



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee

MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 13, 2022, 4:30 – 5:30 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:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director
- Peggy Sloan, Planning Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Services Coordinator
- Bob Dean, Regional Services Director

Guests for Erving’s Poplar Mountain Road Public Hearing:

- Susan Brereton, Abutter
- Bryan Smith, Erving Town Administrator
- Jackie Boyden, Abutter

1. Review and adopt 12.9.21 Executive Committee meeting minutes

Chair Bill Perlman convened the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Jay moved adoption of the 12.9.21 minutes as presented. Julia seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, by roll-call vote.

2. Consider candidate for appointment to the Franklin Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (FRHRA) Board of Commissioners

The FRHRA asked the committee to consider Greenfield’s Susan Worgaftik, active in Greening Greenfield and housing rights initiatives. The committee discussed Susan’s resume and letter, approving of the FRHRA’s appointment.

Jay moved appointment of Susan Worgaftik of Greenfield to the (FRHRA) Board of Commissioners. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

3. Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS) issues and updates

FY23 Budget/Decommissioning

Linda explained that the FCECS Oversight Board advises a less-than-level budget for FY23. Though the final total cost for decommissioning is still unclear, the oversight board thought it possible to decrease the capital replacement budget by \$22 K. Linda asked Executive Committee members how they felt about this plan, adding that the program fund balance currently totals more than \$300K.

Members considered the timeline for decommissioning; the persistent paging problem; how inflation might affect needed system purchases; the reality that ECS maintenance costs primarily are those of the Commonwealth Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS), now that most county EMS units have transferred to it; and the fact that the \$22K will not be reduced from the operating budget, but rather the capital replacement line — less critical now, with CoMIRS up and running. Consensus of the committee was to follow the budgetary recommendation of the FCECS Oversight Board, thereby decreasing the capital replacement line item from \$75K to \$53K

Portable Digital Repeater Switch

Bill explained that some on the FCECS Oversight Board are interested in purchasing a \$30K portable digital repeater, equipment that takes radio signals, amplifies, and rebroadcasts them. Members discussed the logistics of purchasing, housing, transporting, and maintaining the repeater, and the appropriateness of the FCECS having this type of equipment (vs. Homeland Security). Greenfield currently possesses one. The committee recommended the FCECS not purchase a digital repeater.

4. Review letter for Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Forest Legacy designation

Peg Sloan presented a request for a letter of support to expand the Forest Legacy Program area to include MTWP towns. This request came from FRCOG's representative to the MTWP Board, Emily Johnson, a member of the Franklin Regional Planning Board's Executive Committee Executive Committee. Peg reminded members that the guiding principle of the MTWP is support for forest conservation and natural resource-based economic development that sustains the region's ecosystems while improving the financial viability of municipalities. The key issue people have with the Forest Legacy Program is that protection of forestland can occur either via a conservation restriction or in fee title. However, Peggy stated that any protection of forestland should only occur via conservation restriction, so that the property remains on the municipal tax rolls and is revenue neutral.

Members reviewed the letter and agreed that land should not be acquired in fee title by the state or federal government, as doing so would increase public land ownership and remove the property from municipal tax rolls, resulting in financial hardship to the community. State Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) have historically been underfunded and inadequate. They asked to strengthen the letter to clarify FRCOG support and asked Linda to review and approve the revised letter.

Jay moved to authorize, sign, and send the letter, if redrafted to make clear that FRCOG support is strictly limited to forestland protection via a conservation restriction. Julia seconded the motion, which passed, with Kevin Fox opposed, and all others in favor, by roll call vote.

5. Project Updates

Transfer to the Commonwealth Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS)

FRCOG received notification from the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) that Franklin County is included in its Phase II build-out — improvements that add new towers and increase digital coverage. Once fully digital, the county will have a paging system and can decommission the FCECS. FRCOG is currently looking for \$600K funding sources to purchase digital pagers.

After Action Review (AAR)

The COVID AAR survey — asking about FRCOG's COVID response, authority, capacity and communication — has concluded. The rate of response was 38%.

Advocacy

Linda recently sent the Franklin County legislative delegation a slideshow that presents an economic analysis of rural Franklin, Barnstable, and Berkshire Counties. The analysis shows that rural counties have been struggling since the great recession and further effected by the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic. The hope is that the legislators will remember these deep urban/rural inequities when considering how to distribute American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This data debunks the idea that urban areas were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The Legislative Rural Caucus is asking the regional delegation to bring the analysis to state house and senate leadership. The caucus is also requesting a meeting with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to ask to help rural areas equitably.

6. Public Hearing on a petition for discontinuance and transfer to the Town of the county layout of Poplar Mountain Road in Erving.

With a quorum deemed present at 5:00 p.m., the chair opened the public hearing with introductions and explained that the purpose of the hearing was to consider the Town of Erving's petition for discontinuance of the county layouts of Poplar Mountain Road and transfer to the Town.

Jay made a motion to dispense with the reading of the Notice of Public Hearing. Bill seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

The committee and guests (see above) watched Bob Dean's public-view video of travel down the road. Bob noted that some repairs to the surface had already been completed since the washouts last summer which brought to the fore the Town's understanding that the road was a County Road.

Erving town administrator Bryan Smith, commented that if the Executive Committee agrees to discontinue the county layouts of the road and transfer its care to Erving, the town plans to restore the road without any major changes, retaining it as a public way. A special town meeting is planned for March for acceptance and layout of the road by the town or, if necessary, at the annual town meeting in May. The Erving Select Board would like to have all legal control of the layout, but does not plan to change boundaries, he added.

No formal objections to the discontinuance and transfer were made.

Jay moved that public convenience and necessity requires that the prayer of the petitioners be granted and we hereby discontinue all Franklin County layouts of Poplar Mountain Road in the Town of Erving and transfer the roadway to the Town of Erving, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 82, Section 5, Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and agree to sign the Order of Discontinuance and Transfer for this docket, that grants no monetary damages to any party. Transfer of Poplar Mountain Road from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, as successor to the Franklin County Commission, to the Town of Erving will become effective upon the Town of Erving's official town meeting acceptance of the road. Until such acceptance, the subject road shall remain a county way. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

The committee and guests discussed next steps, and the hearing adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

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

No further business was discussed.

Jay moved committee adjournment. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote. Bill P. adjourned the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft 12.9.21 Executive Committee minutes
- Susan Worgaftik appointment letter
- Susan Worgaftik resume
- Draft Forest Legacy support letter
- Public Hearing Protocol Map

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.