

Metro Regional Coalition December 9, 2008 Meeting Summary

The Metro Regional Coalition (MRC) met on December 9, 2008 at 8 a.m. at the Westbrook Public Safety Building. All six of the member municipalities of the MRC were represented. Those attending were: **Cape Elizabeth:** Councilor Jim Rowe, Mike McGovern. **Falmouth:** Amanda Stearns (for Nathan Poore), Theo Holtwijk. **Portland:** Joe Gray. **Scarborough:** Tom Hall, Harvey Rosenfeld. **South Portland:** Mayor Tom Blake, Jim Gailey, Erik Carson. **Westbrook:** Mayor Bruce Chuluda, Jerre Bryant, Keith Luke. **Cumberland County:** Commissioner Dick Feeney, Peter Crichton. **GPCOG:** Neal Allen.

Also attending: **Portland Chamber:** Mark McAuliffe, Jim Cohen, Godfrey Wood, Chris O'Neil and Jim Damicis of Policy One. **Southern Maine Community College:** Bethany Campbell. **Maine Department of Economic & Community Development:** Brian Doyle. **Monks O'Neil Development:** Tim O'Neil.

The following is a brief summary of the meeting.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mayor Chuluda, Chair of the MRC, opened the meeting with introductions around the table. He stated that the primary purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion of the last few meetings regarding a possible economic development authority. To that end he asked Jim Cohen to lead the discussion as Jim has been integrally involved with this initiative, initially as a member of the Portland City Council and Chair of the MRC and now as a member of the Portland Chamber's committee.

2. Approval of October 21, 2008 Minutes

Mayor Chuluda asked for approval of the minutes of the October 21, 2008 meeting of the Metro Regional Coalition. The minutes were unanimously approved on a motion by Jerre Bryant, seconded by Jim Gailey.

3. Subcommittee Report: Regional Economic Development Authority

Jim Cohen proceeded to review the draft Regional Economic Development Corporation Organizational Outline-December 2008. He indicated that a subcommittee consisting of Harvey Rosenfeld, Erik Carson and Bill Whitten is developing a cost estimate for establishing and operating a Regional Economic Development Corporation. Jim cited key issues that need to be reconciled including: the region served, the management structure, financial responsibilities of the participating parties, and the composition/role of a separate advisory group. Jim followed his summary with a request for input from those attending.

Within the municipal membership as well as the Chamber representatives, there was consensus with the viability of the concept and a general acknowledgement that the details of governance and structure together with the financial obligations would be key to the collective and individual decisions of the parties to participate. It was further recognized that the issue of geography/inclusiveness and the regional nature of economic development need to be further discussed. Other observations included the desirability of featuring the region in the context of its Portland identity; the need to consider short and long term implementation strategies with respect to existing staff; the need to ensure that the purpose of the Authority is clearly defined and that it will fill existing voids.

It was agreed that organizational issues would continue to be discussed by the subcommittee of the MRC/Chamber that has been developing the proposal over the last few months. To that end the subcommittee should try to reconvene in January prior to scheduling the next meeting of the full MRC.

4. Greater Portland Development Commission

Mayor Chuluda recognized Tim O'Neil of Monks O'Neil Development, LLC. Mr. O'Neil briefed the group on the status of the Greater Portland Development Commission that was formed during the World War II era but continues to be a legal entity empowered to conduct certain economic development activities, including the issuance of bonds. He explained that during the last session of the Maine Legislature there was an effort to reclaim the Commission's assets. While such action did not occur, the legislature directed that the Commission's "activities" be suspended pending a financial audit. The Business Regulation and Economic Development Committee of the Legislature are expected to review the issue again in the upcoming session. Jim Cohen pointed out that the initial funds for the Commission came from the Portland region. Chris O'Neil stated that the preservation of the Commission should be of "highest priority" to the group as it offers a "fantastic opportunity" that provides a mechanism for carrying out many of the objectives of the MRC/Chamber group. He went on to suggest that a bill be drafted that in effect retrofits the Commission's Charter. Mark McAuliffe suggested that we need to establish a "vision" that can be sold and that we can draw on the collaborative work that we have been engaged in that was initiated through the Chamber study. Following the discussion there was consensus to move forward with efforts to preserve and restructure the Greater Portland Development Commission. To that end it was agreed that Tim O'Neil should ask legislative leadership for a placeholder bill on behalf of the Commission.