

Franklin Regional Council of Governments



Annual Report 2022
Charlemont

Cover image: Sunset in Buckland.

Photo credit: Andrea Donlon, FRCOG Senior Land Use Planner

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1997 by Franklin County municipalities, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments is a strong, mature and multi-faceted organization serving many needs of the Franklin County region. The FRCOG administers shared services programs that allow our smaller member towns to achieve efficiency by sharing resources and services. This includes our Collective Purchasing Program, our Cooperative Public Health Service, our Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program and our Town Accounting Program. The FRCOG serves as Franklin County's designated Regional Planning Agency, or RPA. In that role, we work with municipal planning boards on local projects, identify and create regional long-term stewardship and economic expansion initiatives, and assist with federal and state required plans and activities. Over the past 24 years, as the FRCOG identified gaps in regional services, we expanded our grant programs to provide teen and adult community health planning, emergency preparedness planning and services, and regional fiduciary services on behalf of western Massachusetts.

2022 was a busy year for the FRCOG. Grants and staffing expanded our public and community health and planning programs and thus our ability to serve our member towns and our region in new and innovative ways. We also were able to return focus on pre-pandemic priorities, including the development of a new web site, which was well worth the 3-year wait. The new site is easily navigable and informative. I encourage you to take a look often: <https://frcog.org>.

As the retirements of many long-time staff near, we also spent 2022 thinking and preparing for succession by examining internal leadership potential, focusing on expanding the diversity of our staff, financially preparing for the retirements of long-time staff, and exploring a new administrative structure. With the engagement of staff, committees and the FRCOG Council, we also developed a new mission statement to guide our thinking, our work and our entry into the FRCOG's 25th year:

The FRCOG's mission is to foster a vibrant, sustainable region for all, and to leverage resources that promote collaboration and efficiency within our member communities.

We do this by providing advocacy, planning, and cooperative services – both proactively and in direct response to our member communities' needs.

Within this year's Annual Report, you will find highlights of our multi-faceted work. While this report does not address every program, project, or service we engaged in this year, it demonstrates the breadth of our services and our positive impact on the region in 2022.

Linda Dunlavy
FRCOG Executive Director

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ADVOCACY



While the FRCOG works to represent the needs of the region with one voice, the scale of our advocacy changes according to need. Our advocacy may focus on specific legislation or a particular project, or address the best interest of a sub-region in the county, the needs of Franklin County overall, or the needs of rural communities throughout the Commonwealth. We often advocate for the needs of Franklin County, both at the state and federal levels, through partnerships with other mission-driven organizations.

Photo: State Rep. Natalie Blais addresses a crowd in Ashfeld Town Hall.

Setting Rural Legislative Priorities

The FRCOG leads, facilitates and organizes the work of the legislatively created Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC), whose mission is to support and enhance the economic vitality of rural municipalities. The RPAC spent the end of 2022 researching and prioritizing issues, policies and funding that will benefit rural municipalities. These priorities were then matched to bills filed by the legislature in early January 2023, and make up the RPAC's legislative agenda for the next legislative session. The priorities will also, by and large, be the priority legislative focus of the FRCOG. The priorities are:

- Permanent allowance of remote meetings
- Establishment of an Office of Rural Policy
- Rural housing development
- Increased funding for local road maintenance and formulaic change to Chapter 90
- Increased PILOT funding and formulaic change

- Implementation of the Rural Schools Commission recommendations
- Agricultural viability
- Establishment of a funded Municipal Building Authority

These priorities have also been presented to the Healey/Driscoll administration and will be sent to Franklin County and other rural municipalities for their support and to provide testimony as relevant bills wind through the legislative process.

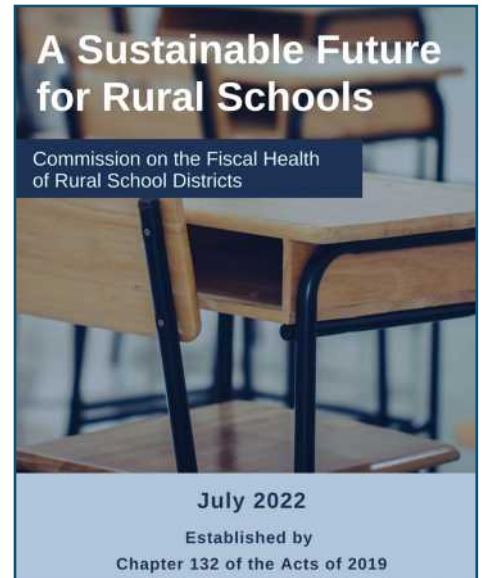


Recognizing Rural School Challenges

The final report from the Rural Schools Commission was completed in July 2022. The report provides a strong analysis of the debilitating and stacking issues facing rural schools including: flat population growth and accelerated declining student enrollments, higher per pupil costs that are not recognized by the Chapter 70 formula, greater student transportation costs, and limited potential for consolidating schools due to long travel times, among other compounding issues. The report's findings are not surprising to Franklin County officials, but, for the first time, they document and quantify the issues districts and municipalities are facing. Implementation of the report's recommendations will be a focus of the FRCOG's advocacy efforts in 2023 and 2024. They are:

- Substantially increase funding for the state's rural school aid program
- Increase transportation reimbursements to rural districts with demonstrated need
- Fund districts with substantial and sustained enrollment losses
- Increase incentives and support for regionalization and shared services
- Establish a Special Education Funding Reform Commission
- Reform School Choice to minimize the impact on rural school districts

View the full report online at: https://bit.ly/sustainable_rural_schools.



2022 and 2023 Legislative Delegations

2022 saw the redistricting of the U.S. Congress and MA General Court, effective for the 2022 election cycle. This listing acknowledges outgoing Franklin County legislators with a (2022), and recognizes incoming members of the new legislative delegation who serve Franklin County with a (2023).

We thank all members of the delegation—outgoing, incoming, and redistricted—for their service to the Commonwealth and Franklin County.

Learn more about the redistricting process at <https://malegislature.gov/Redistricting>.

Members of U.S. Congress

MA Senators in U.S. Congress

- Sen. Edward J. Markey
- Sen. Elizabeth Warren

MA Representatives in U.S. Congress

- Rep. James P. McGovern — 2nd District
- Rep. Richard Neal — 1st District

Members of the MA General Court

Senate

- Sen. Jo Comerford
- Sen. Adam Hinds (2022)
- Sen. Paul Mark (2023)

House of Representatives

- Rep. Natalie Blais — 1st Franklin District
- Rep. Paul Mark (2022) — 2nd Berkshire District
- Rep. Aaron Saunders (2023) — 7th Hampden District
- Rep. Susannah Whipps — 2nd Franklin District

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND LAND USE



Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Climate resilience is also about our ability to successfully manage the impacts of climate change while preventing those impacts from growing worse. The way we have used land in the past, how we are using it currently, and how we plan to use land in the future determines how resilient our communities are and can be.

Photo: An upstream view of the Clesson Brook in Buckland.

