



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Franklin Regional Planning Board— *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, March 24, 2022 / 6:00 – 7:50 p.m.
Location:	Virtual. Zoom Meeting ID: 857 6393 1119
Facilitator:	Jerry Lund, Chair - FRPB; Peggy Sloan, Planning Director - FRCOG

FRPB MEMBERS

- Jerry Lund**, Chair, Leyden, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Julia Blyth**, Clerk, Northfield At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Bernard Boudreau**, Northfield Select Board
- Marybeth Chichester**, Colrain Planning Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Brant Cheikes**, Whately Planning Board
- Lloyd Crawford**, Hawley Planning Board
- Jennifer Gross**, 1ST Vice Chair, Wendell Select Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Wayne Hachey**, New Salem Select Board, FRCOG Council
- Emily Johnson**, Deerfield At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Richard Nathhorst**, Leverett Planning Board
- Jane Shaney**, Ashfield Planning Board
- Don Sluter**, At-Large Whately, FRPB Executive Committee
- David Travers**, Heath Select Board, FRPB representative to the Transportation Planning Organization
- Chuck Washer**, Shelburne Select Board, FRPB Rep. to the REPC
- Jon Wyman**, Buckland Planning Board

FRCOG STAFF

- Peggy Sloan**, Planning & Development Director
- Liz Jacobson-Carroll**, Administrative Services Assistant

PRESENTERS/GUESTS

- MJ Adams**, City of Greenfield
- Laura Marx**, The Nature Conservancy
- Zach Chornyak**, Tighe & Bond
- Elizabeth Quirk**, Transportation Advocacy Board
- Peter Valinski**, Tighe & Bond

1. Introductions and Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes	J. Lund, Chair – FRPB & FRPB Members
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J. Lund convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. A round of introductions followed.

D. Sluter moved to adopt the 1/27/22 minutes, M. Chichester seconded the motion, and the motion passed with four abstentions (Boudreau, Crawford, Grant, and Hachey).

2. Presentation on the Family Forest Carbon Pilot Program & Climate Resiliency Forestry Practices	L. Marx, Climate Solutions Scientist – The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
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Marx began her presentation by emphasizing that “the forest didn’t get us into this [climate] problem, and it’s not going to get us out.” Reducing emissions must be our top priority, but “drawing down” carbon through smart forestry practices is a complementary action, she continued, referencing the ‘Reduce, Remove, Adapt’ concept. Noting that TNC has recently compiled, edited and circulated a comprehensive list of smart-forestry guidelines, these include:

- keeping the forests we have – avoid forest loss (this is of critical importance)
- growing new forests and trees – reforestation, under planting climate-adapted trees, greening developed areas
- reducing stressors – climate-informed forest access and forestry operations, remove invasive vegetation, protecting seedlings from deer, respond to disturbances
- passive management – establish forest reserves, increase time between harvests
- active management/timber harvesting – create gaps to promote regeneration, retain more carbon in a thinning, facilitate forest transition to better match future conditions

Addressing the cost of such efforts, Marx referenced landowners (in Heath, Ashfield, Chesterfield and Worthington) who have received grants, and cited several local towns’ receipt of Municipal Vulnerability Program funding. We can’t rely on grants alone, she added and then introduced the Family Forest Carbon Program (FFCP).

The FFCP Northeast Pilot program is being launched by TNC and the American Forest Foundation in 18 counties in New York and Vermont as well as the four western counties of MA in April 2022. It will fund four smart-forestry resiliency practices: establish reserves/delay harvest, and create gaps to promote regeneration/retain more carbon in a thinning. Eligibility requires 30 or more acres of northern hardwood forest in private ownership which have no conservation restrictions that would preclude harvesting. Landowners contract to participate in either of two practices – Grow Older Forests (the no-cut option) or Enhance Your Woodland (harvest is an option) – for 20 years, at no cost, and receive annual payments for proven carbon storage increases calculated using US Forest Service data. Marx emphasized the importance of S.1880 and state funding to promote other smart-forestry practices to increase resiliency not included in the FFCP.

