starting in fall of '23. Members viewed a slide with salary figures offered to Linda by agencies recruiting her for their director seat. They agreed that if FRCOG doesn't build salary resources, the agency may not be able to fill the opening positions with qualified people. Claire and Linda also plan to look at the positions at which long-serving staff occupy within FRCOG's current grading system to determine whether salaries are competitive or if raising those grades is appropriate.

Asked about the range of services and programs of other planning agencies, Linda explained that FRCOG is an outlier in MA, with only the Cape Cod Commission comparable, although housing prices on the Cape far exceed those in Franklin County. To prep for upcoming budgetary conversations, Bryan and Kayce felt it important to understand how FRCOG's services compare to others. Jane agreed that careful insight into responsibilities for roles across the state would be vital when creating new management positions. Equally important, she added, is conveying how one town's relationship to FRCOG is not necessarily the same as that for other towns. Bill promoted use of time limits for raising salaries to avoid losing steam. Phoebe suggested including housing and transportation index measures for different regions of the state to provide further context.

4. Update on search for a wage and classification tool that recognizes specialty/technical expertise

Bob reported that staff have yet to find a wage/classification tool that recognizes expertise without supervisory responsibilities. Staff will keep looking.

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

No further business was discussed.

Bryan S. moved to adjourn and Kayce W. seconded, with all voting in favor by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda

- Minutes of the 7/12/21 meeting
- US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Consumer Price Index, Northeast Region, October 2021* webpage
- *OPEB Projection* slide
- Director recruitment salary range slide

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.