

**GPCOG Executive Committee Minutes**  
**June 4, 2008 Meeting**  
**12:00 p.m. at GPCOG**

**In attendance:** Paul McKenney, President, Cape Elizabeth; Genie Beaulieu, Freeport; Gordon Billington, Standish; Richard Feeney, Cumberland County; Rosemary Kulow, New Gloucester; Suzanne McCormick, PROP; Anthony Plante, Windham; Jane Knapp, Gorham; Robert Nicholson, Sebago; Mike Reynolds, Raymond; Ed Suslovic, Portland; Dick Wood, RC&D

**Members absent:** Bridgton, Casco, Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Frye Island, Gray, Harrison, Long Island, Naples, North Yarmouth, Pownal, Scarborough, West Bath, Westbrook, Yarmouth

**GPCOG Staff:** Neal Allen, Maddy Adams, Ann Mazerolle, David Willauer

- (1) **Welcome and Introductions.** Paul McKenney opened the meeting at 12:10 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made.
- (2) **Minutes: Executive Committee meeting of May 14, 2008.** *Robert Nicholson moved approval of the May 14th minutes, with Dick Wood seconding the motion. All were in favor.*
- (3) **Proposed Operations Budget for 2008-09.** Neal reviewed the highlights of the budget:
  - The budget is up 2.95%, but excluding pass-through expenses it is up 1.01%.
  - South Portland has officially voted to join COG
  - No increase in the member dues rate for the 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year
  - Total of 19 staff positions, including two part-time, three PACTS, and funding for a possible entry-level Planner.
  - Direct Program Pass Through expenses of \$751,000.
  - Member dues revenue of \$242,175 or 9% of the total budget. Increased dues revenue is based on the expectation that the City of South Portland and Chebeague Island will become members of GPCOG effective July 1, 2008.
  - Personnel expense including salaries, leave and fringe benefits represents 49.6% of the total budget with 72% of the personnel expense funded through program grants and contracts.
  - Salary expense includes an average adjustment of 3%.
  - Fringe benefit increase of 8.8% is due primarily to an increase in health insurance costs plus the addition of one staff person and continued funding to support the Sustainability Initiative.

There were 26 staff members when Neal started at COG ten years ago. The smaller staff size today probably has to do with towns having their own planning staff, plus technological changes that have also led to efficiencies. Neal suggested the idea of a Compensation Committee, composed of the officers, for purposes of accountability on the fringe and salary items, and added oversight.

Neal walked through the budget. The funding for ICLEI will come from member dues. Robert Nicholson brought up the idea of raising dues since they haven't been raised in so long to such projects as energy audits, for example. This is something that many towns would probably be interested in having done but cannot afford to do on their own. Paul responded that the Steering Committee has been talking about the dues issue over the past year. In 2010 there will be a new Census and the population numbers may change and thus

the dues will change. The new Census numbers probably won't take effect until 2012, however. If a dues increase occurs, the increase could be implemented across the board, or communities could be charged to participate in special projects through a user fee. Tony said that he has wondered if we have shortchanged ourselves because we haven't increased dues. Ed noted that we want to be careful about planning far enough ahead if there is a dues increase and we also need to consider LD 1. Gordy noted that the budget is an operating vehicle for COG driven by grants and funds. Is COG doing what the members want or could more be done if there were a dues increase?

*Dick Wood moved that the Executive Committee recommend approval of the budget to the General Assembly. Ed Suslovic seconded the motion and all were in favor.*

**(4) Updates and Reports.**

4A. Sustainability Initiative. Neal reviewed the task forces and the idea of a Retreat for all members of the task forces. The Environment Sustainability Task Force, chaired by Ed Suslovic, met prior to this meeting. Ed stated that principles from the task forces are important but of equal importance is that the principles be put in the context of action. We want to develop an action-oriented document. A regional sustainability plan is what we hope to have as a result.

Neal spoke about the Sustainability Forums. ICLEI membership will provide us with more resources. The DVD from the March Energy Forum will be available soon and will be sent to each of our member towns. Ed spoke about an Energy Alliance – a place where municipalities, businesses and citizens could go. Neal said that he is meeting with them at the end of the month.

4B. Right to Know Law – Mandatory Training for Elected Officials. In 2007, the legislature passed a law requiring all elected officials to complete a right to know law training. When we looked into it, the state was not ready with the program. They are now ready and are in the process of implementing it. MMA is planning training sessions beginning in the fall and there is an on-line course provided by the state. Should COG assist in this process or do we want individuals to look into it on their own. Ed thought it was a good idea for COG to take part in this and maybe have a session locally for our elected officials. Rosi mentioned that some of the law firms also do training sessions and we might be able to join in with them; they are usually offered free. Mike mentioned that Raymond is dropping their MMA membership so they would appreciate if COG put a program together. Neal will do some homework on this and talk to some of the law firms that specialize in this and possibly work through the City's corporation counsel. Perhaps we could have two sessions – one locally and one in the Lakes Region (perhaps at the Raymond Public Safety Building).

4C. Corridor Coalitions.

- The Metro Regional Coalition has signed an interlocal agreement for a regional crime lab; with the County's participation, it serves 22 communities. They are also having economic development conversations.
- Lakes Region Corridor – A decision on the Lakes Region Transit proposal will be made this month. Originally it was projected that it would cost \$75 per hour to run the service and now it will probably be more like \$90/hour. David provided some background on the funding.

- Naples Causeway Bridge – MaineDOT has requested COG’s help in doing some of the analysis. The state has budgeted for a fixed span bridge but there has been a lot of local opposition to that.
- Central Corridor – Exit 63 Master Plan – we have been about a year in limbo because MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority haven’t agreed on a scope.
- I-295 Study has been completed; still awaiting the final report.

4D. Proposed trip to Nova Scotia. Neal reported that about 12-15 people, including the Steering Committee and others in the community, will be traveling to Nova Scotia in mid-August for a couple of days to build a stronger relationship with the Maritimes and to explore their regional government, especially in the Yarmouth and Halifax areas. The cost would be borne by each person who goes. It is something that the Steering Committee feels is timely. Paul added that we can learn a lot from what they are doing; they are way ahead of us with sustainable initiatives. The Yarmouth group is excited about hosting us.

4E. Annual Meeting – June 19, 2008 at Keeley the Katerer at 5:00 p.m.

- (5) **Other Business.** Jon McNulty has resigned as director of RTP. Ed mentioned that merging RTP with METRO could save lots of money. RTP meetings are held behind closed doors and Portland doesn’t have a seat on their Board. Perhaps GPCOG should convene a meeting of the critical stakeholders or write a letter. It was suggested that GPCOG write a letter to the RTP Board about exploring the idea of merging with METRO. Paul recommended that we start with a letter to the RTP and METRO Boards stating our position and offer a follow-up meeting. The letter should be copied to participating municipalities and organizations providing funding. The Committee agreed that a letter should be sent from Neal and Paul.

The CCEMA newsletter featured an article on GPCOG and Dick Brobst. Neal thanked Dick Feeney.

Paul brought up the idea of Officers annually reviewing GPCOG salaries and benefits, as Neal brought up earlier in the meeting. ***Robert Nicholson made a motion that a scope and a more fleshed out proposal be presented for the Committee to vote on. The motion was seconded and all were in favor.***

- (6) **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.