Discussion topics included Chapter 61, Forest Stewardship Plans with a climate component recently developed by DCR, the involvement of foresters and the Franklin Land Trust in developing climate resiliency forestry practices and landowner options. Other topics discussed included the potential for the program to drive harvesting of wood products to less sustainably managed forests, and the lack of a regulatory market. The climate change impact of New England forests becoming increasingly more like those of the mid-Atlantic was also noted.

3. Presentation and Discussion on the Franklin County Public Water and Wastewater Study	Z. Chornyak, PE/Senior Project Manager & P. Valinski, PE/Vice President – Tighe & Bond
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Chornyak and Valinski presented Tighe & Bond’s (T&B) nearly-completed study that evaluated the needs of existing public water and wastewater systems in roughly half of the towns of the county, and evaluated

the potential for developing new systems in three other county towns/village centers (3 public water and 3 public sewer). The project included, for the existing systems, assessing preparedness for climate change impacts, providing recommendations and cost estimates for needed improvements, developing GIS mapping, and identifying potential capital funding sources. The mapping component, a significant aspect of the project, involved gathering information from online sources, paper files, and operator interviews from all 26 towns into a consistent GIS format. T&B assessed the cost of addressing current needs of the existing water systems to be approximately \$120 million, and of the existing sewer systems to be approximately \$160 million over a 20 year study period. Also presented were requirements for these wastewater systems to have DEP-related asset management/capital improvement plans, sewer rate studies, lab QA/QC procedures, O&M manuals, SSO reporting documents, and I/I investigative and corrective work. Chornyak also presented water system requirements including DEP-related asset management/capital improvement plans, water rate studies, O&M manuals, Emergency Response Plan and Source Water Protection Plan updates, and Annual Consumer Confidence Reporting. Recent DEP requirements also require systems to conduct staffing analysis, Chornyak noted. Chornyak provided specific examples of the infrastructure needs for both large (Greenfield) and small (Shelburne Falls) water and wastewater systems.

Valinski outlined the evaluation conducted for three new sewer systems (in Bernardston, Colrain and Conway), and for three new public water systems (in Erving, Charlemont and Conway). The proposals for sewer systems built on feasibility work done in recent years by those towns. Similarly, the proposals for water systems also build on earlier geologic mapping and analysis. Valinski listed numerous potential funding sources, for systems of both types, from the state (DEP and One Stop Program) and federal (USDA, USEPA, US Dept. of HUD) programs. Discussion topics included limited land availability; connecting to neighboring towns' infrastructure; pairing with affordable housing projects to enhance funding opportunities; the process for Select Boards to form feasibility committees; and mutual aid/regionalization agreements regarding staffing, among others.

4. FERC Update on Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Facility	P. Sloan, Planning Director – FRCOG
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Sloan summarized FRCOG's involvement in the negotiations related to recreational assets to be implemented by FirstLight as part of the license renewal process. She indicated that the FRCOG Executive Committee has decided to sign the licensing Agreement in Principle (AIP) for the recreational facilities, but that there is much more work to be done to address water flow and erosion issues. FRCOG staff will provide additional information on the recreational AIP at the next meeting.

5. Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting / Adjourn / Public Comment	J. Lund, Chair -- FRPB
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Cheikes moved to adjourn the meeting, Travers seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Documents Distributed / Presentations Viewed:

- Agenda
- FRPB Minutes, January 27, 2022 – DRAFT
- Climate-smart forestry and the Family Forest Carbon Program, The Nature Conservancy, March 24, 2022
- Water & Wastewater Study Services, Tighe & Bond, March 24, 2022

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 26, 2022. Copies of all documents are available. Please contact Liz Jacobson-Carroll at ljc@frcog.org or 413-774-3167 x101.

Respectfully submitted,
Julia Blyth, Clerk - FRPB