



Franklin Regional Council of Governments Council

MINUTES

Date & Time:	Thursday, February 2, 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; **Michele Giarusso**, Leyden; **Steve Ellis**, Montague; **Bee Jacque**, Northfield; **Bob Manners**, Shelburne; **Ellen McKay**, Shutesbury; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Michael Idione**, Wendell; **Emily Johnson**, FRPB; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regionally Elected; **Jane Peirce**, Regionally Elected.

Regrets: *Vacant*, Charlemont; **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; *Vacant* New Salem; **Janice Boudreau**, Rowe

Absent: **Phil Kantor**, Conway; **Carla Davis-Little**, Monroe; **Alan Genovese**, Warwick; **Gabe Voelker**, Orange; **Brian Domina**, Whately

FRCOG Staff : **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Dir.; **Rebekah Boyd**, Admin Svcs Coord.; **Claire McGinnis**, Finance Dir.; **Bob Dean**, Dir. of Regional Services; **Phoebe Walker**, Dir. 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 5:36 p.m. Roll call was taken and both simple and financial quorum were present, with 19 members and 75.54% of the weighted of the total membership in attendance.

2. Adopt 10/20/22 minutes	Chair Trevor McDaniel
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Paul McLatchy moved to adopt the 10/20/22 meeting minutes. **Ellen McKay** seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll call vote.

3. Council Update	Newly Elected Chair, Trevor McDaniel
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Trevor announced that the council will meet next on **Thursday, April 20, 2023**, and then on **Thursday, July 20**, to reorganize and elect new officers. Open seats remain on the finance and personnel committees. Councilors were encouraged to step up to fill them.

Trevor reported that Franklin County was well represented at the Mass Municipal Association (MMA) Conference in January, and that the event proved to be an excellent chance for municipal officials to network, and to learn about forthcoming grant opportunities. He urged officials to attend the Western MA MMA Conference in Holyoke on April 1, and hosted by the MA Selectboard Association. The focus of this regional event is on rural issues that challenge our communities.

4. Executive Committee Update

Kevin Fox

Kevin reported the business of the executive committee since the council last convened, (*See Council Updates, January 2023; Executive Committee Update.*)

5. Executive Director Update

Linda Dunlavy

Linda briefed the council on recent advocacy efforts and FRCOG projects and initiatives. (*See Council Updates, January 2023.*)

Strengthening Regional Emergency Preparedness

Linda explained that the Ardent Group's COVID-19 After-Action Review, analyzing the FRCOG's role in future regional response coordination, is complete. The end recommendations are in line with the updates the council has received thus far. Broad stroke recommendations are as follows:

- Create a single FRCOG/Regional Emergency Coordination Plan.
 - *Formally establish a FRCOG Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC).*
 - *Prevent redundant, inconsistent or conflicting information from the FRCOG.*
- Develop a single and scalable EDS plan for the county that is deployable at various locations.
- Strengthen the Franklin County Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC) as the all-hazards planning and exercise body for the region.
- Clarify the structure of regional emergency response and the role of public health emergency preparedness in that structure.
 - *Better engage public health professionals in emergency preparedness work.*
 - *Reorganize the Franklin County Public Health Emergency Preparedness (FCPHEP) Coalition governance model to be composed of public health professionals.*
 - *Eliminate the confusion of what MAPHCO is and does by renaming it the (FCPHEP) Coalition.*
 - *Pursue service area changes with MA Dept. of Public Health and municipal officials of Williamsburg, Orange, and New Salem and/or include Orange and New Salem in county preparedness activities.*

The FRCOG was awarded a MA Efficiency and Regionalization grant totaling \$147,855 for an 18-month period to move these recommendations forward. This grant runs through June 30, 2024 and will begin when staffing capacity in FRCOG's Emergency Preparedness Program allows for it. Linda requested council members consider a vote to accept the recommendations from the Ardent consulting group.

Trevor McDaniel moved to accept and carry out the Ardent Group's COVID-19 After Action Review recommendations to help clarify FRCOG's role in future regional response coordination. Greg Snedeker seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll-call vote.

6. Finance Committee Update and Presentation

Michele Giarusso

Michele, Claire, and Linda walked the Council through the FY24 FRCOG Budget Proposal, referencing the budget memo and proposal sent to members the previous week and following the sequence and detail of the accompanying slideshow presentation. (*See Budget Memo, FY24 FRCOG Budget, and the FY24 Budget Proposal Presentation*)

Members discussed cost of living (COLA) vs. step raises (FRCOG gives only COLA); the stiff competition among both public and private employers to attract and retain staff; the FRCOG Personnel Committee's 4% salary increase recommendation; inflationary trends and the rise in social security; the

unique position of the FRCOG, among other state entities, in having contributed \$2.4 mil toward its OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) liability.

Ellen moved to approve the FY24 FRCOG Council Budget Proposal of \$5,072,482, of which \$2,917,881 is for the general fund and administration and \$2,154,603 supports the municipal fee-for-service programs. Steve Ellis seconded the motion, which passed with all in favor by roll call vote.

7. Franklin Regional Planning Board (FRPB) Update

Emily Johnson

Emily urged councilors to participate in the Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan by filling out the FRCOG survey, attending the public meeting or the municipal officials meeting, and using the interactive map by marking roads and other byways that require improvements.

8. Special Presentation and Discussion

Megan Rhodes

With little time left in the meeting, Megan briefed the committee on the progress of the Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), updated every 4-5 years, which looks at existing conditions, needs, and issues — as well as projected conditions — and makes short and long-term recommendations. Among projects identified as the top 25 in the 2020 RTP, 10 are completed and 13 are in progress. Current and upcoming projects include:

- Signal and intersection improvements on Route 2 in Greenfield near Big Y
- Install wayfinding signs on the Franklin County Bikeway
- Outdoor recreation plan and inventory
- Dirt/gravel roads vulnerability assessments and toolkit

Megan also touted the importance of survey, interactive map, and meeting participation, for planners to have as much feedback as possible, and to hear about stakeholder’s project ideas before the March deadline.

9. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance/ Adjournment

Trevor McDaniel

Members and staff discussed the efforts of some lawmakers to make hybrid meetings a requirement for all public meetings. Although the uptick in meeting participation is a boon to many boards and committees, the regulation would be a hardship on municipalities, particularly without continuous — not just transitional — funding resources for IT equipment, personnel, and technical training. Linda suggested written testimonial from local officials would help to combat the effort.

Ellen McKay moved to adjourn, Paul McLatchy seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the October 20, 2022 meeting
- January 2023 FRCOG Council/Programmatic Updates
- Budget memo from FRCOG Finance Director, Claire McGinnis, dated 1.27.23
- *FY24 FRCOG Budget Proposal*
- Slideshow presentation: *FY24 FRCOG Budget Proposal*
- Slideshow presentation: *Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan Update 2023*

Minutes taken by Rebekah Boyd.