Climate Resiliency Plan for the Clesson Brook Watershed

Citizens and town officials don't have to look beyond their town borders to see how climate change can impact already vulnerable infrastructure, or overwhelm emergency response capacity. However, we do need to look beyond our town borders to find long-term, sustainable resiliency strategies. Franklin County towns know how to do this—many already share services with their neighbors (see our Shared Municipal Services section in this report). This same cooperative approach, at a watershed scale, strengthens the climate resiliency of each town and the watershed as a whole. Clesson Brook, its tributary streams, and watershed

lands cross municipal boundaries, including the towns of Ashfield, Buckland and Hawley. The waters are coldwater fisheries resources, and the land in the watershed includes farmland, forestland, and habitat

of rare and endangered species—a collective ecosystem that contributes to the local and regional food system and economies. By working at the watershed scale, these three towns can build a framework of actions that improve the climate resiliency of each town.

In 2022, FRCOG staff initiated a Climate Resiliency Plan for the Clesson Brook Watershed, made possible through a MA Municipal

A watershed is an area of land where rainfall and snowmelt drain into a stream, lake, or river system. Because watershed boundaries do not follow town boundaries, a watershed can provide a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of natural systems and the built environment, as well as how climate stressors can affect several things simultaneously. Decisions about the way land and resources in the watershed are used, and how towns that share watersheds work together to make their communities more resilient, can have positive impacts on those living down the road, down the hill, and those living downstream.

Vulnerability Preparedness grant awarded to Buckland and a MA Department of Environmental Protection grant awarded to the FRCOG. This project assesses undersized and failing culverts, as well as flooding and stream erosion hazards along Clesson Brook that pose a risk to roads, homes and farmland. The final plan will include recommendations and conceptual designs for projects that can reduce these flooding and erosion hazards, and make progress towards strengthening the resiliency of the watershed as a whole.

The Resiliency Plan is a 2-year project. In 2022 (year one), outreach and public engagement efforts included hosting a Watershed Community Open House, which over 40 residents attended to share information and concerns, and meeting with watershed landowners to tour sections of Clesson Brook and allow them to share photos and stories detailing the impacts of Tropical

Storm Irene and other recent heavy precipitation events. Staff also visited Mohawk Trail Regional School to speak with students about how settlement patterns have affected our rivers, how Clesson Brook has already been affected by climate change, and what it means to be a Fluvial Geomorphologist (a scientist that studies rivers).

As staff worked to foster engagement with the project, a project consultant completed a hydrologic and hydraulic model for the watershed, drafted a fluvial geomorphic assessment, created a geodatabase of all the road-stream crossings in the watershed, and developed a prioritized list for crossing replacements. The Clesson Brook Climate Resiliency Plan will be completed in 2023. Stay informed about our progress by visiting https://bit.ly/FRCOG_watersheds.

2022 Climate Resilience Projects at the Municipal Level

For over five years, FRCOG staff have used our state-approved template for Open Space & Recreation Plans (OSRPs) to include the most current climate change data and strategies for resilience. In 2022, FRCOG staff assisted seven towns with OSRP updates.



Cyclists in Wendell State Forest. Wendell was one of the towns to update their OSRP in 2022.

FRCOG also provided technical assistance to 15 towns to work towards meeting their energy reduction goals and decarbonization efforts under the Green Communities program. In 2022, FRCOG helped towns to secure \$308,000 for municipal energy efficiency projects such as air source heat pump installations, and weatherization.

In 2022, the Dept. of Energy Resources offered funding for RPAs to assist communities with net-zero planning. FRCOG worked with two communities to begin greenhouse gas inventories and municipal net-zero operations plans. These tools will provide communities with a roadmap for reducing emissions and supporting the state's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Throughout 2022, FRCOG worked with the Town of Montague to develop the comprehensive plan *Five Villages: One Future* to provide a vision and strategic path for the town for the next 15 years. This plan will not only have a Climate and Sustainability chapter, it will also incorporate climate resiliency into every element of the plan. Learn more about Montague's Comprehensive Plan online at: <https://montagueplans.org/>.



Participants brainstorm priorities in a Montague Comprehensive Plan workshop.

COMMUNITY HEALTH



Our community health programs work to improve the conditions that contribute to the health and well-being of local residents through a variety of collaborative projects including youth substance abuse prevention, chronic disease prevention, racial equity, and healthy aging.

Photo: FRCOG staff Keyedrya Jacobs and AmeriCorps member Debbie Gonzalez creating one of a series of video tours of local human services available in the region.

Advancing Community Health by Addressing Inequities

One of the major outcomes of the COVID pandemic, both nationally and in Massachusetts, is a greater understanding of the impacts of non-medical factors that influence health outcomes in people's lives. We learned that COVID-19 unjustly impacted poorer people, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, and people living in crowded housing. As a nation, and as an organization, we are re-examining our work and our priorities to ensure that everyone has equal access to good health. Some of the Community Health projects at the FRCOG that are doing this work are highlighted below.

The FRCOG is the host of a regional **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Network**. The CHIP, advised by a steering committee representing 15 agencies, sets regional health improvement priorities and works to address them on a three-year cycle. 2022 was the second year of the current plan cycle, which focuses on social determinants of health and evidence-based strategies related to diabetes, behavioral health, and youth substance use.



The **Improving Housing to Improve Health (IH2)** project is a collaborative effort by Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Community Legal Aid, Citizens' Housing & Planning Association, and FRCOG, and is supported by the Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds. This five-year project focuses on addressing barriers to housing encountered by community members who have a history of incarceration and/or substance use disorders.

Through IH2, FRCOG provided Community Preservation Act (CPA) technical assistance. Communities that adopt the Community Preservation Act establish

a modest but reliable stream of locally-controlled funding for affordable housing. Technical assistance provided included support for Greenfield's Community Preservation Committee as it developed the City's first CPA Plan, and to Shelburne as that town worked towards adopting the CPA in November 2022. We also educated other towns in the region about options for increasing the impact of their CPA spending on affordable housing.

The IH2 project also enabled the FRCOG to host the Small Town Housing Working Group, which serves as a forum for municipal leaders and local housing advocates to develop strategies and share updates about housing-related work and available funding.

FRCOG's **Partnership for Youth (PFY)** worked closely with school staff, administration, and students to understand the current status of racial justice work in our local school districts, documented in the 2022 report *How Franklin County & North Quabbin Schools Are Advancing Racial Justice: A Regional Snapshot*. Thus far, efforts to address the report recommendations have included staff participation in the planning and execution of a Safe Schools Summit focused on Racial

Healing held in November, as well as planning for an equity-focused Youth Summit to be held in the spring of 2023. PFY staff also began planning for schools to receive training and support in implementing Restorative Practices in all schools as a way to reduce racial disparities in discipline.

Restorative Practices are mindsets and approaches that prioritize community relationships and shared decision-making. One such practice is Restorative Justice. Rather than simply punishing an 'offender', a restorative process makes space for the experience of all while seeking amends and healing.

The questions that restorative justice seeks to answer are: 'Who has been harmed?', 'What are their needs?', 'Whose obligations are these?', and 'How do we collectively work to put things right?'. When these questions are answered collaboratively in a repair process, the outcomes of dignity, healing, and community reinvestment for all are possible.

