

Metro Regional Coalition

Meeting Summary: September 20, 2007

The Metro Regional Coalition met on September 20, 2007 at 8:00 a.m. at the offices of the Greater Portland Council of Governments.

All of the member municipalities of the Coalition were represented. Attendees were: **Cape Elizabeth:** Councilor Paul McKenney. **Falmouth:** Town Manager Nathan Poore. **Portland:** Councilor James Cohen; Police Chief Tim Burton; Assistant Corporation Counsel Elizabeth Boynton. **Scarborough:** Councilor Ron Ahlquist; Town Manager Ron Owens. **South Portland:** Acting City Manager Jim Gailey; Police Chief Ed Googins. **Westbrook:** Mayor Bruce Chuluda; Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, Jerre Bryant; Evidence Technician, Steve Hamlin. **Cumberland County:** Commissioner Richard Feeney; County Manager, Peter Crichton; Deputy County Manager, Bill Whitten. **GPCOG:** Neal Allen, Executive Director; David Willauer, Director of Planning.

The following is a summary of the meeting.

(1) Welcome & Introductions

In his capacity as Chairman of the Metro Regional Coalition, Councilor Cohen called the meeting to order and asked for introductions around the table.

(2) Regional Crime Lab Report

Councilor Cohen began discussion of this item. He mentioned that the proposed Regional Crime Lab had been discussed at the April meeting of the Coalition with agreement by the group to meet again after discussions involving Cumberland County and the City of Portland had been held on the issue of the County's financial participation. He also mentioned that the Police Chiefs were to review the document again and work with Portland's Corporation Counsel on language involving the financial participation of Cumberland County and the other parties. He asked Chief Burton and Elizabeth Boynton to brief the Committee on the status of the Crime Lab.

Chief Burton reported that the effort to secure a Congressional earmark for funding the Crime Lab had failed and that the issue of fully financing the program was now a policy decision that each member of the Coalition would have to make. He added that they would continue to explore outside funding support including another earmark effort. He also indicated that Elizabeth Boynton had crafted the alternative financing language in the proposed Agreement.

Councilor McKenney asked if the financing language in the Agreement is consistent with the attached breakdown by community and County (Exhibit B) and if the numbers are reasonable. Chief Burton confirmed that they are consistent and reasonable.

A question was asked of Peter Crichton regarding the County's participation. Mr. Crichton stated that the County will not be participating because of its tight budget citing the impacts of LD1 and the County Jail. He added that the situation could change. Councilor Cohen asked how the

County planned to retain these services to which Mr. Crichton said that they would do what they are currently doing. Councilor McKenney then asked if the County did not view the Crime Lab as an opportunity to serve as a conduit for increased services for its towns. Mr. Crichton agreed that they could see it that way but it required more discussion.

Jerre Bryant and Nathan Poore then asked a series of questions regarding the current level of expenditures that the County is incurring for investigative services and the concept of a user fee to offset that expense. Discussion ensued with no resolution although Mr. Crichton indicated that the concept made sense. Councilor McKenney asked if the County is willing to approach the communities they serve to determine if they are willing to sign on. Commissioner Feeney indicated that the County could do that. Councilor Cohen expressed his hope that the County Commissioners would still consider participating in the Crime Lab and urged that they think beyond the current year.

There were a number of suggestions that the Coalition approach such communities as Biddeford, Saco, Windham, Freeport and Gorham to determine if they might be interested in participating in the Crime Lab project.

In response to a question from Ron Owens, Chief Burton explained that the Crime Lab will accommodate up to ten staff at one time and that equipment is increasingly expensive due to its advanced sophistication. Mr. Owens stated that we need to resolve if the costs are acceptable. Mayor Chuluda followed with a question on operating costs and was told that Portland will cover the overhead expense but specific consumable items will need to be identified in an annual budget. Elizabeth Boynton asked if a summary memo outlining a not to exceed financing/budget scenario would be helpful. To that end Chief Burton stated that he would meet with the other Police Chiefs to identify such expenses and that Ms. Boynton's suggested memo will include cost projections, level of service and other relevant detail. Councilor McKenney proposed that, once all of the funding details have been agreed to, a letter outlining the benefits of the Regional Crime Lab should be sent from the Coalition to other communities in the region inviting them to participate.

On a motion made by Councilor McKenney and seconded by Mr. Bryant, the proposed budget scenario memo to be followed by a letter to other communities was unanimously approved as next steps for the Regional Crime Lab. It was further agreed that in order to accommodate municipal budget schedules, commitments would be needed by the end of the current calendar year.

(3) Meeting Summary of the April 12, 2007 Meeting

Because the Agenda inadvertently omitted the April 12, 2007 meeting summary (the summary was included in the agenda materials), Councilor Cohen proposed that the Coalition consider the item at this time.

On a motion by Ron Owens, seconded by Paul McKenney, the meeting summary of April 12, 2007 was unanimously approved as submitted.

(4) Discussion of future projects for collaboration

Due to a lack of time this item was tabled.

(5) Update on bus transportation collaboration

Councilor Cohen provided background on this item explaining that a Transit Summit had been held two years ago through PACTS and that one of the outcomes was to reconvene the group upon completion of the PACTS Transit Study. The Transit Study has been completed and it is timely therefore to review the status of transit in the region. Councilor Cohen asked that the Metro Regional Coalition consider cosponsoring with PACTS a follow-up transit summit. There was a brief discussion regarding the possibility that the 2010 census may result in the PACTS region being designated as a Transportation Management Area. As a TMA one of the key requirements is that the policy board of PACTS must include elected officials.

On a motion by Mayor Chuluda, seconded by Councilor McKenney, it was unanimously agreed that the Metro Regional Coalition will co-sponsor a transit summit with PACTS.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Metro Regional Coalition was set for November 15, 2007 at 8 a.m. at GPCOG.