



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Franklin Regional Planning Board— *MINUTES*

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| Date & Time: | Thursday, March 23, 2023 / 6:00 – 7:40 p.m. |
| Location: | Remote Meeting via Zoom |
| Facilitator: | Jerry Lund, Chair - FRPB; Peggy Sloan, Planning Director - FRCOG |

FRPB MEMBERS

- Jerry Lund**, Chair, Leyden, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Sam Birch**, Wendell At-Large
- Heidi Bohn**, New Salem Planning Board
- Ron Coler**, Ashfield At-Large
- David Dean**, Sunderland Select Board
- Jennifer Gross**, 1ST Vice Chair, Wendell Select Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Emily Johnson**, Deerfield At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Richard Nathorst**, Leverett Planning Board
- Charles Olchowski**, Greenfield At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Walker Powell**, Orange Select Board
- Michael Shaffer**, Erving At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Jane Shaney**, Ashfield Planning Board
- Joseph Strzegowski**, Conway Planning Board
- Chuck Washer**, Shelburne Select Board, FRPB Rep. to the REPC
- Tricia Yacovone-Biagi**, Shelburne Planning Board

FRCOG STAFF

- Peggy Sloan**, Planning & Development Director; **Liz Jacobson-Carroll**, Administrative Services Assistant; **Andrea Donlon**, Sr. Land Use and Natural Resources Planner; **Kimberly Noake MacPhee**, Land Use & Natural Resources Program Manager & Climate Resiliency Specialist

PRESENTERS/GUESTS

- Andrew Baker**, Shelburne Select Board
- Natan Cohen**, Wildflower Alliance
- Elizabeth Erickson**, Colrain
- David Greenberg**, Colrain Planning Board
- Tom Sullivan**, PollinatorsWelcome.com

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| 1. Introductions and Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes | C. Olchowski, FRPB Vice Chair & FRPB Members |
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C. Olchowski convened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. A round of introductions followed.

E. Johnson moved to adopt the January 26, 2023 minutes, R. Coler seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously, by roll call, with three abstentions (Greenburg, Yacovone-Biagi & Strzegowski).

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| 2. Presentation and Discussion on the Regional Pollinator Plan | K. MacPhee, FRCOG |
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K. MacPhee began her presentation by explaining the needs and importance of native pollinators. She then summarized Phase I of the project, which involved extensive research and development with an initial eight towns* from 2019 to 2021. A Pollinator Action Plan was created for each town, and both a Regional Pollinator Action Plan and a Regional Pollinator Habitat Corridor Implementation Toolkit were created for broader use. This trio of documents is the first of its kind in the state, she noted, and will serve as a model. She described and depicted mapping methods, landscape scale analyses, habitat enhancement strategies, and more that were developed for the towns.

Thanks to a second State grant, MacPhee and colleagues are launching Phase II. They will start by convening the eight original towns to identify successes and challenges – and then to include five** more towns. They will provide technical assistance to: promote pollinator friendly initiatives and projects, help Planning Boards revise zoning bylaws and regulations that support pollinator habitat, highway departments and other transportation officials for designing and enhancing roadside pollinator habitat.

Discussion topics included bylaws pertaining to solar power facilities, the Yard-by-Yard initiative, the adjacent work of wildlife biologists, non-native bees and invasive plant species, and delayed mowing, among others.

*Heath, Shelburne Conway, Greenfield, Bernardston, Montague, Wendell and Orange

**Ashfield, Buckland, Colrain, Deerfield and Shutesbury

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| 3. Presentation and Discussion on Short Term Residential Rentals (STRs) | A. Donlon, FRCOG |
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This presentation was recorded and is viewable here, if you missed it:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pq71OxRiRCI>

A. Donlon described her grant-funded research into the relatively recent growth of the short-term rental market, and its possible influence on the availability of long-term housing units (for both rental and sale) in Franklin County. She explained challenges and methods of gathering needed data, noting her estimate of approximately 300 units in the county, 40 – 50% of which are in “West County.”

All STRs are subject to the MA Dept. of Revenue’s lodging tax, but towns must adopt a bylaw in order to collect a local lodging tax. Fifteen Franklin County towns have done so. FRCOG has a sample warrant article for any town that wants to opt in to the local lodging tax. Most towns deposit the income into their municipal general fund, but a town could earmark revenues specifically for housing (for example, rental assistance, housing rehabilitation, or conversion of a town-owned property to affordable housing). She shared several charts analyzing revenue by town and county, over recent time periods. She mentioned differences in general bylaws and zoning bylaws, and summarized activity in MA towns.

Acknowledging that the STRs are now well-established within the local tourism industry (which totaled \$729, 000 last year) alongside hotels, motels and bed & breakfast venues, Donlon reviewed a list of

considerations for municipal planning departments. She pointed out that specific types of regulations address the various issues of concern to a municipality.

Discussion topics included the impact of the STR on a second/vacation home versus that of converting a home to an investment property for STR use. Only the latter will remove a local long-term housing unit from the market, A. Baker remarked. J. Gross noted that State regulations for landlords providing long-term rental housing has also pushed owners toward STRs.

General and zoning bylaws must be adopted at Town Meeting, Donlon said, adding that a list and summary of bylaws other towns have adopted to address STRs is available from FRCOG.

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| 4. Brief Update on the FERC Relicensing Process | P. Sloan, FRCOG |
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Sloan stated that discussions between stakeholders and FirstLight regarding erosion control have been halted. Negotiations regarding a recreation settlement agreement continue.

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| 5. Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting/Adjourn | J. Lund, FRPB Chair |
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Shaffer moved to adjourn the meeting, Strzegowski seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM by roll call vote.

Documents Distributed / Presentations Viewed:

- Agenda
- FRPB Minutes, January 26, 2023 – DRAFT
- Regional Pollinator Plan
- Short Term Residential Rentals

The next FRPB meeting will be May 25, 2023. The next FRPB Executive Committee meeting will be held on April 3rd. Copies of all documents are available. Please contact Liz Jacobson-Carroll at ljc@frcog.org or 413-774-3167 x101.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Blyth, Clerk - FRPB