

GPCOG Executive Committee Minutes
April 29, 2009
12:00 p.m. at GPCOG

In attendance: Paul McKenney, President, Cape Elizabeth; Genie Beaulieu, Freeport; Gordon Billington, Standish; Cathy Breen, Falmouth; Dick Brobst, North Yarmouth; Peter Crichton, Cumberland County; Pat Finnigan, Portland; Mike Reynolds, Raymond; Bill Schaffer, Yarmouth; Matthew Sturgis, Gray; Dick Wood, RC&D

Members absent: Bridgton, Casco, Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Frye Island, Gorham, Harrison, Long Island, Naples, New Gloucester, Pownal, Scarborough, Sebago, South Portland, West Bath, Westbrook, Windham, PROP

GPCOG Staff: Neal Allen, Maddy Adams, Steve Linnell, Eben Marsh, Ann Mazerolle

Guests: Deborah Cabana, Gray; Elizabeth Trice, Cumberland County

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** Paul McKenney called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Neal distributed a handout on staff announcements. Carol MacKenzie will be retiring at the end of June and Eben Marsh has been hired to take over Carol's duties as the part-time Director of Cooperative Services and Human Resources. Neal introduced Eben and provided some background. Introductions were made around the table.
2. **Minutes: Executive Committee meeting of February 25, 2009.** *Dick Brobst moved approval of the February 25th minutes, with Dick Wood seconding the motion. All were in favor.*
3. **Regional Planning Concept: Update and Discussion.** Neal provided some background and read an e-mail that he had received from Sue Inches of the State Planning Office who is very excited about this concept. Following are the next action steps to take place:
 - GPCOG and SPO will adopt a Joint Resolution in support of the concept.
 - Municipal Resolution to include a commitment on behalf of the municipality to participate on the "leadership team."
 - SPO staff will participate with GPCOG in public outreach efforts.
 - GPCOG and SPO staff will meet this summer to "brainstorm."
 - GPCOG's technical assistance contract with SPO can be used as one of the funding sources.
 - The parties will explore all potential funding sources.
 - Possible joint presentation at the GPCOG Annual Meeting on June 18th.

The municipal comprehensive plan process is very cumbersome. The SPO currently has to review hundreds of plans. They see a regional plan as a way to better facilitate the objectives of quality of place and sustainability. It will be much easier to review six regional plans versus hundreds of individual plans, especially since the SPO has limited staff. We would be the test case for a regional plan. Gordy said it is important to realize that this can be good for the municipalities as well as the state. It should take away some of the burden on the towns to produce a comp plan and work through a lengthy process with the state. However, we will need to bring some good ideas to the towns. Neal added that having SPO as a partner is critical to making this work. He thought it would be a two-year process. It needs to be a well thought out program and presentation. We will go out to the Corridor Coalitions and then to the municipalities for information sharing and input.

Some towns are currently in the process of updating their comp plans. It was asked how it would be played out to bring the towns on board that have recently done or are doing their comp plans. Neal recommended that municipalities continue on with the update process. However, it would be helpful if those towns that are beginning the update process be brought up to date on the regional plan concept and that they be introduced to GPCOG's seven sustainability principles. If they are cognizant of those principles, that would be helpful. Neal didn't think that the individual plans

would be eliminated. When we are ready to talk details with SPO, municipal people and town planners should probably be involved in that brainstorming session. Genie also suggested including historic preservation groups, environmental groups, etc. in the discussions.

Regarding the review and approval process, the regional plan would go to the SPO but the local plans would be approved by GPCOG. Gordy said that he foresees a chapter for each town with overarching principles in the regional plan. COG would become the governance rather than the state but details will need to be worked out as to how this would work since COG is a member-owned and operated organization. Neal added that if the SPO cannot guarantee that this regional plan concept is something that will be accepted by the State, then we don't want to spend all the time and money to work through this. The SPO will do the initial draft of the Resolution. We will put a subcommittee together of planners, municipal officials, etc. for a brainstorming session this summer.

4. **Economic Sustainability Forum.** Survey results from the forum were distributed, along with comments on the forum. Gordy noted that there was a good argument for buying local and how it impacts local economic development. Neal provided an overview of the results. Michael Shuman incorporated COG's seven sustainability principles into his presentation. The idea of presenting the DVD of the forum to the group working on the regional plan, as well as the Executive Committee, was suggested. The DVD should be a piece that all the players involved should see. It could also be put on the Speaking in Maine series and local cable stations.

Paul mentioned that the Metro Regional Coalition has signed a resolution about forming an economic development corporation. The focus of that corporation will be on the Metro Region municipalities. The idea of a larger economic development corporation has also been discussed by the Steering Committee. The idea of a corporation for economic development (possible name SMEDCO) would come out of the CEDS Committee under the auspices of GPCOG working with all of our partners. The Revolving Loan Fund Programs would fall under this corporation. Genie thought this is probably the way to go but not having seen the presentation she is reluctant. There are definite benefits from economic development engines that we shouldn't lose sight of. It was explained that COG is an EDD with SMRPC. The idea is to create two separate economic development districts. We are being funded like we are separate organizations through EDA and we are receiving more money. Paul explained that we need an entity that works on a regional basis – a mechanism to work on economic development functions. This is still in a concept phase; more information will be provided on this idea.

5. **Nominating Committee.** The following Executive Committee members volunteered to serve on the Nominating Committee – Cathy Breen, Gordy Billington, Matt Sturgis and Paul McKenney. All were in favor of the nominees.

6. **Reports.**

- Budget – member dues were reduced by 10% for one year.
- No salary adjustments this year for staff. Ann and Neal will be working on additional cuts to the budget. Paul complimented the staff for their hard work. Neal pointed out that we are still short one staff position.
- The spring Activity Report was distributed.
- Regional ReCOgnition Awards – the cover letter and nomination form was distributed.
- Access to Capital Funding Forum – will be held on May 8th from 9-11 at the Wishcamper Center at USM. A handout was provided.
- ICLEI – staff and Neal met with Christa Koehler; the software is finally available. Training will begin soon. There are two efforts that we are embarking upon – energy and climate change action plan, and municipal inventory. South Portland, Cape Elizabeth and Yarmouth are the

first inventories being done and that effort is underway. This Executive Committee could serve as an oversight committee.

- Energy plan – we will have a regional energy plan which could become part of the comprehensive plan.
- Nova Scotia follow-up. Relationships were established as a result of our trip last summer. A new air service called Starlink has started between Nova Scotia and Portland. There may be a delegation from Nova Scotia coming to Maine.

7. **Other Business.** Neal has requested that an additional meeting of the Executive Committee be scheduled for May 13th. One of the items on the agenda would be the Global Communities Task Force.

8. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.