ARTICLE 31

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Charter Change Fact Sheet

What is the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)?

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments is a regional service organization serving the twenty-six towns of Franklin County. It was formed in 1997 in response to the abolition of County Government and the Franklin County Commission.

The FRCOG is a voluntary membership organization. All 26 municipalities of Franklin County are members. Membership assessment is as low as possible and pays for administration, advocacy and special projects.

> The FRCOG's mission: 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.

Participation in fee-for-service municipal service programs is voluntary and paid through separate assessments (with assessment formulas unique to each program); federal and state grants fund other programs.

The FRCOG is both a Council of Governments (COG) and the designated Regional Planning Agency (RPA) for Franklin County. COGs provide cooperative planning, coordination, and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines; RPAs, created by Massachusetts General Law in 1974, study, plan, and recommend how a region can protect and enhance its environment, economy and quality of life through the land use, natural resources, climate resiliency, economic development, and transportation.

What is the FRCOG Charter?

Franklin County Commission (the name of our former county government) provided valuable services to the towns of Franklin County and was the legislatively established Regional Planning Agency for Franklin County. In the mid-1990s, Governor Weld was intent on eliminating County Government, as he considered it a redundant layer of government.

> A charter is a legal document granted to an organization that outlines the purpose and structure for the creation of an organization, as well as the rights and duties the organization will have.

A Charter Commission was formed to create a Council of Governments before county government was abolished. The Charter was adopted by all 26 towns in 1996, and the FRCOG

was created in 1997. State legislation allowed the formation and creation of the FRCOG and abolished the county government – 151 Acts 96, Section 567.

Why Update the Charter Now?

The FRCOG Charter is a strong document. In our 25+ year history, no amendments have ever been made. Now, some items are out of date, and no longer reflect the evolution of the FRCOG and Franklin County.

To make any changes is a significant process. We do so now prior to the anticipated retirements of several long-term management staff, and to poise the FRCOG and the region for the future.

FRCOG Charter Amendment Process

Step 1
Majority vote of FRCOG Executive Committee.

Step 2
2/3 of weighted vote of FRCOG Council.

Step 3
2/3 majority vote by 2/3 of member towns.

Proposed Charter Changes

The proposed changes update the Charter to remove references to the original formation of the FRCOG, align grammar, provide greater clarity, and create greater flexibility when impacting state and federal law changes. Changes also:

- Expand FRCOG Council and Executive Committee municipal membership eligibility
- Revamp Franklin Regional Planning Board by reducing membership composition (from 74 members to 20); expanding membership potential to include subject matter experts and/or professional planners; enable easier amendment to the Board's operating procedures by removing specificity in the Charter; renaming the Board the Franklin Regional Planning Advisory Board (FRPAB) to clarify its purpose
- Add language to address vacancies on Council or FRPAB
- Clarify the procedures for out-of-County municipalities that wish to join the FRCOG, and for in-County municipalities that may wish to leave the FRCOG
- Modify future charter change process requirements by requiring a simple majority vote of 2/3 of Town Meetings

View a copy of the original charter with all proposed changes highlighted red (additions/edits) and red strikethrough (deletions) at: https://bit.ly/frcogcharter or scan the QR code below.