

GPCOG Executive Committee Minutes
October 14, 2009
12:00 p.m. at GPCOG

In attendance: Gordon Billington, Chair, Standish; Tom Blake, South Portland; Cathy Breen, Falmouth; Dick Brobst, North Yarmouth; Pat Finnigan, Portland; Paul McKenney, Cape Elizabeth; Tony Plante, Windham; Mike Reynolds, Raymond; Suzanne McCormick, PROP; Matthew Sturgis, Gray; Elizabeth Trice, Cumberland County; Carl Winslow, Yarmouth; Dick Wood, RC&D

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

Guest: Liz Hertz, State Planning Office

GPCOG Staff: Neal Allen, Maddy Adams, Steve Linnell, Eben Marsh, Rebeccah Schaffner-Tousignant, Ann Thompson

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** Gordy Billington, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00. He introduced Liz Hertz from the State Planning Office, and then introductions were made around the room.
2. **Minutes: Executive Committee meeting of June 3, 2009.** *A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the June 3rd meeting; all were in favor.*
3. **Regional Planning Memorandum of Understanding: GPCOG and the State Planning Office.** Neal reported that COG has been in discussions with the State Planning Office for the past year regarding how this regional planning effort could be done. The MOU is deliberately vague as to where the regional planning effort would begin. He mentioned that Evan Richert has been working in the Midcoast area on a similar effort, and that together with Liz Hertz of the State Planning Office and Kat Fuller of MaineDOT, an information-sharing meeting was held with GPCOG staff. A GPCOG Road Show PowerPoint will be brought to our member communities as a first step for building a philosophical foundation for the plan.

Regarding funding, every year we receive a technical assistance contract from the SPO. We have been working through the terms of that contract so that those funds can be applied to this regional planning effort. Gordy added that one of our original intentions was to have comp plans that complement one another between towns. We would like to build a more comprehensive plan for the region that would be built upon our seven sustainability principles. The Lakes Region towns have not yet been approached about this concept because we were looking for endorsement on the MOU from the Executive Committee first before we proceed on to the towns. Tony stated that this is really exciting; there has been a need for more regional coordination of planning efforts. We all seem to exist in our own little bubble. We have spent some time working on this through the Steering Committee and how it fits in with what we are doing. He would like to hear from the SPO about what the benefit would be. Liz stated that it will be a regional benefit. The SPO feels this is a really exciting opportunity and they are hopeful that it will take off, especially regarding planning in regions like Sebago Lake. If we left it up to each municipality, we still wouldn't know or be ensured that we were protecting the Sebago Lake resource. An added benefit to the smaller communities that don't have planners is that they could undertake comp planning at what we hope will be a reduced cost to them. Each municipality will hopefully feel more aligned with the region. We are hopeful that COG moves forward with this; we know it will be a multi-year process. SPO wouldn't see a problem reviewing a multi-municipal plan. They see a lot of benefit to the individual municipalities, the region and the SPO.

Liz spoke about Gateway 1 which is the other big regional planning effort that is happening. Gateway 1 is a corridor plan with 22 towns involved. Each municipality is endorsing this plan into

their individual comp plans. Each plan will be good for 12 years. When it comes time to redo their existing plan, they would make it more of a union with the regional plan. You would only need an extension if you had already submitted your plan and wished to participate in the regional plan.

There was discussion about how this would impact communities, such as South Portland, that are currently in the process of updating their comprehensive plans. Constant contact with those communities that will be starting with their regional plans is critical. It was suggested that when the towns begin their process that the councilors be sure that they are aware of the seven sustainability principles. It was asked why the Lakes Region communities would be the first to try this. Neal explained that the Lakes Region towns don't have the planning capacity that the larger towns do. As a starting point, it is a good idea to start with contiguous communities that share resources, such as the Lakes region and the 302 Corridor. There should be a cohesive vision and approach. Bringing the seven sustainability principles to each of the towns that are working on their comp plans, and having them endorse the principles, would also be a good first step. An advisory committee will be formed. Liz noted that this isn't an easy thing to take on but she is very excited about all the things she is hearing. Matt suggested breaking it down to two concepts: the seven sustainability principles, and identifying common elements that towns may have such as Sebago Lake, Route 302, etc. Keep in mind the common elements that you share with your neighbors. ***Matt made a motion to accept the MOU as written. The motion was seconded and all were in favor.***