FRCOG collaborated with LifePath regarding **Age- and Dementia-Friendly Planning**. Franklin County is a rapidly aging region, with 34% of residents expected to be over 65 by 2030 (compared to an anticipated state rate of 22%). This demographic shift is both a challenge for community planning, and an opportunity for more civic engagement and inter-generational connections.

In 2022, LifePath and FRCOG collaborated on a survey that reached 2000 residents. Although 90% of survey respondents want to stay in their towns as they age, only 53% said their community was a good place to age. FRCOG and LifePath staff began meeting with each Town/City to examine the results of the survey and begin a discussion of how to improve the age and dementia friendliness of the community.

In 2022, FRCOG Public Health Nurses also offered community level-trainings on Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia and Healthy Living/Healthy Aging in numerous towns. FRCOG staff were also active participants in the regional Age-friendly Steering Committee convened by LifePath, and on the working groups analyzing the data and prioritizing next steps for implementation in 2023.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The FRCOG's economic development planning efforts include advancing policies, programs and projects that support new and existing businesses and industries, enhancing skills and employment opportunities, and investment in vital infrastructure.

Photo: FRCOG staff and the volunteers who manage the Bridge of Flowers gardens are joined by State Rep. Natalie Blais, as well as Ashley Stolba and Juan Vega from the MA Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to celebrate the funding that will provide infrastructure improvements to this iconic landmark.

Collaboration (and Patience) Yields Success

Much of the FRCOG's work is in collaboration with local, regional, state and federal partners. In the world of economic development, some of these partnerships last for years, even decades, to achieve significant progress. 2022 was a year to celebrate these collaborations and their successes.

In December, over 100 local, regional, state and federal officials met in the Ashfield Town Hall to celebrate a significant broadband milestone: all the Western Mass municipalities that had been identified as unserved or underserved now had operational last mile broadband solutions in their communities. While the FRCOG's active involvement with broadband ended once Governor Baker committed to work individually with each unserved municipality for a broadband solution that met each town's needs and resources, we are proud of the 15+ years of advocacy, work and partnerships that led to the December 2022

celebration. Our efforts included:

- Helping to educate eastern Massachusetts of the broadband inequity in the Commonwealth
- Convening our towns to work together to explore options and solutions
- Proving that public investment was required to bring broadband to unserved, rural communities, resulting in the creation of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and the first infusion of public funds for this purpose
- Gaining access to the I-91 corridor telecommunication fiber installation that now acts as the backbone for regional and municipal networks
- Vetting dozens of proposed technologies and solutions
- Serving as an inaugural and continuing member of the MBI Board of Directors advocating for the needs and rural municipalities.

These years of advocacy and collaborative effort are paying off. **Massachusetts is now 98% served by broadband, putting us in the top 5 states in the country for broadband coverage!** We are honored to have played a role in bringing this achievement about.

Advocating for the needs of rural communities and helping state officials understand the capacity constraints of rural municipalities and of rural municipal officials has long been a focus of the FRCOG. In the spring of 2022, the FRCOG collaborated with

our legislators and neighboring Regional Planning Agencies to offer a series of informational sessions on state grant opportunities, and worked with Representative Blais' office to bring state officials to the region to visit particularly vexing problems.

In 2022, Franklin County municipalities received more One Stop funding than ever before, including a \$2.3 million award to make critical infrastructure improvements to the Bridge of Flowers that the FRCOG assisted in securing.

Planning for Municipal Building Reuse

An unused municipal property quickly becomes an expensive liability. FRCOG can provide assistance in the redevelopment process, from providing information about resources available, to supporting brownfields assessments and facilitating a community visioning process. In 2022, the FRCOG helped Buckland and Northfield assess reuse options for municipal buildings that are no longer needed for their original purpose.

Buckland received a MassDevelopment award for technical services to envision reuse of the former Buckland Highway Garage at 50 Conway Street. The award provided architectural services to develop conceptual design scenarios for the property's reuse. Additionally, FRCOG used DLTA funds to conduct a community visioning process for the property that included a community meeting to review site characteristics and market conditions, and initiated a conversation with residents about the site's future.

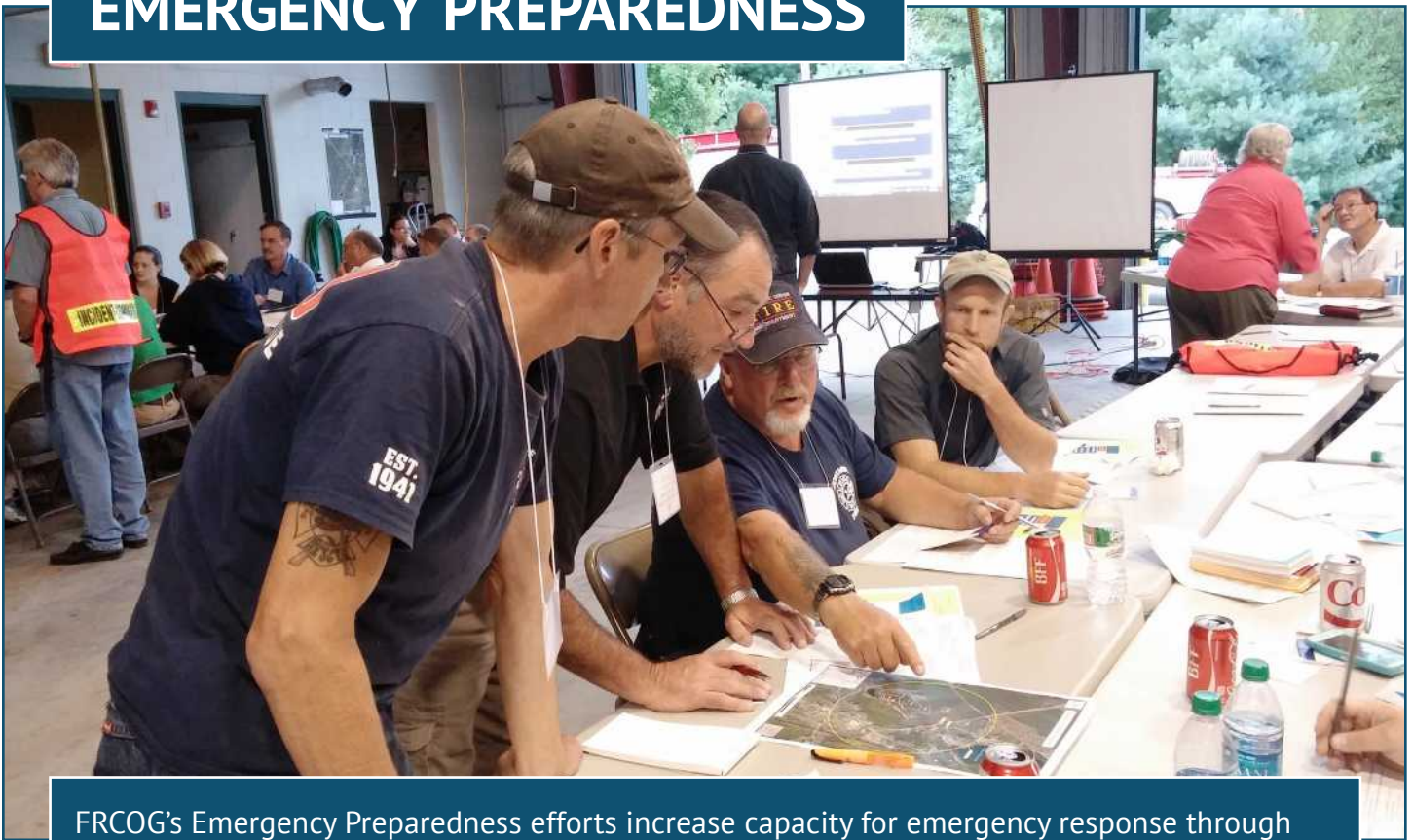


The former Buckland Highway Garage.

