



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Franklin Regional Planning Board— *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, May 25, 2023 / 6:00 – 7:40 p.m.
Location:	Remote Meeting via Zoom FRCOG Offices - JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA
Facilitator:	Jerry Lund, Chair - FRPB; Peggy Sloan, Planning Director - FRCOG

### FRPB MEMBERS

- Jerry Lund**, Chair, Leyden, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Heidi Bohn**, New Salem Planning Board
- Brant Chiekas**, Whately Planning Board
- Ken Miller**, Ashfield Planning Board
- Marybeth Chichester**, Colrain, FRPB Executive Committee
- Michael Shaffer**, Erving At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Tricia Yacovone-Biagi**, Shelburne Planning Board
- Emily Johnson**, Deerfield At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Charles Olchowski**, Greenfield At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Don Sluter**, Whately At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Sarah Kerns**, Northfield Select Board

### FRCOG STAFF

- Peggy Sloan**, Planning & Development Director;
- Jessica Atwood**, Economic Development Program Manager;
- Allison Gage**, Sr. Land Use and Natural Resources Planner;
- Clara López**, Administrative Services Assistant

### PRESENTERS/GUESTS

- Kenny Olchowski**, Greenfield
- Amy Klippenstein**, Ashfield

<b>1. Introductions</b>	J. Lund, Chair & FRPB Members
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J. Lund convened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. A round of introductions followed. A quorum was not present. The minutes of the last meeting were tabled. **Announcement: FRCOG** was awarded a \$500K grant for the assessment of Brown Fields. This grant comes at a perfect time to assist with moving various pending projects forward. It is unclear how many parcels can be tested as the costs from parcel to parcel can vary significantly. The FRCOG has four (4) years to spend the grant.

<b>2. Presentation and Discussion on the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) Regional Economic Development Plan</b>	J. Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager – FRCOG
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Atwood presented the 2023 Franklin County CEDS Annual Performance Report, primarily an update of data and projects identified in the 5-year plan 2020 CEDS Plan. The framework used is provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), ensuring our region’s eligibility for certain pools of federal EDA funding. The

FRCOG Executive Committee /EDD Governing Board will vote to adopt the report on June 8<sup>th</sup>, and the report will be submitted to the EDA by June 30. The report has been endorsed by the CEDS committee.

Atwood reviewed highlights from the draft Annual Report. She noted that the original Plan was created at the beginning of COVID-19, and so subsequent annual reports have included updates specific to the pandemic. For this draft, she added other special topics including: Measuring Economic Distress, Population Projections, Tech Economy, New Development across Industry Sectors, Aviation Technician Program, and the Massachusetts Agriculture Innovation Center.

Atwood reviewed updated demographic and economic data. The population numbers from the 2020 Census indicate a slight population decline from the previous decade. While total numbers for BIPOC residents is small, that population is seeing growth. The UMass Donahue Institute created statewide population projections to be utilized for regional transportation plan updates. Data for Franklin County predicts significant declines over the next thirty years, and the State population growth slowing down. However, Atwood noted, these declines are not a foregone conclusion. The region has the opportunity to take action to mitigate these projections. Positive changes that may reverse population decline include broadband access. In addition, how climate change will impact local population growth remains to be seen.

Atwood continued that while the unemployment rate is low, as of the end of 2022, the total labor force is still not at pre-pandemic levels. Data for employment by industry sectors show an increase from 2020 to 2021, but for many sectors it is not at pre-pandemic levels.

Atwood described recent efforts to develop a Tech Economy in this rural region, using a strategy from the Vermont-based Center on Rural Innovation (CORI). Organized by GCC, a CORI workshop was held in March with local and regional leaders. The purpose of the workshop was to learn more about the CORI model for building local capacity and developing a strategic plan to create a new tech economy in the region.

Other initiatives mentioned included the announcement of a \$4.2 million grant to the Franklin County Tech School for an aviation maintenance technical program for students and adult learners. Other pending projects include development of Greenfield downtown housing as part of the redevelopment of the Wilson's Department store building (65 units of mixed income housing along with expanded retail space), and a Clinical Support Options project for 36 studio apartments and an expanded shelter. Also, she noted that the Valley Flyer has become a permanent rail service. Public hearings are taking place to evaluate expanding rail service across the northern tier. A Rural Downtown District Management study is underway. Consultants will be meeting with local officials from the three pilot project areas to learn more about their downtown business needs. More project highlights from the slide deck were reviewed.

