

**GPCOG Steering Committee Minutes**  
**March 18, 2009**  
**12:00 p.m. at GPCOG**

**In attendance:** Paul McKenney, President, Cape Elizabeth; Gordy Billington, Standish; Cathy Breen, Falmouth; Tony Plante, Windham; Mike Reynolds, Raymond

**Staff:** Neal Allen, Maddy Adams, Ann Mazerolle, Caroline Paras

- (1) **Welcome.** Paul McKenney welcomed everyone at 12:10.
- (2) **Approval of February 25, 2009 minutes.** *Gordy Billington moved approval of the February 25<sup>th</sup> minutes with Mike Reynolds seconding the motion. All were in favor.*
- (3) **LD 731. An Act to Designate Cumberland County as a Pine Tree Development Zone.** Neal explained that LD 731 is currently under consideration by the Maine Legislature. If approved as drafted, LD 731 waives the PTZ unemployment and wage requirements for Cumberland County in order to allow the County to be eligible for PTZ benefits. Since the PTZ was established in 2003, very few areas within Cumberland County have been eligible for PTZ benefits. Economic development directors and the METRO Coalition are supporting this. It would steer funds to this County.

Caroline explained what a Pine Tree Zone is. A PTZ is like a TIF district. You have the option of investing in infrastructure or putting the money into capital for the businesses. Funds cannot be used for roads, sewers, etc. When it was originally proposed, the idea was to direct investment in distressed areas. Economic development directors applied to get funds for their region. The Sebago Lakes Labor Market area qualified as did the Bridgton area. In 2007 there was an amendment that made any manufacturer expanding in place anywhere in the state eligible for funds.

Gordy said that although it fits with what COG is trying to promote, he didn't care for COG becoming a partisan agent. Tony agreed and said that the role of COG as a neutral convener is valued; he didn't feel an endorsement was necessary. Genie didn't think it had a chance. Mike didn't feel comfortable voting on it and said he would feel better if it were brought before the Executive Committee. Cathy didn't feel knowledgeable enough to endorse it. No formal action was taken.

- (4) **March 27<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Economy Forum.** Neal distributed the Forum program and reviewed it. A luncheon with Michael Shuman has been scheduled after the program at 1:00 at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. There will be door prizes at the forum including autographed Michael Shuman books and the Sunrise Guide. A survey will be distributed asking for respondents' opinions of the sustainability principles and if they support the development of a regional plan. The results could be used in our CEDS planning. Neal reviewed what Michael Shuman would be addressing in his presentation.
- (5) **Regional Planning Concept and Regional Economic Development.** At the meeting in January, Neal distributed the draft planning concept that we developed guided by the sustainability principles. The idea is to create a regional plan that over time would supplant the state's role in reviewing local comprehensive plans. Over time the municipal local plans would need to be found consistent with the regional plan which would have to be approved by the state. The idea for the regional plan was sent to Sue Inches at SPO and she was intrigued by it and subsequently had a

meeting with her staff. She has shown some real support for this idea. The SPO has been looking for an opportunity to work on a regional planning process. Neal distributed two handouts: one explaining the regional planning concept and one from the SPO with questions for discussion.

Neal reviewed the five “Big Picture Issues”

- Establishing agreement on the purpose, objectives and benefits.
- Redefining the roles and responsibilities of municipalities, GPCOG and the State Planning Office.
- How to ensure consistency with state growth management policy, development review, and GPCOG sustainability principles.
- Establishing the elements of local plans and the regional plan.
- Implementation/Enforcement.

We think that the first thing that should be done is to inventory regional plans. We need to determine what is missing and then analyze plans for consistency with the state’s growth management rules. It would be a useful, productive process. The funding would include some money in the 2010 budget -- perhaps we could use some state technical assistance funds. Some of the work is directly related to EDA so it could be incorporated with CEDS. Perhaps transportation-planning funds could be used if transportation is part of it as well. Caroline mentioned that an inventory was done last year – it was essentially a list of plans.

Mike said that he mentioned the regional plan idea to his comp plan group and they discussed how they shared lakes, etc. They said they would be interested in helping with a regional plan. They had a lot of trouble with the state and feel that the state doesn’t understand our region. He thought we would see great support from Raymond. Cathy said that it makes a lot of sense but she was not convinced that it would happen. Neal said that to fully implement the plan would probably take about ten years.

Neal reviewed the questions from the SPO. Phase 1 would be to go through these questions with the SPO. Then we would need to get approval from the Executive Committee to move forward with this. The SPO is looking for an opportunity that could be replicated statewide; it may require a statutory change. In the process of developing the legislation, we could flesh out some of the answers to the questions that the SPO is asking. We could work with the SPO on this legislation.

Communities will not be required to sign on to this regional plan idea, but if they do then they will need to abide by the rules of the compact, similar to the Denver Mile High Compact. It doesn’t mean that your municipality has signed on if the Executive Committee approves it. It was suggested that a carefully crafted Resolution be brought to the Town Councils. The Resolution should probably happen before the statutory language is put in place. The Councils will need to know that they will not be committing funds or losing authority. Next step: draft a Resolution.

- (6) **Other Business.** Economic development concept: It was reviewed by the Metro Regional Coalition Economic Development Subcommittee and the full Metro Regional Coalition. The MRC wants to keep it small; we would like them to open it to the region. The language in the Resolution was modified a little; the current language is specific to the Metro region.
- (7) **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.