

FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Executive Director • Linda Dunlavy



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NEWSLETTER

Difficult Financial Times

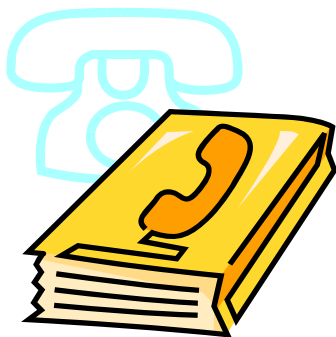
With 9-C mid-year cuts, increasing costs, and a ballot question to repeal the income tax, the FRCOG has been focusing on how to help our member municipalities during these difficult financial times. We have summarized the Massachusetts Taxpayer's Foundation analysis of the impacts to Question 1 and have analyzed the potential cuts to each town's local aid. The FRCOG Procurement Officer has worked with participating communities and our fuel vendors to negotiate lower prices for the cooperative fuel bids this year. We thank both A.R. Sandri for agreeing to reduce the contracted cost of fuel oil by \$0.35/gallon, and Dennis K. Burke, Inc. for reducing the contracted diesel price by \$0.50/gallon beginning on January 1. We are pleased that Senator Stanley Rosenberg is representing our region's needs on the newly formed legislative Special Municipal Relief Commission and we are working with our towns to offer the Senator municipal relief recommendations. With new grant funding we will be pursuing new regional services that will reduce costs and improve services for our members including, assessing services, distribution of software to track Board of Health permits and fees, and assessing the benefit of shared equipment and other services. We continue to be actively involved in helping our school systems benefit from collaborative purchasing opportunities.

Compared to many other organizations and programs throughout Massachusetts, the FRCOG was spared from significant 9-C cuts implemented by Governor Patrick in October. The Board of Health Capacity-Building Workshop Series had its funding cut in half. This series provides much-needed continuing education for local boards of health. Thanks to the funding over the past years, the workshops have been free to local officials. Unfortunately, because of the cut in funding to this program, registration fees will return. The Community Coalition for Teens' Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program was also cut by 50%. This innovative and successful program works with schools and community partners to reduce high-risk behaviors among youth in the North Quabbin region. Conversations are underway now to identify what will be cut and what will remain.

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FRCOG 2009 Directory & Wage & Salary Survey



The FRCOG 2009 Directory is now on-line under www.frcog.org, Publications, General FRCOG. Feel free to print it out. It will be updated quarterly as changes are made. The 2009 Directory that includes contact information for municipal, regional and state officials is complete. Once copies are back from the printer, they will be distributed to each town.

The 2009 Wage & Salary Survey will also be available soon on-line under our website as described above. If you have any questions on either of these two publications, contact Leah Gibson, info@frcog.org.

Recycled Paving A New Option

The cooperative purchasing program stays current with the towns' highway maintenance needs by adding new services and equipment on the highway bid. This year, an environmentally friendly and cost saving process called Cold In Place Recycling was added to the highway bids. The process uses an on-site "train" that includes the machinery to pull up old asphalt, mill it, mix it with fresh asphalt, lay it, and roll it all with little over-the-road trucking and without the need for a lot of new asphalt. A project in Warwick this Fall was very successful. Tim Kilhart, Warwick Highway Superintendent, says that using Cold In Place Recycling saved the town 46% over regular full depth asphalt reclamation. The total savings to the town on the 2.3 mile project on Route 78 was \$175,000. For more information, please contact Andrea Woods, bids@frcog.org.



Homeland Security Grants to Franklin County



The Franklin County Emergency Communications System has received additional funds from the Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) for continued build-out of the emergency radio system. This \$350,000 grant is funding a new antennae and microwave simulcast being constructed on Mt. Independent at Berkshire East Ski Area in Charlemont. This new site will enhance the emergency communication system utilized by Franklin County Fire, Police, and EMS Departments and also improve cross-jurisdictional emergency communication with Berkshire County. The site is expected to be operational by the end of November.