An online survey was also conducted to gather more input from the community. These responses were used by the firm of Kuhn Riddle Architects to create three conceptual designs that were presented at a second community meeting. The designs and responses from the community were then shared with the Select Board, who will be responsible for choosing how the parcel should be reused.

In anticipation of a proposed new public safety complex in Northfield, the Town asked the FRCOG to help identify next steps and resources for the potential reuse of the Northfield Fire Station at 93 Main Street. Similar to the project in Buckland, FRCOG staff prepared a presentation to describe the site and market conditions, and begin a community discussion of potential reuse options. The Town will seek a MassDevelopment award to fund architectural services to create redevelopment scenarios for the property based on community input.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



FRCOG's Emergency Preparedness efforts increase capacity for emergency response through activities including planning, training, and exercising at all levels of local government and healthcare. The FRCOG does this through the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC), and the Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP).

Photo: local fire department staff and Emergency Management Directors discuss response strategy during a hazardous materials spill exercise.

Strengthening Regional Response Coordination

Prior to COVID-19, the regional understanding of the FRCOG's role during an emergency was to provide fundamental technical assistance while towns managed their individual response. The level of regional assistance and coordination required of the FRCOG and the Emergency Preparedness Program staff throughout the pandemic was unprecedented, and required thoughtful post-incident analysis to inform our role in the region during future large-scale or long-duration states of emergency.

Throughout 2022, the FRCOG engaged in After-Action Reviews to evaluate:

- The role of the FRCOG overall, and the Emergency Preparedness Program, in regional response coordination, a need evidenced by COVID-19
- The efficacy of current Emergency Dispensing Site

Plans and planning processes

- The inter-relationships of multiple preparedness planning groups advising the FRCOG and Emergency Preparedness Program.

The FRCOG contracted with Ardent Decisions Group, a respected consulting firm with decades of experience in post-incident analysis. Ardent worked with the FRCOG to design and conduct stakeholder surveys, interviews, and focus groups amongst all communities and government sectors within the region.

The findings showed strong agreement throughout the region that the FRCOG should play a role in response coordination when emergencies exceeded the capacity of municipalities and existing mutual aid agreements; however, the findings also showed a reluctance amongst municipal officials to confer additional

authority upon the FRCOG. This led to an enhanced round of focus groups to better answer the question of what the FRCOG should do to enhance regional coordination without assuming operational control during an emergency.

Local public safety (police, fire, EMS), Emergency Management Directors, Town Administrators, members of Select Boards, Boards of Health, Health Directors and Agents, Public Health Nurses, as well as regional leaders from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Northwest Incident Management Team, and the FRCOG Council participated in this process, resulting in final recommendations from Ardent Decisions Group in November of 2022. The FRCOG Council formally accepted these recommendations in January of 2023.

View the recommendations online at: https://bit.ly/FRCOG_AAR_overview.

The FRCOG successfully wrote for an Efficiency and Regionalization grant to fund the efforts needed to move these recommendations forward. In 2023, FRCOG will convene municipal partners in the region to identify next steps in removing redundancies and confusion within existing preparedness efforts, develop a FRCOG regional response coordination plan, and clearly delineate the FRCOG role in the Franklin County Multi-Agency Coordination Center. This is a deliberate and long-term effort that will last through all of the coming year and into 2024. We look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress.

Training & Equipping First Responders

WRHSAC
Western Region Homeland
Security Advisory Council



Since 2004, the FRCOG has served as fiduciary for the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC). In 2022, WRHSAC engaged the western MA first responder community in several initiatives and trainings to boost emergency response capacity. The following are a few examples of WRHSAC projects.

WRHSAC conducted an **After-Action Review (AAR)** of the western MA region's COVID-19 response. Information was gathered via survey, one-on-one interviews, at standing meetings, and through focus groups. An AAR Conference was held in late fall to present the findings. The WRHSAC AAR and Improvement Plan are available at: https://bit.ly/WRHSAC_AAR. WRHSAC will utilize these findings and recommendations to inform planning, training and equipment funding over the next several years.

In the fall of 2022, WRHSAC hosted its inaugural **First Responder Mental Health Resilience Conference**, which provided leading-edge approaches to foster mental health resilience in first responders every Thursday in October. Each day included a speaker in the fields of trauma, neuroscience, critical incident

stress management, and peer support, and was followed by practical skills workshops specifically tailored for first responders. Find videos and resources from the conference at: https://bit.ly/WRHSAC_MHR_videos.

In 2022, WRHSAC supported the **Western Mass Tech Rescue Team's (WMTRT)** efforts to add water rescue capabilities by providing funding for exercises. A tabletop, functional and a concluding multi-discipline full-scale exercise were conducted throughout the summer. The multi-discipline approach fostered response relationships between WMTRT, Massachusetts State Police Dive Team, Northwest Incident Management Team, and multiple fire, local dive teams, and EMS agencies.