Atwood entertained questions regarding the Annual Report. There was some conversation about the predicted population decline and the need for more housing. Atwood responded that even though population decline is projected, more housing is needed. This is due to the current lack of housing, as well as trends related to family sizes getting smaller and more older people living alone. FRPB members have until June 7 to submit comments or suggestions regarding the Report. Link to draft 2023 Franklin County CEDS Annual Report: <https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-CEDS-Annual-Report-DRAFT-05.22.23.pdf>

This project was funded by a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant from the EEA. All the engineering studies for this project have been completed. Franklin County is already seeing the impact of climate change.

**Project Background:**

- Heavy Precipitation – A top concern for the Clesson Brook Watershed (CBW)
- Failing and undersized culverts pose current and future risk to transportation and emergency response
- Areas damaged by TS Irene are still experiencing severe erosion that threatens roads and bridges
- Buckland Recreation Area is plagued by chronic flooding and erosion
- The Deerfield Watershed has very little protected land in the upland tributary areas
- Agricultural use along stream corridors has the potential to impact the water quality

**The project goals and outcomes are as follows:**

- Fluvial geomorphic assessment of the Clesson Brook Watershed provides information on the causes of erosion, channel instability, and habitat degradation
- A Hydrologic and Hydraulic model of the Clesson Brook estimates peak flow rates and projected future conditions considering climate change
- There is now a database to identify road-stream crossings for prioritizing which culverts need to be replaced
- List of land parcels within the Clesson Brook Watershed to be prioritized for conservation
- Identified 12 restoration projects and prepared 4 conceptual designs
- Complete Watershed-Based Plan for Clesson Brook
- Community members engaged throughout the planning process

**Major Project Findings:**

- 20% of the banks are eroding and 15% are armored;
- 28 “Mass failures” (landslides – major sediment source);
- Not enough wood in the stream (natural conditions: 175 to 225 pcs/mile, Clesson Brook conditions: 97 pcs/mile);
- Identification of Road/Stream crossings – results, including high risk crossings, are published in the Clesson Brook Watershed App;
- 87 head cuts (locations where water flow erodes rock) were identified; and
- BioMap area – priority areas for conservation are identified. Nature based solutions are offered for future flood prevention. Protection improvements for segments of Rt. 112 suggested.

**Finalize Climate Resilient Watershed Based Plan:**

The findings will be used to create a Watershed Based Plan that meets the EPA’s required format. Once approved, the plan will be eligible to apply for FY24 MVP Action grants, as well as DEP grants and other sources, to implement the recommended projects. Other activities to meet the requirement of the grant include a stream table presentation at the Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School and a Zoom Open House on June 7<sup>th</sup> for community members who live along Clesson Brook. A. Gage entertained questions. E. Johnson asked about the permitting process for introducing wood into the river. A. Gage acknowledged that the process can be cumbersome.

<b>4. Brief Update on the FERC Relicensing</b>	P. Sloan, FRCOG
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After careful consideration, a Recreation Settlement Agreement has been reached. The FRCOG Executive Committee has approved signing on to the agreement. A key feature is a recreation management plan, to be updated every 10 years. There will be a recreation stakeholder group which will meet annually to review proposed changes to programming and/or operations. A thorough ADA assessment of current and proposed facilities will be made. P. Sloan offered to return to present more detailed information regarding proposed improvements at a later time. This agreement is a significant improvement over what was initially proposed. E. Johnson thanked P. Sloan for her tireless effort on this project. Sloan thanked staff K. Noake-MacPhee and A. Donlon for their efforts. Montague and Northfield Select Boards have approved signing onto the Settlement Agreement. Erving and Gill’s decisions are pending. Staff reviewed the Fisheries and Flows settlement agreement and prepared comments related to erosion to be filed with FERC.

<b>5. Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting/Adjourn</b>	J. Lund, FRPB Chair
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Sloan emphasized that the June meeting is very important as Annual elections will be held. There are slots for At-large slots on the Board. Sloan requested that members contact the FRPB Nominating Committee or Sloan if they have suggestions for new At-Large members.

Announcement: the Town of Florida voted to join the Woodlands Partnership and Savoy is voting soon.

**D. Sluter moved to adjourn the meeting, E. Johnson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.**

Documents Distributed / Presentations Viewed:

- Agenda
- FRPB Minutes, March 23, 2023 – DRAFT
- CEDS Regional Economic Development Plan
- Clesson Brook Watershed Climate Resiliency Project

The next FRPB meeting will be held virtually **on June 22, 2023**. The next FRPB Executive Committee meeting will be held on June, 5th. Copies of all documents are available via the FRCOG website. Please contact Clara López at [clopez@frcog.org](mailto:clopez@frcog.org) or 413-774-3167 x101.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Blyth, FRPB Clerk