Nineteen Fire Departments throughout Western Massachusetts, including Greenfield, Shelburne, Orange, Leverett, and Ashfield recently had Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) installed in Fire Department vehicles. Utilizing the MDTs, public safety agencies have access to Web EOC (Emergency Operations Center), eCEMP (electronic Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans) and GIS (Geographic Information System) for displaying multiple forms of geographically referenced information, including location of hazardous materials, hydrants, surface water supplies, special populations, etc. Via the internet, agencies also have access to email; internet based street mapping and satellite imaging such as GoogleEarth®; and access to secure information/communication portals.

The FRCOG, as fiduciary, provides coordination and implementation of the Homeland Security grant funds for the WRHSAC. Information about the Western Region's activities and programs can be found at www.wrhsac.org or by contacting Susan Brown, sbrown@frcog.org.

Staples

We have several boxes of E-1 Canon staples left over from a copy machine we don't use any more. Can anyone use them? If you can, please contact Gretchen Johnson, planning@frcog.org.

Park and Ride Study Completed for Franklin County

The FRCOG has just completed to identify and evaluate potential Park and Ride lots throughout Franklin County in order to provide residents travel options for their trips both in the county and to destinations outside of it.

The FRCOG reviewed demographic, economic, and travel data related to transportation needs in order to determine appropriate locations for park and ride lots in the county. Surveys were also distributed to users of the existing MassHighway Charlemont Park and Ride Lot and to users of other parking lots that seemed to be functioning as informal park and ride lots. These surveys confirmed that there is demand for a park and ride lot within the county and that several sites have been acting as informal park and rides. Finally, the FRCOG selected many specific sites based on various criteria around the county that could serve as potential facilities. These sites were then evaluated and narrowed down based on several factors, including: the ease in which they could be accessed; current ownership of the property (public ownership was preferred); the amount of public investment needed to develop the site; and how quickly the site could act as a park and ride lot.



Several areas stand out as prime locations including: the Visitors Center at the Route 2 Rotary; the 7-11 parking lot in Sunderland on Route 116; the intersection of Route 5/10 and Route 116 in South Deerfield/Whately; and the West River Health Center parking lot in Orange at the intersection of Route 2 and West River Street. A draft of the FRCOG's Franklin County Park and Ride Study was recently released for public review and comment (which can be viewed at the FRCOG website) that will run from November 1, 2008 through November 30, 2008. If you would like more information about the study, or would like to offer comments, please contact Megan Rhodes, mrhodes@frcog.org.

Sunderland Scenic Turnout Project

The FRCOG is working with the Town of Sunderland, Stantec Inc. and Urban Forestry Solutions to design improvements to the existing turnout area on Route 47 just south of Falls Road in Sunderland. Route 47 is part of the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway and this improvement project was included as a recommendation in the Corridor Management Plan for the Byway that was completed in 1998. The funding for the design and construction of this project is being provided through the National Scenic Byway Program.

The proposed improvements include the resurfacing of the turnout, improvements to the entrance/exit to enhance visibility, the installation of signs, a picnic table, and an information kiosk. The kiosk is intended to provide information on the Town, the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway and the surrounding landscape. The project also includes selective tree pruning in order to open up the views of the Connecticut River and Mount Sugarloaf from the scenic overlook area. For further information please contact Elizabeth Giannini, giannini@frcog.org.

Local Officials Hone Crisis Communication Skills

Local Boards of Health and health agents, as well as Franklin County CERT team members recently attended the first of a two-part training on Crisis Communication Skills. The series includes information about how to act as a Public Information Officer, including working with the press and how to create good public messages during a crisis. The second in the series, planned for November 12 at GCC's TV Studio, will include mock television interviews as well as further message development training. The FRCOG's Regional Preparedness Program Manager, Thomas Williams, will be the presenter at the event. Interested local officials are welcome to attend the second session, but should contact the FRCOG for a packet of information from the first session. To register, please call Davette Young, admin@frcog.org.