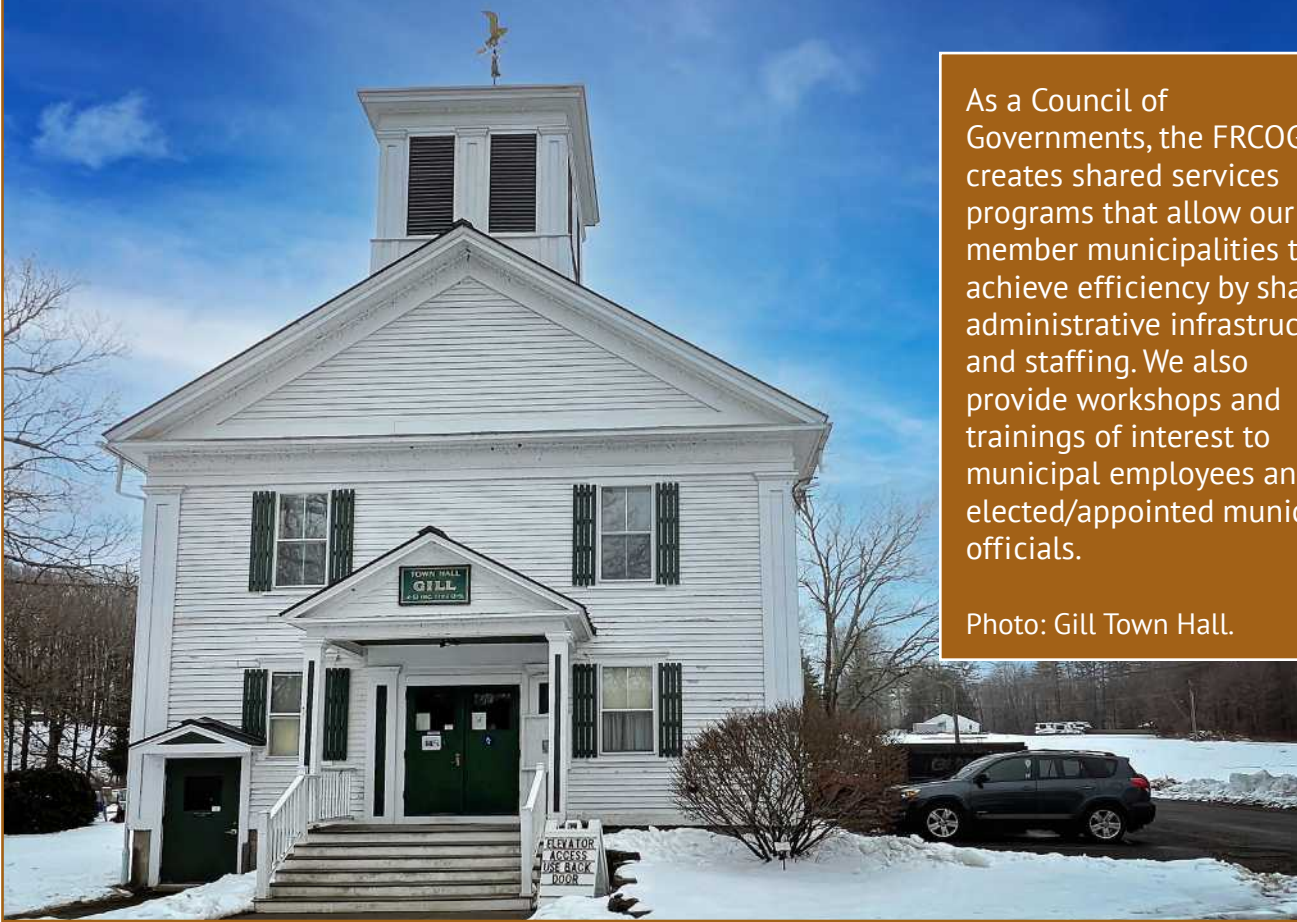


Participants in a tech rescue exercise held in Franklin County, summer 2022.

SHARED MUNICIPAL SERVICES

As a Council of Governments, the FRCOG creates shared services programs that allow our member municipalities to achieve efficiency by sharing administrative infrastructure and staffing. We also provide workshops and trainings of interest to municipal employees and elected/appointed municipal officials.

Photo: Gill Town Hall.



Shared Service Programs Make More Possible in 2022

The **Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program (FCCIP)** allows 16 towns to share the costs of providing state-mandated inspections and local zoning enforcement by certified inspectors, and to provide information regarding building, zoning, plumbing & gas, and wiring requirements to their residents and businesses. In 2022, FCCIP staff processed 2,571 permits of all types, similar to the total in 2021.

The **Town Accounting Program** provides quality municipal accounting services to 12 towns. The program provides member towns with professional accounting staff, access to shared software at a greatly reduced cost, and a service product completed in adherence to the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws and the Uniform Municipal Accounting System. Our seven staff members (4.3 FTE) processed 648 vendor and payroll warrants in 2022.

The **Collective Purchasing Program** provides over 30 separate collective bid opportunities across eight different bid categories, as well as individualized

procurements for complex projects throughout Western Massachusetts. Providing services outside Franklin County keeps the program costs to our Franklin County constituents as low as possible. Of note in 2022, bids were negatively affected by global supply chain issues and increased prices of commodities and construction materials. However, numerous grants, federal ARPA funds, CPA allotments, and additional state funding allowed towns to complete some larger building improvements and road projects.

In 2022 the **Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS)**, a regional health district, celebrated its tenth anniversary. Currently, 12 towns use the services of the Health Agents, and 15 use the services of the Public Health Nurses and Health Educator.

A core function of the health district staff is to protect the public health in member towns through ensuring food and housing safety, water protection through private well and septic work, and licensing of pools,



CPHS 10th anniversary celebrants at a summer 2022 Annual Meeting.

camp, and lodging establishments. Public Health inspection and permitting work in 2022 included reviewing for code compliance and completeness, inspecting, and issuing permits and plans for all member towns.

The CPHS Public Health Nurses increased the number of walk-in wellness clinics in the region, which served residents with health counseling, chronic disease self-management coaching, referrals for services, and blood glucose monitoring. The health district continued to administer flu and COVID-19 vaccine through home visits, community clinics, and supporting state-funded mobile vaccine vendor clinics. The Nurses administered over 900 Flu and COVID vaccines, and

hosted 20 vendor clinics that provided over 2,300 more vaccines.

In 2022, the CPHS Public Health Nurses and Health Educator began a health education outreach program. Each month, CPHS provided an article and informational flyer to member towns on topics of importance to resident health, including tick bite prevention, food access through SNAP and HIP, summer food safety, recovery awareness and supports for people experiencing substance use disorder, tips for septic and private well owners, and managing health and stress during the holiday season.

FRCOG 2022 Municipal Trainings & Workshops

Emergency Preparedness

- Amateur Radio Training & Licensing
- Fire Officer Training
- Vehicle Lift & Stabilization
- Tactical Emergency Casualty Care
- W MA Tech. Rescue Team Exercise

Municipal Officials Continuing Ed.

- State Funding for Western MA
- Selectboard 101
- Town Admin. Roundtables
- Highway Superintendents Roundtable

Planning, Conservation, and Development

- Shelburne Falls Village Summit
- Small Town Housing
- Planning Board Roles & Responsibilities
- Diversifying Rural Housing Opportunities
- Resiliency and Historic Preservation: How Local Communities Can Protect their Resources

Public Health & Community Awareness

- The Attorney General's Housing Renewal
- Youth Mental Health
- Pre-Rental Housing Inspection
- How to Administer Naloxone/Narcan
- Three-In-One Food Safety Training
- Public Health Roundtables

TRANSPORTATION



Transportation touches all our lives every day, whether driving to the store, biking to school, taking the bus to work, or navigating curbs and sidewalks on foot or with an assisted mobility device. The FRCOG works to provide the region with a transportation network that is as sustainable and multi-modal as possible.

Photo: North County Road in Leyden.

Unpaved Roads Assessments in Franklin County

The network of rural unpaved roads throughout Franklin County is vulnerable to the effects of changing precipitation patterns, flooding, and freeze-thaw cycles causing more frequent and involved maintenance work. During “mud season” or very high rain events, these roads can become impassable, leaving households isolated and stranded. Due to climate change, “mud season” is happening several times a year, rather than historically only in the late spring. These repetitive recurrences increase municipal costs, impair emergency access, and intensify the amount of sediment washing into nearby waterbodies and sensitive habitats. Small towns can be burdened by maintenance and labor costs to mitigate these impacts.

