

## **Public Works Directors Association Meeting**

9:00-11:00 a.m.

**Thursday, April 25, 2007**  
**GPCOG Conference Room**

**Present:** Shawn Bennett (Pownal); Mike Bobinsky (Portland); Bob Malley (Cape Elizabeth); Roger Mosley, Chair (Standish); Mike Shaw (Scarborough); Erik Street (Yarmouth).

**Staff:** Carol MacKenzie (GPCOG); Sue McIntyre (GPCOG); David Willauer (GPCOG).

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Roger Mosley, Chairman  
Roger Mosley called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. and welcomed those present.
2. **Acceptance of Minutes from February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007 Meeting** – (Item tabled until next meeting).
3. **Continuation of Mutual Aid Agreement Discussion for Public Works Department** (Item tabled until next meeting).
4. **Discussion of Patriot's Day Storm and Lessons Learned**  
The group discussed the recent storm and lessons learned.

A need for a regional radio frequency was discussed. Mike Bobinsky said that Portland was still operating in an "emergency mode". They are expecting a declaration from FEMA for receiving financial assistance for towns and residents. He is hoping that the declaration is made soon.

Bob Malley spoke of things that went well and items that could be improved upon. There is a need for better communication with Central Maine Power Company. It would be good to invite one of their representatives to one of the meetings. Bob's office was not getting any feedback from them and there were many issues. He also expressed frustration and disappointment with the lack of time that was allowed to complete "form 7". There was not enough time to immediately assess if something was minor damage or major damage. The department was extremely busy in just trying to get streets opened, etc. They had no information coming from MEMA and it was difficult to determine damage to private property in that short amount of time. It was disappointing to not get good information from agencies that they were communicating with. Roger and Shawn both agreed with Bob saying that they too were disappointed with communications from CMP during the storm. Shawn added that it would have been good for CMP to have had someone available to at least go around and let them know if the lines were safe or not. Mike noted that CMP also needs public works personnel to clear roads, etc., and that partnering and better collaboration is needed. It would be great to find a way to create a win-win situation for both.

Bob reported that Cape Elizabeth had 109 streets without power. Roger said Standish public works office as well as the town hall had lost power. Portland had many areas without power but Mike's office did not sustain a power outage. He added that Portland essentially implemented NIMS command procedures utilizing a unified command system. There were some evacuation issues that they had to deal with. They had to rely on cell phones and also used new software called "E-Team". Public works calls still remained in public works. When FEMA makes the declaration, Portland will have all the documents, dates, etc.

Mike Shaw spoke of how he tried to get information from radio stations without much success. There weren't many people with AM/FM radios and/or batteries. David added that the whole media response was more or less stories of people in trouble. It was noted that WCSH did provide some information on some of the road closures, etc. and that their station can be found by dialing 87.7 on your FM radio. Judith Harris was busy monitoring the status of transportation services and was feeding that information to the Department of Transportation as well as Terry Gilpatrick, the Portland Public Information Officer (PIO). Mike noted that it was helpful to have someone like Terry for contact. They relied on her reports for downed trees, closed roads, etc. Storm damage filing forms for Portland residents were also uploaded on the City's website.

A need was also expressed to work with multi-disciplined task teams. Portland Fire Department assisted public works personnel with trees, etc. Portland had teams of three people. Partnering with other departments was new. There are different working relations but it was a good start. Discussion continued on the subject of generators, communication and the sharing of equipment. It was noted, however, in a storm like this one, that

it would have been very difficult to help out another town because everyone was so overwhelmed with their own issues. Bob said he sees these things as a “county role” and that more could be done with the NIMS training at this level. A discussion pertaining to a mechanism for seeking extra support for public works ensued. During the blizzard of '78, calls were made to the National Guard for support and assistance. It was thought that the National Guard might have provided assistance to Camp Ellis during this storm. They have the equipment and resources. Perhaps the National Guard could be weaved into the Mutual Aid Agreement.