Planning Department Completes Two Comprehensive Watershed Assessment Projects



The staff of the Planning Department recently completed two multi-year watershed assessment projects. The FRCOG received funding from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP) to comprehensively assess nonpoint pollution in six of the major subwatersheds of the Deerfield River watershed, including: the North River, the South River, the Chickley River, the Green River, and two segments of the mainstem of the Deerfield River. The FRCOG partnered with the Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA), the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, and the MA Department of Fish and Game's Riverways/Adopt-A-Stream program and volunteers to complete these projects. Activities conducted during the projects included: an assessment of land use activities, the identification and field-verification of potential non-point sources of pollution, and targeted sampling plan for *E. coli*, an indicator of pathogens. A comprehensive Action Plan for stakeholders in their work to reduce pollution.

The FRCOG also received DEP funding to conduct a Watershed Assessment of the Four Mile Brook watershed in Northfield. The purpose of this project was to provide a comprehensive assessment of the Four Mile Brook watershed and develop strategies and projects for mitigating identified sources of nonpoint source pollution and for managing growth in the watershed. The FRCOG partnered with the Town of Northfield, ABR, Inc., and watershed stakeholders to complete this project.

A new methodology for watershed assessments developed by the Center for Watershed Protection (2004) was used by FRCOG to inventory potential sources of nonpoint pollution along the stream corridors and upland areas of the Four Mile Brook watershed. Volunteers were recruited to assist with the macroinvertebrate sampling program, which assessed current water quality conditions. Two consultants were hired - one to prepare conceptual engineering designs for stormwater runoff control and the other to prepare conceptual designs for managing flow in Four Mile Brook to reduce bank erosion, which threatens the integrity of Four Mile Brook Road. A Watershed Management Plan was developed that includes recommendations for stormwater and unpaved road Best Management Practices, riparian buffer management and restoration, as well as recommendations for new development that will help to prevent nonpoint pollution.

The final Project Reports are available on CD/DVD. For more information, please contact Kimberly Noake MacPhee, P.G., natres@frcog.org.

Community Coalition for Teens turns 20!

The Community Coalition for Teens is celebrating its 20th Anniversary! Since 1988, CCT has been promoting the health and well-being of Franklin County and North Quabbin Youth. The program provides technical assistance to schools and community-based partners in the application of research-based and proven effective approaches to youth development and public health. Its current programs include the annual Regional Teen Health Survey, teen pregnancy prevention, social norms marketing, environmental strategies to prevent teen substance abuse, the Annual Youth Conference, and tobacco prevention and cessation. CCT co-coordinates the Communities That Care Coalition. The CCT Resource Library is open to the public by appointment and has an on-line catalog. CCT partners and collaborators, past, present and future, are cordially invited to stop by the CCT office at 278 Main St., Suite 411 on Thursday, October 30, from 3-5 p.m. for cake and celebration.

Enforcement of Underage Drinking Laws



A clerk at the Curtis Country Store in Charlemont receiving a prize from Erika - a young-looking-21-year old. The clerk carded Erika when she pretended to attempt an alcohol purchase without an id as part of our alcohol purchase survey program.

The Community Coalition for Teens Substance Abuse Prevention Program, in collaboration with the Communities That Care Coalition Laws and Norms Workgroup, is working with towns to increase enforcement of underage drinking laws. Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Deerfield, Gill, Heath, Orange, Shelburne, and Whately have all signed an MOU allowing and encouraging greater cooperation in this effort. Cindy Boyle of the Northwestern District Attorney's office has recruited and trained youth to participate in compliance checks and educational interventions. Chiefs and patrol officers of Buckland, Deerfield, Orange and Shelburne attended a compliance check training held at the DPH offices on September 10th and are working with Glenn Johnson, CCT's Substance Abuse Prevention Program Coordinator, to organize checks. On October 4th an ID check was conducted and nine of the ten markets and package stores in Bernardston, Buckland and Shelburne asked for ID during that check. For more information about how your town can get involved, contact Glenn Johnson, glennj@frcog.org.