In the spring of 2022, the FRCOG conducted a survey of Highway Superintendents in Franklin County and the surrounding region to better understand the issues related to unpaved roads, and the costs that are involved in regular maintenance and emergency repairs. The FRCOG also created an online, interactive map for regional residents to mark specific locations of unpaved roads issues, found at: <https://rb.gy/blj9qa>. The results indicated that the majority of our towns spend at least \$25,000, and up to \$120,000, on dirt/

gravel road maintenance per year; a typical finding is towns will spend four times as much on maintenance of unpaved roads as they do on paved roads, or need to defer basic maintenance due to lack of funding.

Most unpaved roads are classified as local roads, and therefore are not eligible for federal funding for maintenance or reconstruction. This limits towns to using Chapter 90 or state grant funds, which is not sufficient—the most necessary funding is for more expensive and complicated projects that would bring these unpaved roads up to current standards and make them more resilient to the effects of climate change.

The FRCOG is using the data collected through these surveys to create a Dirt Roads Stormwater Management Toolkit. The toolkit will help provide realistic strategies and best management practices to maintain and preserve unpaved roads, reduce maintenance costs, and protect sensitive environmental resources.

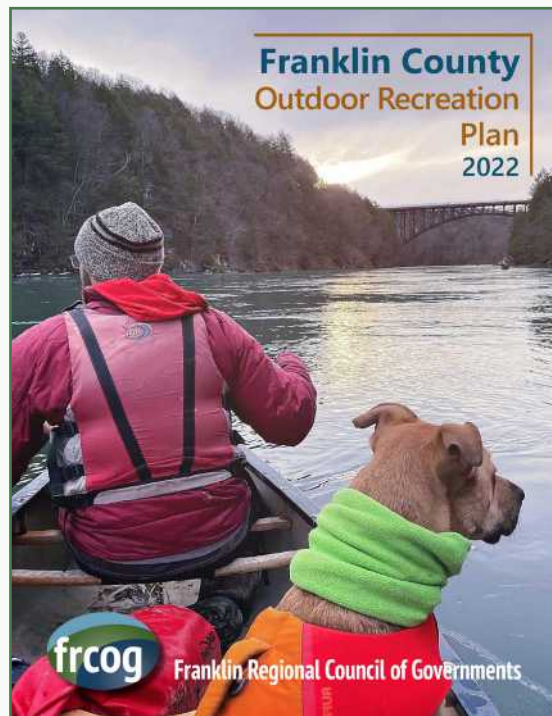
The issues highlighted by our 2022 efforts were recognized by MassDOT, who have begun analysis of how the Commonwealth can help address the costs and issues related to unpaved roads.

Franklin County Outdoor Recreation Plan

In 2022, the FRCOG Transportation Planning staff developed a comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for Franklin County that presents considerations for improving outdoor recreation in the region. The plan is designed to assist local communities, non-profits, and recreation-focused groups. It focuses on access to recreation, and addresses barriers that may be inhibiting use, such as transportation and infrastructure-related considerations, and information needed by potential users to ensure access and safety. The plan also considers recreation which has the potential for further growth in the region.

Staff compiled an inventory and assessment of the existing outdoor recreation assets by location and type, evaluated existing challenges, identified ways to improve user experiences, recommended improvements, and examined trends to determine the future needs for recreation in Franklin County.

As part of the work on the plan, staff gathered geographic information system (GIS) data points and site-specific information to create an online region-wide map. This map-based information is a valuable tool for future planning work. In 2023, staff will use the data to develop a public-facing



online map that will serve as a resource for potential recreation users.

The Franklin County Outdoor Recreation Plan is available on our website.

In Remembrance of Maureen Mullaney

With acute sadness, we report Transportation and GIS Program Manager Maureen Mullaney died in late September of 2022. Maureen worked at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments for just under 30 years, and left her imprint on all of our work related to transportation infrastructure, accessibility and safety.

As a Transportation Planner and Program Manager, Maureen knew that transportation infrastructure projects are often long-range and incremental. It is not lost on us that in 2022, we saw significant progress in passenger rail infrastructure in our region. Maureen's dedicated work with state, regional and local partners leaves a legacy of permanent north-south passenger rail service in the County, with significant progress towards east-west rail as well. Maureen would be the first to say all the accomplishments under her tenure were the results of numerous years of many people working together. She was known for her deep love of family, her sharp sense of humor, and her passion for celebrating life. She is deeply missed.

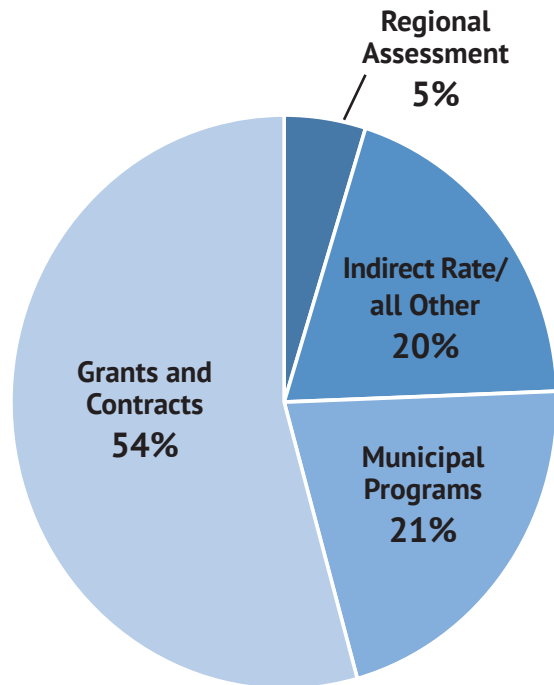


FINANCIAL REPORT

Over the past 25 years, the FRCOG has managed our fiduciary responsibilities with careful stewardship by our Finance Committee, Council and staff. The financial strength and integrity of the FRCOG yielded significant benefit to the region and its municipalities in 2022.

Year after year, FRCOG uses approximately \$500,000 in membership assessments from our municipalities as a springboard to apply for grants. In FY2022, the FRCOG created and delivered valued programs to the region in excess of \$8 million, meaning we leveraged and multiplied local funds by 16x for the benefit of our municipalities and stakeholders.

Annual Financial Statements and Fiscal Reviews for the FRCOG can be found in the Publications section of our website.



FRCOG FY22 Revenues by Funding Source

2022 FUNDERS

The FRCOG is grateful to the following state and federal departments and agencies for their trust in our ability to help guide and sustain Franklin County.

