



Franklin Regional Council of Governments Council

MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, April 20, 2023, 5:30 p.m.
Location:	Virtual meeting held remotely via Zoom video conferencing application
Facilitator:	Trevor McDaniel, Chair

Councilor Attendees:

Paul McLatchy, Ashfield; **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; **Heather Butler**, Buckland; **Kevin Fox**, Clerk, Colrain; **Trevor McDaniel**, Chair, Deerfield; **William Bemberly**, Erving; **Greg Snedeker**, Vice Chair, Gill; **Roxann Wedegartner**, Greenfield; **Will Cosby**, Hawley; **Tim Shores**, Leverett; **Steve Ellis**, Montague; **Bee Jacque**, Northfield (5:38 p.m.); **Andrew Smith**, Orange; **Ellen McKay**, Shutesbury; **Gillian Budine**, Wendell; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regionally Elected; **Jane Peirce**, Regionally Elected.

Regrets: **Vacant**, Charlemont; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **Vacant** New Salem; **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Janice Boudreau**, Rowe; **Bob Manners**, Shelburne; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Emily Johnson**, FRPB
Absent: **Phil Kantor**, Conway; **Carla Davis-Little**, Monroe; **Alan Genovese**, Warwick; **Brian Domina**, Whately.

FRCOG Staff : **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Admin Services Coordinator; **Claire McGinnis**, Finance Director; **Phoebe Walker**, Director of Community Services

1. Call to order and roll call of hybrid meeting	Chair Trevor McDaniel
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The chair convened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken and both simple and financial quorum were present, with 16 members and 70.880% of the weight of the total membership in attendance. At 5:38 p.m., attendance rose to 17 members and a weight of 76.114%.

2. Adopt 2/2/23 minutes	Chair Trevor McDaniel
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Steve Ellis moved to adopt the 2/2/23 meeting minutes. Paul McLatchy seconded the motion, which passed by roll call vote, with one abstention, and the rest of the members in favor.

3. Council Update	Newly Elected Chair, Trevor McDaniel
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Trevor announced that the Council will meet next on **Thursday, July 20, 2023**, and then on **Thursday, October 19**. Open seats remain on the Finance and Personnel Committees. Councilors were encouraged to step up to fill them.

Trevor reported that the Western MA MMA Conference in Holyoke, hosted by the MA Selectboard Association and FRCOG, was a success — well attended by more than 100 officials from all four western MA municipalities. The focus of this event was on rural issues that challenge our communities, with Rep. Blais and Sen. Comerford both sitting on a panel discussing priorities for the region. New MA Auditor Diana DiZoglio welcomed input from attendees regarding her office’s priorities for rural communities, and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll delivered the keynote address.

4. Executive Committee Update

Kevin Fox

Kevin reported the business of the Executive Committee since the Council last convened, *[See Council Updates, April 2023; Executive Committee Update]*, including its appointment of Bryan Smith of Erving as interim representative to the Franklin County Transportation Planning Organization, until the full Council could convene to consider an appointment.

On recommendation by the Executive Committee, Steve Ellis moved that the Council make permanent Bryan Smith’s position of interim East County representative to the Transportation Planning Organization. Paul McLatchy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by roll call vote.

5. Executive Director Update

Linda Dunlavy

Linda briefed the Council on recent advocacy efforts and FRCOG programs’ projects and initiatives. *[See Council Updates, April 2023.]*

6. Planning Board Update

Emily Johnson

Emily Johnson was not in attendance, prompting the chair to pass over this agenda item.

7. Finance Committee Update and Presentation

Michele Giarusso

Finance Committee member Jay DiPucchio reported that after review and discussion of the year-to-date summary of the FY23 Council budget, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the Council a \$60,000 increase to the pooled expense line, sourced from undesignated general fund balance. The shortage is the result of extraordinary sick leave expenses, he said, adding that the Committee asked staff to review next year’s budget to determine how to be better prepared going forward.

Jay moved that the Council amend the FY23 budget, increasing the pooled expense portion of the general fund by \$60,000, resulting in a \$1,252,248 pooled expense total and a \$2,734,536 general fund total. Ellen seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by roll-call vote.

8. Personnel Committee Update

Jane Peirce

Jane briefed the Council on the meeting late last year at which the Committee robustly discussed how to provide salaries that will retain staff while also being mindful of municipal constraints. Linda then presented the proposed revisions to the *FRCOG Personnel Policy* sections on mileage reimbursement and family and medical Leave. *[See Personnel Policies: Proposed Revisions — Travel Reimbursement and Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).]*

The proposed addition to the **Mileage** section of the policy is intended to clarify how health and building, plumbing, and wiring inspectors are compensated for mileage. It reads as follows:

Inspection staff with routine work at various sites throughout the county are encouraged to plan travel in economical routes, which may include locations in a route from home in the morning or towards

home in the afternoon. In either direction, mileage and time is reimbursable from that first or final work location.

The changes made to the **FMLA Leave** section of the policy alters the way the time-period is measure for leave calculations. It reads as follows [*with cross outs being the old language and bold the new language*]:

*The FRCOG will grant an eligible employee up to a total of twelve work weeks of unpaid leave during a ~~fiscal year~~ **continuous 12 month period, beginning with the date of filing...***

Linda explained that administrative staff recently learned that the FMLA leave policy, in its current iteration, can be very expensive when up to 12 work weeks of leave-taking occurs at the end of one fiscal year, and on July 1 then flows into the next fiscal year, when 12 more weeks are allowed.

The Council perused these language changes as a First Reading with a vote on the revisions expected at the next meeting. Linda noted that the Personnel Committee meanwhile will engage in further discussion regarding the high number of unused sick hours staff are currently allowed to hold, and will be coming back to the Council with ideas to consider for how to best address that issue.

9. Franklin County prioritization of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission legislative priorities

The Council reviewed the top 10 Rural Policy Advisory Commission's (RPAC) legislative priorities for the current legislative session. Linda noted that the prioritization of the bills represent the needs of rural municipalities across the state and likely are not in the order of import to Franklin County. Members were generally in agreement that the top 10 list compiled by the RPAC included legislation that addresses the issues that most concerned them and also agreed that the order is a bit different for Franklin County. Of greatest import to members were establishment of a rural policy office; making the Chapter 90 formula more equitable; reforming the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) formula, creating a municipal and public safety authority, and revising housing funding programs to be more cognizant of and available to rural needs.

10. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance/ Adjournment Trevor McDaniel

No further business was discussed. **Paul McLatchy moved to adjourn, Roxann Wedegartner seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.**

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the October 20, 2022 meeting
- *April 2023 FRCOG Council Updates*
- Personnel Policies: Proposed Revisions
- *Rural Policy Advisory Commission Legislative Priorities* for the 2023-2024 session
- FRCOG FY23 Budget Report, period ending March 31, 2023.

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.