4. **GPCOG PowerPoint.** Neal distributed a draft of the PowerPoint presentation, and reviewed it with the Committee. There will be more detail when this is presented to our members such as the savings realized through Cooperative Purchasing and examples of the work done by the Corridor Coalitions. The audience for the PowerPoint will be our members, elected boards and perhaps other stakeholders. It was suggested that planning boards also be included. Mike said that he would like to invite all of Raymond's boards and make it a larger presentation to sell the seven sustainability principles. He could get a good crowd if we were talking about the principles. He said he would be willing to be the pilot town in December with the approach being the seven sustainability principles. Tom Blake thought the PowerPoint was great. He would like to forward more comments about the PowerPoint after the meeting. He would like to see COG do a press release for the South Portland presentation. The idea is to enlighten our communities about what COG does. He suggested putting the sustainability principles up front to draw more attention to them and that the presentation be a half hour. It was suggested that the sustainability principles be printed so that they can be posted on the wall. Cathy recommended tailoring the presentation to the community, as some communities are more familiar with COG services than others. If anyone has comments on the presentation, please e-mail them to Neal. The first presentation will be on November 30th to the City of South Portland.
5. **Efficiency Maine: Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grants.** Steve L. explained about the block grant money available; the deadline for applications is November 18th. Several towns may band together to apply for up to \$500,000 for a regional project (maximum award per town is \$85,000). These may include energy audits, retrofits, transportation programs such as traffic signal synchronization, waste reduction, renewable energy generation, as well as other projects. An individual town may apply for up to \$85,000 to support a Custom Project. A match of at least 10% is required. Regardless of whether or not a community chooses to apply for a custom grant (either regional or individual), it is recommended that they apply for a \$10,000 template planning grant. Template planning grants are non-competitive, and a town may apply for both custom and template grants. There has to be a lead municipality and the application has to come from the municipality. COG can assist with putting the grant together. Gordy asked if the money could be used to do a regional energy assessment. Paul stated that COG staff helped Cape Elizabeth with an alternative energy committee; they did an energy audit. It sounds like there is money for each community to have an energy committee established. Neal added that this is an unusual opportunity for

communities to establish committees and get some money to get things going for a regional energy strategy. He said that COG could write a letter of endorsement for each of the communities. Whoever doesn't have an energy committee should apply for funds. Elizabeth asked if COG could write up a template grant for the towns. She said she has a list of people who would be interested in helping with the grants. She will send that list to the Managers; the list includes people who can do energy audits.

Steve also updated the committee on the work being done with three pilot communities to assist their community energy committee to conduct a baseline emissions inventory and forecast, adopt an emission reduction target, and develop a local action plan to meet the target. This work aligns perfectly with the specifications of the Template Planning Grants. COG is also working on a regional inventory which we hope to present at the next Executive Committee meeting.

6. **Activity Report.** Neal distributed the Activity Report and then reviewed it.
 - The GPCOG Standing Committee on Community and Economic Development will be the CEDS Committee, which will be strengthened and expanded.
 - The Brownfields program is being funded with an initial grant of \$400,000 in ARRA funds. We received six proposals in response to an RFP and have selected Credere Associates, LLC of Portland. We have to move quickly, as identification of potential sites before winter is critical. An Advisory Committee will be formed.
 - Salt Bid – Eastern Salt is the new vendor, with ISCO as back-up should there be any problems. ISCO and Morton Salt merged and the FTC and Attorney General got involved. As a part of the negotiation, the price per ton was reduced by \$1.00.
 - Center for Global Engagement. Neal has not yet developed an implementation plan. We may have a volunteer director to help jump-start the process. It is going to require outside funding support to be a success.
 - EDA grant was finally approved. The funds, totaling \$885,000 and equally matched, will be used to expand Westbrook's Five Star Industrial Park and fund the start-up infrastructure development for Portland's new Rand Road Park. An annual planning grant of \$110,000 has been approved.
 - GO MAINE is receiving more funds from the state as the program continues to expand. The total number of vans has increased to 36.
 - Maine Rail Plan – Neal has been appointed to this committee.
 - The Regional Transit Map and Timetable was distributed.
 - New GPCOG staff – Rebecca Lambert is a new planner working on energy and transit projects; and Lynne Powers has joined the Support Staff replacing Sue McIntyre.
 - RC&D Conference is scheduled for October 29-31.
 - On December 1, there will be a Q&A session with DECD Commissioner John Richardson on the future of Maine. It will be at the Jewett Auditorium in South Portland at 6:00 p.m.
7. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.