



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

COUNCIL — *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, January 26, 2016 / 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Location:	William B. Allen Room, Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield
Facilitator:	John O’ Rourke, Chair

REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDEES

Kaycee Warren, Ashfield; **Stanley Garland**, Bernardston; Rob Riggan (5:38 p.m.), Buckland; **Kevin Fox**, Colrain; **John O’Rourke**, Conway; **Bryan Smith** (5:41 p.m.) Erving; **Greg Snedeker**, Gill; **William Martin**, Greenfield; **Hussain Hamdan**, Hawley; **Michele Giarusso**, (5:50 p.m.) Leyden; **Wayne Hachey**, New Salem; **Julia Blyth**, Northfield; **Marilyn Wilson**, Rowe; **Andrew Baker**, Shelburne; **Ellen McKay**, Shutesbury; **Tom Fydenkevez**, Sunderland; **Dawn Magi**, Warwick; **Michael Idoine**, Wendell; **Lynn Sibley**, Whately; **Bill Perlman**, Regional; **Jay DiPucchio**, Regional; Jim Basford, FRPB.

STAFF & VISITORS: **Linda Dunlavy**, Executive Director; **Rebekah Boyd**, Admin Services Coordinator; **Patricia Auchard**, Dir. of Finance; **Bob Dean**, Dir. of Reg. Services; **Phoebe Walker**, Dir. of Community Services; **Scott McPherson**, GCTV.

REGRETS: **Toby Gould**, Charlemont; **Carolyn Ness**, Deerfield; **ABSENT:** **Brian DeVriese**, Heath; **Gordon Fretwell**, Leverett; **David Nash**, Monroe; **Richard Kuklewicz**, Montague; **Diana Schindler**, Orange.

1. Roll Call, & Adopt 11/3/16 minutes	John O’Rourke
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The Chair convened the meeting at 5:32 p.m. Roll call was taken and a general and financial quorum was met with 19 members and 57.73 % of the weighted vote of the total membership attending. (Rob Riggan, Buckland; Bryan Smith, Erving; and Michele Giarusso, Leyden arrived after roll call, but in time to vote on financial matters.)

Ellen M. moved adoption of the 7/21/16 minutes. Bill Perlman seconded. All in favor with one abstention.

2. Council Update	John O’Rourke
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John O announced that the next two meetings: April 20 and July 20. He welcomed new members Jay DiPucchio (Regionally Elected) and Franklin Regional Planning Board Appointee, Jim Basford.

3. Executive Committee Update	Bill Perlman
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See updates.

4. Executive Director Update	Linda Dunlavy
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Linda D. summarized a handful of FRCOG initiative and ongoing projects (*See January 2017 Updates*). These included:

- Receiving outstanding project requests from municipalities (Sunderland, Greenfield, Northfield, Ashfield and Bernardston) for forthcoming District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) projects.
- Looking at how we can expand/change public transportation in Franklin County. March 1 is the date of the summit in which stakeholders will discuss how to expand transit options.
- Monitoring FirstLight Pumped Storage facility relicensing application to FERC.
- In regular contact with Congressman McGovern’s office regarding changes to federal administration and its effects on FRCOG and the region. The Congressman’s office welcomes emails and calls of concern, and finds it helpful to refer to the growing list of comments from constituents. A written letter, they suggested, carries more weight than an email; and an email more than a phone call.

8. Special Presentation & Discussion –

Bob Dean

Franklin County Emergency Communications System (FCECS)

Council took in the slideshow presentation focused on the history, organization and oversight, operations, budget, current challenges, and future options for the operation and maintenance of the aging multi-million dollar emergency communication system serving the county. To date the FCECS program has accrued only \$77,000 in the fund balance.

Members and staff noted problems in functionality symptomatic of the use of obsolescing equipment. Replacement of old mismatched antennas that fail to provide optimal coverage and are a source of interference has begun. This Executive and Finance Committee-approved expense will drain \$70,000 from the \$77,000 fund balance and leave the communication system vulnerable without fund replenishment. Representatives expressed deep concern that if the region experienced an emergency situation, the system could fail, risking the safety and well-being of county residents.

Linda explained that the FY18 budget proposes a replenishment of the Reserve Fund to \$75,000. In answer to a question from Mayor Martin, if the money is not used in FY18, it will stay in the FCECS reserve fund. To the question of whether it made sense to put money into a failing system, one member compared the fund balance appropriation to the action of towns putting aside money in stabilization for unexpected events. We need to have the money available to react quickly, if necessary. If we don’t need it, it stays in the FCECS enterprise account, not the general fund of FRCOG.