Results are in From the First Year of the Connecticut River Water Quality Monitoring Project

Before going out for a paddle or swim during the summer and early fall, recreational users of the Connecticut River are now able to check the internet for up-to-date water quality information on three segments of the river, including one in Franklin County between Turners Falls and Greenfield. This new water quality monitoring project is being conducted by the University of Massachusetts in partnership with the FRCOG, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and the Connecticut River Joint Commissions. The project is one of ten Connecticut River projects funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Water temperature and bacteria data was collected for 26 sites along the river. This data will provide a more complete picture of the river's health and understanding about sources of contamination. This information will be useful not only to recreational users who have direct contact with the waters, but to local, state, and federal officials working to address sources of nonpoint pollution. The monitoring results for the 2008 season can be seen at the draft web site: <http://www.umass.edu/tei/mwwp/ctrivermonitoring.html>. The final design of the web site will provide simple, clear graphics, including a colored flag system, to communicate sampling results. Information, to be presented in both English and Spanish, will be posted within 24 hours of monitoring so that recreational users can make informed decisions about their activities on the river.

If you are interested in volunteering your time next year (training is provided) or have any questions, please call Kimberly Noake MacPhee, P.G., natres@frcog.org.

Emergency Communications Using Amateur Radio

Emergency Communications is a vital part of planning for disasters before, during and after an event. The region has done a tremendous job at coordination and implementation of police and fire communications. Another level of communications is Amateur radio. Amateur radio operators have been used in almost every disaster that has occurred throughout the United States and around the world. Recently, it was discovered that one of the amateur radio antenna systems located in the Greenfield Emergency Operation Center (EOC) was not operational. Chet Chin, FRCOG MRD Coordinator and Bill Boutwell, both ham radio operators, went to the EOC to help restore the antenna for normal operation. With the help of the Greenfield Fire Department, the Greenfield EOC Amateur radio equipment has been tested and all installed equipment is in 100% working condition! Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) ham radio operators can be confident that when all else (communications) fails, amateur radio will be there to provide backup communications. There are at least 15 CERT licensed ham radio operators on our Franklin County CERT team! Thank you to the Greenfield Fire Department for making this happen in a safe and efficient manner. Working together, we got the job done and are better prepared when the phones go down, cell phone towers get overloaded, or other normal modes of communications fails. MRC and CERT will be continuing our cooperative efforts to assist each other when the call comes. For more information please contact, Chet Chin, mrc@frcog.org.



Greenfield Rotary Update

The long awaited Safety Improvements at the Greenfield Rotary are now complete. The development of these improvements was the result of a collaborative process between the FRCOG and MassHighway District 2. The bulk of the changes involved adding pavement markings and directional signage, but some minor widening was required to accommodate an additional lane on the Route 2 and Route 2A approaches. Improvements appear to be having the desired effect in slowing circulating vehicle speeds, and reducing congestion. Some rear-end crashes continue to be reported at the Rotary, but it is too early to determine how successful the improvements have been in crash reduction. In general, the feedback on the improvements has been very positive, although some have commented on the distraction of the pavement marking text on the rotary approaches. These and other aspects of the improvements continue to be monitored and will be adjusted as deemed necessary. For more information on this project or to provide feedback contact Keith P. Wilson, kwilson@frcog.org.



MassHighway Safety Toolbox

MassHighway's Traffic Safety Toolbox (<http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/safetytoolbox/>) provides a resource for municipal staff and citizens to identify potential countermeasures for addressing safety concerns in their communities. Specifically, a series of fact sheets provide guidance and information regarding selected traffic safety and engineering topics. For assistance with safety concerns in your community, please contact Keith P. Wilson, kwilson@frcog.org.

ColourBright Reflective Pavement Marking Presentation



The FRCOG in coordination with the Town of Montague recently hosted a presentation by Ennis Paint (www.ennispaint.com) on the ColourBright Reflective Pavement Marking material. Developed in the United Kingdom, ColourBright combines a very durable colored (red, green, yellow and white) Bauxite Aggregate and powerful reflectors (four times as bright as traditional pavement marking materials) called Clusterbeads. This product has proved most effective in wet conditions when typical thermo plastic and marking paints tend to be least effective, but should have added benefits under all conditions, especially in unlit areas. The FRCOG would like to thank Dan Larouche and Tom Bergeron at the Town of Montague for their assistance in setting up the presentation and a potential crosswalk site for future experimentation. For more information, please contact Keith P. Wilson, kwilson@frcog.org.

Conway Exercise a Success

On October 25th 2008, the town of Conway Massachusetts held an innovative exercise that simulated an infectious disease that would have serious consequences if an ordinary emergency dispensing site was activated. This exercise was different in that it was planned to be a door to door delivery of medications to prevent spreading of an infection to large groups of people gathering in one place.

