



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee

MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Location:	FRCOG, Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield MA, Downstairs Allen Room
Facilitator:	Bill Perlman, Chair

Executive Committee/EDD Board Representatives Present:

- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Dani Letourneau, Greenfield Alternate
- Julia Blyth, FRPB representative
- Kevin Fox, Colrain Representative
- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected

Staff Members and Guests Present:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Planning Program Manager
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Bob Dean, Regional Services Director

1. Review and adopt 10.14.21 Executive Committee meeting minutes

Chair Jay DiPucchio convened the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Dani moved adoption of the 10.14.21 minutes as presented. Julia seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, by roll-call vote.

2. EDA grant match support

Jessica Atwood reported that through a supplemental planning grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), FRCOG was able to hire a second staff person – Keith Barnicle, Economic Development Special Projects Planner – to work on economic development planning tasks, including the creation of the county’s Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. This position started in October 2021, and is funded through June 30, 2022. Staff would like to apply for an ARPA-funded economic development grant to continue the position and fund pursuit of economic priorities for two additional years. Receipt of this grant would significantly increase the economic development planning program’s capacity to accomplish projects such as:

- Direct technical assistance to help municipalities/districts pursue water or wastewater infrastructure projects
- Identifying new industrial land that leverages existing infrastructure and meets industry demand
- Developing a digital toolkit for use by local governments, business groups, and regional entities to support business growth
- Implementation of Deerfield River Outdoor Recreation Study recommendations

This EDA funding opportunity requires a non-federal funding source to match 20% of the total project cost. At the time of application, FRCOG must attest to having the total match in-hand and committed to this proposal. The total two-year project cost is \$220,200. Thus, a \$44,040 non-federal match commitment is required. Staff reminded the committee that FRCOG built a cash-match line into the budget for several years, although the agency always tries to use other sources of match first, before tapping into that reserve account. Many grants with match requirements allow the time that department heads spend on associated tasks to count as match, some allow the cost of staff benefits or agency indirect as match, and some grants allow other grants with similar scope to count as match. As a result, if the FY22 budgeted amount remains fully unused, the year-end grant match reserve account balance will be \$51,206. With that, FRCOG can commit to providing a \$44,040 match. However, in hopes of not depleting the full reserve, staff will use other sources, like those described above, if contractually allowed.

Members discussed the language of the motion previously adopted by the Finance Committee, learning from Jessica that use of the flexible term “reserve funds” was acceptable to the EDA. The agency is most concerned that that the money used for the match is not federal funding.

Jay moved to commit \$44,040 of FRCOG reserve funds for the purpose of providing non-federal match for an award from the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s FY21 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Economic Adjustment Assistance funding opportunity, and to commit that said funds will be available as needed, and not conditioned or encumbered in any other way. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by roll-call vote.

3. Receive Erving Poplar Mountain Road discontinuance request, set hearing and view date

Bob Dean reminded the committee of the petition by Erving to discontinue the county layout of the storm-damaged Poplar Mountain Road. The hope of the town is to have the road transferred to its care. The town plans to restore the road without any major changes, retaining it as a public way.

Kevin moved acceptance of Erving’s petition to discontinue the county layout of the storm-damaged Poplar Mountain Road and transfer of the road to the town, contingent on a vote of approval at the Erving town meeting. Dani seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by roll-call vote.

The committee discussed the logistics of the hearing.

Kevin moved to set January 13, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. as the date and time of the public hearing. Dani seconded the motion which passed unanimously by roll-call vote.

4. FY23 budget development: Personnel and Finance Committees’ strategy on salaries, COLA, assessments, and so on

Claire summarized the strategy spearheaded by the Personnel Committee (PC) and recommended to the Finance Committee (FC) to build a budget to include staff Cost of Living (COLA) increases and use as a gauge the Consumer Price Index (CPI) -- which was 4.6 % in October, and 6 % in November.

Asked how the PC and FC responded to the uptick in CPI, staff explained that the Finance Committee recognizes that when wages go up, the indirect rate also goes up, making it possible for the agency to

give generous raises without an increase to general services assessments. Linda added that raises greater than 4% would require higher Fee-for-Services programs assessments, however, which is a challenge for those programs. Both committees asked staff to build the budget with a 6% COLA increase.

Bill explained that the PC recognizes that by not giving raises at the rate of the Northeast region CPI, the FRCOG effectively reduces the buying power of staff, thereby shortchanging them. Committee members agreed that FRCOG staff are valuable assets, he said.

Jay remarked that a 6% raise is reasonable: a due diligence effort to get FRCOG up to baseline for going forward. He noted that raising collective purchasing assessments by 10% does not amount to big numbers. He felt fully comfortable with 6% COLA increases.

Claire explained that the FC had asked for impact analysis of COLA increases of 4%, 5%, and 6%. She shared that slide. Linda reminded the committee that the CPHS budget assessment went up by 20% in FY21, and the Accounting assessment by 18% in FY21 and 4% in FY22.

5. Project Updates

Succession

Linda reported that the first retirement departure would be one of the FRCOG Council's regionally elected Executive Committee representatives, Bill Perlman, who is not planning to run again in November. The planning director plans to leave in late 2023, and Linda in late 2024, and the list goes on.

Papers for Bill's position come out next summer, so **Step One** of the succession plan is to create a "job description"/marketing document for the role, and begin to get the word out. Staff also wonder if the Council might consider a charter change that would allow two people on the Executive Committee to be from the same town, believing that if someone is regionally elected, their role is to represent the whole of the region.

Steps Two is to adjust salaries so that budgets can accommodate future salaries once all start retiring. This also involves examining the salary *ranges within* each grade, as even the highest salary figures within the ranges have fallen below the competitive market in some cases. The Executive Director position is one of these. Staff are meeting with the Employer's Association of the Northeast (EANE) to discuss this project. This effort would also examine the FRCOG's current position grading system to ensure it is still useful, accurate and appropriate.

Step Three involves a rollout of professional development opportunities for FRCOG staff to develop leadership and management skills while also learning about how the FRCOG runs, is governed and is financed through internal training programs.

Members were particularly excited by step 3, feeling that to train and develop from within is another way to retain long-time, dedicated staff who will grow to have a deep understanding of the way the agency operates.

Step Four is to study and identify whether the organizational structure should change to better reflect and manage the growing organization.

Transfer to the Commonwealth Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS)

Nearly all radios have been received, programmed, and deployed. The last five Motorolas are slated to be programmed tomorrow. With the exception of the Motorola battery problem and supply chain issues, all has gone well in this last stage of the transition to the state system. The deadline to submit installation invoices to FRCOG is December 31. Once done, Claire will close out the account. A paging solution is still needed.

After Action Review (AAR)

Linda reminded the committee that the agency hired a consultant for a COVID AAR for FRCOG and the region as a whole. Efficacy analysis is the goal of their report, Linda explained, not customer satisfaction. A nuanced survey regarding the agency’s response was sent to FC municipalities and stakeholders, asking about FRCOG’s response, authority, capacity and communication. The survey will inform FRCOG if it should be ready to respond to future emergencies and if a charter change is needed. Recommendations for other courses of action can then be considered. A Phase 2 may need to be implemented, she added.

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

No unanticipated business was discussed.

Dani moved committee adjournment. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote. Bill P. adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft 10.14.21 Executive Committee minutes
- *Salary Options in FY23 Budget Prep* slide

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.