If a town’s budget assessment is based on population, and areas of that town are not fully covered by the radio system, can the town get a rebate, asked Bill Martin? FCECS Oversight Committee member Bill P. said dead spots are growing smaller since adding new equipment to the towers. Intermittent and seasonally changing coverage holes are impossible to avoid. Although lower frequencies provide the best coverage, even the old lower frequency system had dead spots. The use of town population for assessment translates roughly into the number of calls that go out, he explained, not the area covered. The assessment formula was created by users when FCECS was first started. It seemed like the fairest way at the time, and all towns agreed, but it could be readdressed by the Oversight Committee. Bill P. suggested that the Mayor ask the Greefield Fire Chief who has a seat on the Oversight Committee to bring that request forward.

The FRCOG radio system manager believes the antenna investment and replacement of GPS units (funded through a Homeland Security grant) will extend the functionality of the system by two years — barring further breakdown of antiquated equipment — and give us time to figure out what’s next for

the FCECS. We have begun conversations with federal and state delegations to explore options for using federal money to replace the system and the possibility of giving the system to the state.

In other parts of the country, county governments exist that have the ability to excise taxes directly for this kind of thing, said Jay DiPucchio. Until the Commonwealth decides to take this over, if we want to continue to be able to respond with police and emergency services, we're going to need this system, and need to invest appropriately, he said. Tom Fydenkevez agreed, saying he felt members should have a strong conversation and urge towns to support this wholly. Hussain Hamdan opposed the idea of handing operations over to the state, feeling it had a history of unaccountability. All other members speaking to the issue expressed support for exploring ways to let go of FRCOG oversight.

5. Personnel Committee Update

Bill Perlman

The Personnel Committee hasn't met since the November Council meeting.

6. Franklin Regional Planning Board (FRPB) Update

Jim Basford

The FRPB recently heard a presentation on short term residential rentals (Air B&Bs) and tiny homes will work with staff on potential model bylaws. The board is also reviewing minor changes to the Zoning Act with respect to the new marijuana laws, and proposing model bylaws to retail operations and cultivation of marijuana. We're also continuing to monitor the ongoing relicensing of the FirstLight pumping stations.

7. Finance Committee Update

Lynn Sibley

Lynn reported that FRCOG didn't receive the Regionalization and Efficiency grant they had hoped for to help fund the new accounting software for FRCOG and Town Accounting program, however another potential source of funding has been identified (*See updates*). To facilitate a July conversion of software, we need to commit to a purchase. Staff has decided on the software (Avila), and is now exploring how to convert it.

Finance Committee recommendations:

- Use FRCOG reserve fund balance to cover the full cost of basic software for the FRCOG.
- Use Accounting Program reserves to cover the full cost of basic software needs for the Town Accounting Program. This has been approved by the Finance Committee.
- Apply for grant funding for additional specialized features that will improve the functioning and efficiency of the Accounting Program and the FRCOG.

Lynn S. moved to use up to \$47,000 of undesignated cash reserve for the purchase of and conversion to new accounting software for the FRCOG. Ellen M. seconded the motion, which passed with one abstention.

Lynn described how the FY18 budget was created and presented a slideshow to the committee highlighting changes and tips for how to best understand (*See PowerPoint slideshow*). Staff then went over the budget page by page (*See Budget and all relative handouts.*)

Ellen M. moved that we pass the budget of \$3,575,676. Michelle G. seconded the motion.

Discussion: Bill M. asked if the total budget we're voting on includes all the grants. Pat explained that it does not include the grants because they're funded separately, but it does include the indirect pool for

the grants. The total budget, including grants, is roughly \$6 million, said Linda. Linda asked if the Council would like to separate the one FCECS budget from the whole budget, and have two separate motions and votes. No one responded in the affirmative.

Only Bill Martin opposes the motion; all other members are in favor. The motion passes with 51.309% of the total weighted vote of the Council.

9. Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance

Ellen M. moved meeting adjournment. Bill M. seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Documents Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes of November 3, 2016
- January 2017 Updates of FRCOG Initiatives and Projects
- FY18 FRCOG Budget Notes
- FY18 FRCOG Council Budget
- *The Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act, A Guide to the New Law Legalizing Recreational Use of Marijuana*, revised January 2017 compiled by K.P Law
- *Marijuana and Youth Health*, Communities That Care Coalition