

Metro Regional Coalition

Minutes of April 2, 2008 Meeting

The Metro Regional Coalition met on April 2, 2008 at 8:00 a.m. at the offices of the Greater Portland Council of Governments.

All members of the Coalition were represented. Those attending were: **Cape Elizabeth:** Councilor & President of GPCOG, Paul McKenney; Town Manager, Michael McGovern; Police Chief, Neil Williams. **Falmouth:** Police Chief, Edward Tolan. **Portland:** Councilor James Cohen; City Manager, Joseph Gray; Police Chief, Tim Burton; Assistant Corporation Counsel, Elizabeth Boynton. **Scarborough:** Police Chief, Robert Moulton. **South Portland:** Mayor James Soule; City Manager, James Gailey; Police Chief, Edward Googins. **Westbrook:** Mayor Bruce Chuluda; City Administrator, Jerre Bryant. **Cumberland County:** Commissioner Richard Feeny; Commissioner Malory Shaughnessy; Assistant County Manager, William Whitten. **GPCOG:** Executive Director Neal Allen.

Also attending were: Nelle Hanig, Portland; Tex Haeuser and Erik Carson, South Portland; and Caroline Paras of GPCOG.

The following is a summary of the meeting.

(1) Welcome & Introductions

Councilor Cohen, Chair of the Coalition, opened the meeting with introductions and indicated that there were two major items on the agenda: an update of the Regional Crime Lab and a presentation by GPCOG on regional economic development activities.

(2) Meeting Minutes: February 28, 2008

On a motion by Councilor McKenney, seconded by Jim Gailey, the minutes of the Coalition meeting of February 28, 2008 were unanimously approved as submitted.

(3) Regional Crime Lab Update & Scheduling of News Conference

Councilor Cohen asked Chief Burton to brief the Coalition on the status of the Regional Crime Lab. Chief Burton indicated that all of the participating communities, including the Towns of Windham and Yarmouth, have formally approved the Interlocal Agreement with the exception of Portland, Cape Elizabeth, and Cumberland County. He then explained that the Portland City Council is going through the formal approval process; that the Cape Elizabeth Town Council has not formally adopted the Agreement but their Finance Committee has reviewed the document and it appears to have favorable support; and that the County Commissioners will formally consider the Agreement in mid-April. Chief Burton thanked all of those who have worked on the project and remarked that it was a tremendous show of cooperation and doing what is best for the region. He noted that a news conference involving all of the participating municipalities and the County will be scheduled after all of participants have formally adopted the Agreement.

Councilor Cohen asked if there were any questions. Councilor McKenney noted that with the County's participation 20 of the 28 communities in Cumberland County are involved in the Crime Lab.

(4) Economic Development District

Neal Allen and Caroline Paras presented a PowerPoint summary of regional economic development efforts provided through GPCOG. These include the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration of all federally designated Economic Development Districts, facilitation of EDA planning and project funds, maintenance of the GPCOG data center and on-going planning services and staff support for the various corridor coalitions, revolving loan fund, and the Southern Maine Pine Tree Zone program. Also discussed was a description of the Southern Maine Economic Development District and the current effort to develop separate EDD's for GPCOG and the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission respectively.

Discussion ensued around the above to also include cost and revenue sharing options, tax policy, the role of government in economic development, the need to examine various service models, the need to identify and build on the region's strengths, including tourism, and the critical importance of strong, relevant educational and training opportunities. With respect to possible economic development service models, suggestions ranged from the County, to Lewiston-Auburn Growth Council, and creation of an economic development authority -- with it being noted that the EDD/CEDS offers a mechanism for regional economic development planning.

Councilor Cohen summarized the discussion with the suggestion that possible next steps include: exploring cost/sharing models; establishing the appropriate roles for GPCOG and the County; and the need to seek input from USM, the business community, and the Chamber. Councilor Cohen also noted other ideas put on the table: having the County and/or SMEDD assist in strategic planning for economic development; including development of a regional economic plan and goals for cluster development; leveraging the strengths of GPCOG as a convener, a data center, and educator; exploring opportunities to leverage investment of State and DECD, perhaps focused on 1-2 initiatives. To that end, Councilor Cohen suggested the formation of a small sub-committee to explore these issues and report back to the Coalition with more specific recommendations. Accordingly a sub-committee consisting of Councilor Cohen, Councilor McKenney, Bill Whitten and Neal Allen was formed.

The Coalition set the meeting for May 7th and, at the suggestion of Jerre Bryant, the agenda will include a half-hour presentation and discussion on the regional assessing study that is currently being conducted.