Another discussion followed pertaining to inviting CMP at the table for a meeting. The second Greater Portland Evacuation Plan meeting will be held next week. David has invited someone from the Department of Transportation to come to that meeting to provide information along with a copy of MaineDOT's detour plan for the Casco Bay Bridge.

Mike Shaw spoke of the lack of information sharing, coordination and availability during this past storm. There is a need to get a good perspective of what worked and what didn't. It was agreed that there is a need for more discussion with Cumberland County Emergency Management, FEMA, and CMP.

Shelters were made available in several communities, but not many people used them. Portland opened the Expo Building and had 25 to 30 families at the most that stayed. Most people want to stay in their own home unless there is some sort of imminent danger. Roger added that the season and temperatures make a difference. The weather was not very cold and there were no freezing temperatures. Mike Bobinsky said that residents at the Seaside Nursing Home who are on life support were transported to the Barron Center and to the hospitals. They also evacuated Chandler's Wharf as well as the Portland Pier and DiMillo's. Some of these people did not want to leave and had to be physically removed.

This storm basically affected the whole east coast; subsequently, there were no crews available for assistance from the southern states. Canadian crews had to be called in for help. It took them twenty-four hours to get here. That could have been part of the deployment challenge and the communication problems. The importance of the need for pre-planning by all agencies was discussed. There were also staffing challenges in the smaller towns that do not have full time fire departments, etc. These towns had to cope with working department heads plus managing the storm and working as line people.

Mike Bobinsky said that as a department head he was asked to take a lead role in the EOC but in the process was removed from the actual disaster. It did give him a chance to react strategically but he had a lot of staff that worked with him and his emergency team. Logistically, however, it was different. Mike has asked the entire department to do a debriefing on the storm regarding things that have gone well and things that could be done better. Bob said he had a list of detour signs, etc. that were ready before the storm. They are now working on signage and portable stop signs that will stand up to the winds. Some signs needed sand bags to hold them down. MaineDOT did not seem to have done anything with road barricades. Local towns were running thin using their own equipment. MDOT is short-staffed and stretched thin in this area. However, it was noted that they were very timely in the cleaning up and repairs. They were fixing wash-offs and some of their personnel worked during the night. But the safety aspect was wanting in regards to signage.

The discussion then focused on debris collection and FEMA reimbursements. Heavy equipment that is needed to do this kind of work is difficult to find. Filling out the paperwork and procurement forms can be confusing and lengthy. It was agreed that a future agenda item could include a discussion on procurements. Mike said that the islands sustained a lot of damage with many trees that were downed and a chipper might be needed. The chipper alone costs \$25,000 per month to rent. Mike is also concerned with the disposal costs. He told the group that Riverside Recycling would be available to outside communities. Mike will get the information, fees and hours of operation to the group as soon as possible.

The group agreed that it would be beneficial to all if various entities such as CMP, the water district, northern utilities and maybe cable could meet at a future public works directors' association meeting and also consider meeting on an annual basis in order to develop a relationship with each other. Getting the utilities involved in the Mutual Aid Agreement would be the first step. Mike Bobinsky requested that GPCOG facilitate the meetings and communicate that. David said he would speak with representatives.

**5. Other Business:**

The Snowplow "Roadeo" is scheduled for May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007. There is a \$15.00 per team fee. The fee is to help defray expenses for the town that is hosting the event. A list of town names will be compiled for those communities who have an interest in taking turns as a host community. Turns could be taken every two years. The next planning meeting for the event is scheduled for May 3<sup>rd</sup> in Skowhegan.

It was decided to schedule the next Public Works Directors Association meeting prior to meeting with representatives from the utility companies. The Mutual Aid Subcommittee will meet at the end of May. The next Public Works Directors meeting is scheduled for June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 9:00 a.m., and will focus on debriefing of the storm and updates from the Mutual Aid Subcommittee.

Carol said that catch basin bids would open on May 8<sup>th</sup>. In reference to paving bids, Shawn requested considering going back to coordinating towns that are doing similar work together in districts in order to provide for more savings. Carol said it could be a possibility to continue individual town bids and then after the bids are in, look at them on a regional basis so that towns can coordinate the work.

**6. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.