The exercise involved numerous town employees including the board of health, police, fire, emergency services, and several volunteer organizations such as the Community Emergency Response Team, Medical Reserve Corps and amateur radio. Town planners, with the assistance of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments worked out a system of door to door delivery that exceeded the expectations of the operation.

Deerfield and Sunderland will also be doing a door-to-door exercise plan this fall. The lessons learned from all three of these exercises will be used to inform an exercise that the Town of Whately has planned for the Spring of 2009.

Great planning, nearly flawless execution of the plan and teamwork of all involved made this a model operation for home distribution of critical medications.

For more information, please contact Chet Chin, mrc@frcog.org.



Pictured from left to right are volunteers Chet Chin, Richard Wheeler, Tom Foxwell and Marc Tremblay.

Connecticut River Valley Heritage Landscape Inventory

The FRCOG is pleased to report that the following Franklin County towns have been selected to participate in the Connecticut River Valley Heritage Landscape Program: **Bernardston, Greenfield, Leverett, New Salem, and Whately.** The Heritage Landscape Inventory Program is an initiative managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) that is built upon prior efforts to identify and document heritage landscapes of our Commonwealth that are vital to the history, character, and quality of life of our communities. The DCR is partnering with the FRCOG and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program to the Connecticut River valley region of western Massachusetts.

DCR defines heritage landscapes as those special places and spaces that help define the character of your community - the result of human interaction with the natural resources of an area, which influence the use and development of land. These geographic areas contain both natural and cultural resources. Heritage landscapes come in many forms – they could vary from cemeteries, farms, and mill sites to village centers, agricultural valleys, river corridors and scenic byways. The FRCOG will be working with participating communities to identify and prioritize unprotected heritage landscapes; conduct fieldwork to assess them; and document issues, opportunities and recommendations for top landscapes in each community. Resulting reports and maps will be used to help the community plan for preservation of these sites. For more information about this project, or to get a list of dates for local meetings, please contact Melissa Adams, adams@frcog.org.

Changes to the Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting Program

The Chapter 43D Program encourages towns to implement an expedited and streamlined local permit process for targeted economic development sites. A town may choose to designate one or more “Priority Development Sites” (PDS), which must meet specific criteria and have property owner approval, and then apply to the state for the formal approval of this designation. Participating towns are eligible to apply for a one-time technical assistance grant. In September 2008, significant changes were made to 43D Program. A major change is that the amount available for grants has been reduced to \$60,000. Some changes have been made to what tasks are eligible in the grant’s scope of services. All of the changes are described in the program guidance provided on the program website (www.mass.gov/mpro).

In Franklin County, technical assistance grants have been awarded and PDS locations have been designated in Deerfield, Montague, Gill, Orange, Bernardston, and Greenfield. If your community would like more information about the Chapter 43D Program or about how to streamline the permitting process in your community, please contact Peggy Sloan, psloan@frcog.org.

FRCOG Council Representatives for FY 2009

Ashfield	Dave Deherdt	Montague	Patricia Allen
Bernardston	Stanley Garland	New Salem	Jennifer Sandova
Buckland	Stefan Racz	Northfield	Kathleen Wright
Charlemont	Paul Fantucchio	Orange	Rick Kwiatkowski
Colrain	Duane Scranton	Rowe	James Brown
Conway	Tom Spiro	Shelburne	John Payne
Deerfield	John Paciorek	Shutesbury	F. Ellen McKay, Chair
Erving	Thomas Sharp, Vice Chair	Sunderland	Tom Fydenkevez
Gill	Nancy Griswold	Warwick	Frederick Abbott
Greenfield	Christine Forgey	Wendell	Nina Keller
Hawley	Philip Keenan	Whately	Lynn Sibley
Heath	Thomas Lively	FRPB Rep.	Sam Lovejoy, Secretary
Leverett	Gordon Fretwell	Reg. Elected	Ann Banash
Leyden	Michele Giarusso	Reg. Elected	Bill Perlman
Monroe	David Nash		