FEDERAL

- United States Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- United States Department of Justice (DOJ)
- United States Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

STATE

- Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER)
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Administration and Finance (EOA&F)
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS)

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

FRCOG staff members sit on a variety of boards and committees representing the FRCOG, the region and Franklin County communities, either directly as part of their responsibilities, or on a volunteer basis. In 2022 these included:

- Age- and Dementia-Friendly Franklin County and North Quabbin Steering Committee
- Association of State Floodplain Managers
- Baystate Franklin Community Advisory Board
- Baystate Franklin Medical Center Community Benefits Advisory Council
- Coalition for Local Public Health Steering Committee
- Common Capital Board of Directors
- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts Trustees
- Community Health Center of Franklin County Board of Directors
- Creating Resilient Communities
- Del Valle Institute Training and Exercise Advisory Committee
- Dementia-Friendly Massachusetts Physical Infrastructure Committee
- Economic Development Council of Western MA Economic Development Partners
- Four Rivers Educational Foundation
- Franklin Conservation District
- Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
- Franklin County Community Development Corporation Board of Directors and Loan Review Committee
- Franklin County Food Council
- Franklin County Resource Network
- Franklin Regional Economic Development Initiative
- Franklin Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board
- Greenfield Mayor's Task Force Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
- Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Steering Committee
- Massachusetts Association for Floodplain Management
- Massachusetts Association of Public Purchasing Officials
- Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies
- Massachusetts Broadband Institute Board of Directors
- Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services Center for Strategic Prevention Support Management Team
- Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment Working Group
- Massachusetts Cyber Resilient Working Group
- Massachusetts Ecosystem Climate Adaptation Network
- Massachusetts Food System Collaborative
- Massachusetts Food Policy Council
- Massachusetts Municipal Association Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration
- Massachusetts Mutual Aid Plan Advisory Board
- Massachusetts Rural Policy Advisory Commission
- MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board Youth Career Connections Council
- Mohawk Trail Regional School District COVID Task Force
- New England Learning Center for Women in Transition's Coalition for Racial Justice
- New England Public Media Board of Directors
- North Quabbin Children's Health and Wellness System of Care
- North Quabbin Community Coalition Prevention, Addiction, Recovery, and Treatment (PART) Task Force
- Opioid Task Force of Franklin County and North Quabbin Executive Council
- Regional Transit Authority Advocates Coalition
- Rural Development, Inc. Board of Directors
- Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts Program Committee and Legislative Committee
- Welcoming and Belonging Franklin County Leadership Team
- Western Massachusetts Health Equity Network Coordinating Team
- Western Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition Steering Committee
- Western Massachusetts Public Health Association Executive Committee

FRCOG STAFF

Kat Allen

Partnership for Youth Coordinator

Jessica Atwood

Economic Development Program Manager

Jen Audley

CHIP Coordinator

Keith Barnicle

Economic Development Projects Planner

Ellen Batchelder

Assistant Procurement Officer

Audrey Boraski

Land Use & Transportation Planner

Rebekah Boyd

Administrative Services Coordinator

Chris Brothers

Online Permit Administrator

Raine Brown

Homeland Security Program Manager

Ryan Clary

Senior GIS Specialist

Randy Crochier

Public Health Program Manager

Lisa Danek Burke

Regional Health Agent

Bob Dean

Director of Regional Services

Erin Degnan

Town Accountant

Andrea Donlon

Sr. Land Use & Natural Resources Planner

Amanda Doster

Regional Projects Coordinator

Linda Dunlavy

Executive Director

Bill Erman

Alternate Electrical Inspector

Emilee Felton

Town Accounting Assistant

Leigh-Ellen Figueroa

Health & Equity Programs Coordinator

Kala Fisher

Town Accountant

Siobhan Fitzgerald

Parent & Family Engagement Facilitator

Tamsin Flanders

Land Use & Natural Resources Planner

Andy French

Plumbing Inspector

Allison Gage

Land Use & Natural Resources Planner

Ilana Gerjuoy

Safe Streets Safe Schools Coalition Coordinator

Beth Giannini

Transportation Program Manager

Debbie Gonzalez

Youth Engagement Associate/AmeriCorps

Jeff Gougeon

Local Inspector

Linda Gross

Assistant Finance Director

Nick Hathaway

Evaluation Coordinator

James Hawkins

Building Commissioner

Keyedrya Jacobs

Community Engagement & Program Associate

Liz Jacobson-Carroll

Administrative Services Assistant

Debbie Jones

Town Accountant

Mike Kociela

Town Accountant

Stacey Langnecht

Parent & Family Engagement Workgroup Co-Chair

Dara LaPlante

Town Accountant

Paul Lemelin

Permitting Coordinator/Zoning Analyst

Nicholas Licata

Emergency Preparedness Planner

Kimberly Noake MacPhee

Land Use & Natural Resources Program Manager

Mark Maloni

Communications Manager

Rachel Mason

Homeland Security Assistant

Thomas McDonald

Electrical Inspector

Claire McGinnis

Director of Finance

Moon Morgan

Accountant

Joyce Muka

Town Accountant

Maureen Mullaney

Transportation & GIS Program Manager

Dan Nietzsche

Emergency Preparedness Planner

Maureen O'Reilly

Health Educator/Epidemiologist

Sarah Patton

Early Childhood Educator

Megan Rhodes

GIS Program Manager & Planning Coordinator

Chet Rogers

Alternate Plumbing Inspector

Tracy Rogers

Emergency Preparedness Program Manager

Meg Ryan

Regional Public Health Nurse

Laurie Scarbrough

Transportation Planning Engineer

Kurt Schellenberg

Regional Health Agent

Kurt Seaman

Radio System Manager

Peggy Sloan

Director of Planning

Dana Spring

Electrical Inspector

Rachel Stoler

Community Health Program Manager

Xander Sylvain

Emergency Preparedness Program Manager

Cathryn Thomas

Town Accounting Assistant

Phoebe Walker

Director of Community Services

Lisa White

Regional Public Health Nurse

Andrea Woods

Chief Procurement Officer

Kara Younger

Youth Engagement Facilitator

FRCOG COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ashfield

Paul McLatchy

Bernardston

Stanley Garland
Joel Cole, alternate

Buckland

Heather Butler
Barry Del Castilho, alternate

Charlemont

Marguerite Willis
Sarah Reynolds, alternate

Colrain

Kevin Fox, Council Clerk
Joe Kurland, alternate

Conway

Philip Kantor
Erica Goleman, alternate

Deerfield

Trevor McDaniel, Council Chair
Kayce Warren, alternate

Erving

William A. Bembury
Bryan Smith, alternate

Gill

Greg Snedeker, Council Vice Chair
Charles Garbiel, alternate

Greenfield

Mayor Roxann Wedegartner
Danielle Letourneau, alternate

Hawley

Will Cosby
Hussain Hamdan, alternate

Heath

Brian DeVriese

Leverett

Tim Shores

Leyden

Michele Giarusso

Monroe

Carla Davis-Little
Marcella Stafford-Gore, alternate

Montague

Richard Kuklewicz
Steve Ellis, alternate

New Salem

Carl Seppala

Northfield

Bee Jacque
Alexander Meisner, alternate

Orange

Garbiele Voelker
Jane Peirce, alternate

Rowe

Janice Boudreau

Shelburne

Robert Manners
Andrew Baker, alternate

Shutesbury

Ellen McKay
Rita Farrell, alternate

Sunderland

Thomas D. Fydenkevez
David J. Pierce, alternate

Warwick

Alan Genovese

Wendell

Michael Idoine
Daniel Keller, alternate

Whately

Lynn Sibley
Brian Domina, alternate

Franklin Regional Planning Board Appointee

Emily Johnson

Regionally Elected Members

Jay DiPucchio
Bill Perlman

Council Apointments to the Franklin County Transportation Planning Organization:

