



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Executive Committee

Economic Development District Governing Board

MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, July 14, 2022, 5:00 p.m.
Location:	Meeting held with video conferencing technology
Facilitator:	Bill Perlman, Chair

Executive Committee Representatives Present:

- Bill Perlman, Regionally Elected
- Jay DiPucchio, Regionally Elected
- Kevin Fox, Council Appointee

Staff Members:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Rebekah Boyd, Admin Svcs Coordinator
- Claire McGinnis, Finance Director

1. Review and adopt 6.9.22 Executive Committee meeting minutes

Chair Bill Perlman convened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. **Jay moved adoption of the 6.9.22 minutes. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, by roll-call vote.**

2. Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP) Update

Linda expressed some dismay with the consultant hired to write the Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS) decommissioning plan. The deadline for its completion was June 30, but the consultant didn't seem to understand it was due, she said. A new deadline is set for 90 days. She also explained that she had underestimated the amount of time decommissioning would take and the weight of the FRCOG's role in the transition. Staff now estimate 20 hours a week, for one to two years, is needed for decommissioning and liaison work.

In a relative matter, FRCOG advertised for the EPP program manager position early this summer and resumes were received. Staff found that applicants had limited emergency planning experience, however, so they decided to promote Xander Sylvain from within. Xander was point person on the FCECS transition team before he was hired, but continuing on with the same amount of focus in that role is not possible to combine with his management responsibilities. Staff have therefore hired a former planner with the FRCOG, Dan Nietsche — one of the program manager applicants — for the role focused on the decommissioning the FCECS, and as liaison to the Commonwealth Interoperable Radio System CoMIRS.

Next week, staff will ask the finance committee to vote to approve and recommend to Council a transfer of \$30,000 from the undesignated fund balance to cover the costs of: 1.) unanticipated

FCECS/CoMIRS staff time, 2.) COVID-19 After Action Review task implementation, and 3.) building Regional Emergency Planning Committee capacity.

Jay moved to recommend Finance Committee endorsement of the transfer of funds from undesignated free cash to fund staff time used for FCECS decommissioning and CoMIRS liaising, for COVID-19 After Action Review task implementation, and for increasing the Regional Emergency Planning Committee capacity. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

The committee discussed the history of staffing changes in the program and the logistics of the removal of the Royalston tower, which, staff have learned, possibly may be completed at no cost to FRCOG.

3. Covid-19 After-Action Report Update

Staff have joined municipal officials at 12, Phase 2 After-Action Review meetings, to gain clarity on what stakeholders believe the FRCOG's role should be in larger-scale emergencies such as the pandemic. Ultimately, municipalities understand that active response is not in the normal realm of FRCOG's work, but that the agency would step in to support the region when grand-scale emergencies occur. Possible roles include:

- Collectively purchasing PPE or other equipment
- Acting as the communications hub
- Carrying out logistical planning

4. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) legal counsel contract

Next week, staff will ask the Finance Committee for their approval and a recommendation to the full FRCOG Council to amend a budget by \$20,000 to hire an attorney to review the FERC hydroelectric relicensing settlement agreement and provide needed expertise. FRCOG hopes to hire the same counsel that the Connecticut River Conservancy uses, with a contract that prohibits double billing for the same services delivered to both agencies. Staff have asked the four towns directly affected by the settlement (Gill, Northfield, Erving, and Montague) to contribute \$2500 toward the attorney funding, thereby reimbursing \$10,000 of the cost. To date, three of the four towns have agreed. Undesignated fund balance will be the source, if the Finance Committee and Council approve.

Claire told the committee that the FY23 budget includes funding for staff service related to the FERC relicensing process, but that FRCOG hopes not to sacrifice that amount to fund the attorney and then have to come back and ask for more money to fund staff.

Jay moved to recommend Finance Committee endorsement of the transfer of funds from undesignated free cash to hire an attorney to review the FERC relicensing settlement agreement and bring expertise to the process. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

5. Succession Planning Update.

Linda reported that one aspect of planning for succession hiring for management level positions at the FRCOG involved having a project specialist from the Employers Association of the NorthEast (EANE)

analyze the FRCOG's salary schedule and grading tool. The analyst found the tools to be functioning well individually and the system as a whole to be sound and cohesive. The same specialist worked with staff on a deeper dive into planning director and planning position job descriptions and salary ranges and declared them both sound in market comparison. Entry and mid-level positions were also deemed competitive, but FRCOG is further from the mark on the Finance and HR Director's salary. The current FRCOG director salary is not quite as under-competitive as was once believed, with longevity bumps and the recent 6% cost of living increase bringing it more in line with competition. Linda relayed stories of the challenges other planning agencies in the state are having hiring directors, even those with higher salary ranges.

Kevin would like to review the EANE report and asked to have it sent to the Executive Committee for a first look. Linda said one thing they learned from the report was that the grading system does not recognize the value of specialized work. Bill concurred, suggesting, however, that it may be too early to plan implementation of a system that rewards technical as well as managerial paths. Linda will work with department heads to examine the grading of every position in the agency next month.

In addition to the salary and grading system review, staff have formed a reorganization committee and scheduled meetings to imagine restructuring in a manner that better matches the agency's current reality and plan for the future.

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

The MA Rural Schools Commission report will soon to be out and Linda recommended it highly. She feels it does an excellent job of documenting problems in rural school districts, presenting all the ways in which problems compound each other, and offering recommendations for making change. Linda will send the report to the Executive Committee.

Jay moved committee adjournment. Kevin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote. Bill adjourned the meeting at 5:41 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft 6.9.22 Executive Committee meeting minutes

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.