West County – Heather Butler
Central County – Steve Ellis
East County – Gabe Voelker

2022 Council Committee Memberships

Executive Committee

Bill Perlman, Chair
Jay DiPucchio, Vice Chair
Kevin Fox, Clerk
Roxann Wedegartner
Emily Johnson

Finance Committee

Michele Giarusso, Chair
Kevin Fox, Vice Chair
Jay DiPucchio
Ellen McKay
Kayce Warren
Bee Jacque
(one vacancy)

Personnel Committee

Bill Perlman, Chair
Kayce Warren
Bryan Smith
Jane Peirce
(one vacancy)



SERVICES TO CHARLEMONT IN 2022

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND LAND USE

- Provided technical assistance to the planning board to prepare zoning bylaw changes addressing agricultural land use, solar facilities, and telecommunications facilities and assisted with the public hearing process.
- Assisted the town administrator with completing the FY22 MA Green Communities Annual Report.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

- Conducted the annual student health survey to assess attitudes and behavior among middle and high school students. Reported to Mohawk Trail Regional School (MTRS) District administrators on results from 112 Mohawk students, representing 82% of the 8th, 10th, and 12th grade classes. Survey data meets federal requirements for the school and is valuable for grant writing and program planning.
- Provided resources for advancing racial justice in schools to the MTRS district.
- Provided coaching on restorative practices in MTRS District.
- Provided training, materials, and technical assistance for the new, evidence-based PreVenture substance use prevention and mental health promotion program in the school district.
- Provided funding and technical assistance for efforts to increase school-connectedness for students in the MTRS Supported Classroom program, including food safety and CPR/first aid training.
- Provided funding for school-connectedness activities for students and their families at Hawlemont.
- Provided funding and facilitation support to the Mary Lyon Foundation for the creation of the West County People Supporting People Network, which met quarterly to bring together providers from the county's healthcare and human service sectors with community stakeholders in West County, including one meeting at the Charlemont Fairgrounds.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Coordinated the creation of the Deerfield River Outdoor Recreation Study; the Deerfield River Connectivity Project Report, which provided information on how WiFi connectivity could be improved at key river access locations; the Upper Connecticut River Public Safety Map; and signage to identify emergency take-out areas along the upper sections of the Deerfield River.
- Secured permitting from the MA Department of Transportation and funded three porta-potties for three months at the Shunpike Rest area for use by outdoor recreation visitors.
- Met with the town administrator to discuss the municipality's priority town projects seeking funding.

SHARED MUNICIPAL SERVICES

- Charlemont contracted with the FRCOG to receive collective bid pricing for highway products and services, including rental equipment; heating and vehicle fuel; school district fire extinguisher services; and dog tags and licenses. Staff also facilitated a construction bid for improvements to Route 8A under a MassWorks Grant.
- The FRCOG Cooperative Inspections program issued 52 building permits, 39 electrical permits, 38 plumbing/gas permits, and 13 Certificates of Inspection for Charlemont in 2022.
- Charlemont is a member of the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS), a health district based at the FRCOG. CPHS staff:
 - Facilitated COVID-19 and flu vaccine clinics between state mobile vendors and local schools, senior centers and libraries. These clinics served over 1,000 individuals in West County, including many Charlemont residents. Additionally, nurses gave 363 Flu and 548 COVID vaccinations at CPHS Walk-in Wellness hours, vaccination clinics, and home visits. Among these, Charlemont residents received 54 vaccines.
 - Completed state-mandated infectious disease surveillance/contact tracing and reporting for communicable disease cases in district member towns, including 142 Charlemont cases, 129 of which were COVID-19.
 - Collaborated on a West County community training on how to identify an overdose and what to do.
 - Hosted CPHS Walk-in Wellness nursing hours at the Charlemont Federated Church Senior Center and Good Neighbors: saw

80 Charlemont/Hawley residents for 92 separate visits.

- Offered sharps collection and box exchange in collaboration with Franklin County Solid Waste Management District at all CPHS Walk-in Wellness hours: 118 boxes were exchanged.
- Supported the Franklin County Age- and Dementia- Friendly Communities initiative by enrolling 5 new towns, conducting a survey of needs and 4 focus groups for early 2022, gathering participants for work groups to identify survey results priorities from survey results, and speaking to the Charlemont Council on Aging about the initiative.
- Served on the MTRS District's COVID-19 Task Force on behalf of the board of health.
- Provided guidance and training to the board of health members serving as agents for the town.
- Offered tick prevention materials and help for residents accessing tick tests. Through a district program and Department of Public Health subsidy, 8 Charlemont residents received low-cost tick tests, a value of \$240. Of Charlemont ticks tested, 37% were found to be positive for the Lyme Disease Pathogen, and 12% for the Anaplasmosis pathogen.
- Assisted businesses with the CPHS on-line permitting system, and provided technical support for annual permit applications. Processed 66 local and regional annual permits for Charlemont.
- Enforcement of the title-5 (septic) code for the town included: conducting 9 soil evaluations for septic systems; reviewing 12 septic system plans, visiting sites, conducting final installation inspections, and preparing certificates of compliance; witnessing 9 title-5 inspections prior to property transfer; and issuing 3 local upgrade approvals and septic permits.
- Provided oversight and guidance to permit and inspect the installation of a new large septic system at the Berkshire East Ski Area to serve Charlemont
- Conducted 21 retail food inspections; inspected 1 pool for safety; inspected 6 campgrounds /mobile home parks, permitted 4 wells; and assisted Charlemont businesses and residents with sanitary code compliance. Permitted and inspected 11 temporary food establishments.
- Inspected multiple housing cases with varying degrees of complexity.
- Licensed and inspected 14 short-term rental units.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The following list represents the FRCOG workshops, roundtables and training sessions that Charlemont public officials, staff, and residents attended, and the number in attendance.

Emergency Preparedness & Homeland Security

Fire Officer Training – 1

Municipal Officials' Continuing Education

Town Administrator Roundtable (qtrly) – 1

Planning, Conservation & Development

Diversifying Rural Housing Opportunities – 1

Small Town Housing -- 3

Public Health & Community Awareness

Pre-Rental Housing Inspections – 1

Three-In-One Food Safety Training – 12

Public Health Roundtable (monthly) – 1

Additionally, FRCOG staff organized and facilitated educational information meetings for town energy committees, including presenting information on various topics and conducting follow-up communication.

TRANSPORTATION

- Administered a state MassTrails Grant for trail improvements and information kiosks on the Mohican-Mohawk Trail. Facilitated the design of trailhead kiosk panels.
- Participated in the Northern Tier Rail study to examine the feasibility of passenger rail service connecting North Adams, Greenfield, and Boston.
- Completed the MassTrails funded Western Massachusetts Mountain Biking Project, which included creating a map for the trails in Dubuque State Forest.
- Conducted traffic counts on Colrain Road, South River Road, Tower Road and Zoar Road.
- Completed planning and pre-implementation work for the installation of Franklin County Bikeway wayfinding signs.



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

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Greenfield, MA 01301

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<https://frcog.org/>



<https://www.facebook.com/FranklinRegionalCouncilofGovernments/>



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