

GPCOG Steering Committee Minutes
September 23, 2009 Meeting
12:00 p.m. at GPCOG

In attendance: Gordy Billington, President, Standish; Tom Blake, South Portland; Pat Finnigan, Portland; Tony Plante, Windham; Mike Reynolds, Raymond; Matthew Sturgis, Gray

Staff: Neal Allen, Maddy Adams, Eben Marsh

- (1) **Welcome.** Gordy Billington called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.

Approval of August 14th minutes. Neal distributed the brief minutes from the business portion of the Retreat meeting on August 14th. *Tom Blake moved approval of the August 14th minutes. Matt seconded the motion and all were in favor.*

- (2) **Continuation of Retreat Agenda.**

Economic Development. Neal provided some background. Neal felt our role should be that of facilitator rather than as implementer. He spoke about CEDS and noted that although it is helpful, he questioned what we do with it. He thought we should make the CEDS more of a strategic document. This could be a role for the standing committee on community and economic development. In the 90's COG and SMRPC formed SMEDD and, together, we produced the CEDS. The RLF also started in the 90's. We have been petitioning the EDA to make COG and SMRPC separate economic development districts; we have been working on this for quite a long time. We are now getting more money from EDA and we each have our own CEDS and CEDS Committees. EDA formally approved a project that Portland and Westbrook have been working on for over three years. We worked with the County on the CDBG Entitlement Program. There is a role for COG, but what should it be? How can we be helpful and when should we get out of the way?

Tom noted that there are others as well involved in economic development -- the Metro Regional Coalition, the GPEDC, etc. GPEDC has been reinvigorated through work with the legislature; that group consists of only Portland and South Portland. They would interface with the MRC. If we had a coordinating committee, Neal hoped that we could get representatives from all of these groups together. Neal and Gordy met with the County last week to talk about how to work together on these issues. Matt pointed out that there is much duplication by each town without a regional tie-in. A coordinating committee could keep all the towns abreast of what's going on throughout the region.

Gordy felt that dividing SMRPC and GPCOG into two different economic development districts is a good idea. The strategy (CEDS) is a good thing. However, the implementation piece is not in place. Gordy spoke of the Nova Scotia trip and added that Nova Scotia has a lot of federal money and the authority to bond. The MRC is running with the idea of an economic development authority. Their role seems very narrow – going to trade shows, trying to attract business, etc. The County is also interested in economic development; they have their own economic development director.

Paul McKenney's idea is to morph the CEDS Committee into a convener or committee with the economic development directors. Gordy would like to work more on the sustainability principles and build on that. Should we work with the Center for Global Engagement and go that route? Tony pointed out that we all talk regionalization but when it comes to our individual towns, we don't like to give up control. Some governing boards are more open to a regional approach than others. One of the advantages that RPCs/COGs have is that they are made up of

municipalities, many of which do not have economic development directors. The challenges for us are greater than for northern or eastern Maine. Tony noted that Maine has too many programs with too few resources. He spoke a little about Nova Scotia and the differences between us and them. COG is a place that can bring together all the pieces of economic development. Gordy spoke about the concepts that we have looked at – the Denver Mile High Compact, etc.

COG serves as a clearinghouse, a provider of resources, and a coordinator. Neal stated that partnerships are important. Regarding the regional planning initiative, Pat felt that we need to know the strengths of each of our communities; we need to get the trust factor going. The Metro Regional Coalition started with the biotech center. The four economic development directors work as a unit (Keith Luke, Harvey Rosenfeld, Erik Carson and Greg Mitchell). The four communities are working together well. If they add more communities in, then they might have other wants and needs and it may not work as well. Small communities do not have economic development directors and they could benefit from conversations about economic development regionally and get information about RLF's, etc. Mike stated that Raymond has no interest in economic development except that it should be done regionally. They have 15 housing starts per year in their comp plan. However, economic development in Portland can have an impact on jobs for Raymond residents. Neal thought that, with a few additions, the CEDS Committee could take on more of an overview role. Mike thought the CEDS group could be helpful in the regional planning effort as well.

Regarding the formation of a Standing Committee on Economic Development, there didn't appear to be too much support for forming another committee; it appeared that a revamped CEDS could do that. The new CEDS Committee could have a quarterly get-together for networking and information sharing. The CEDS Committee should include the addition of academic people and the private sector. The CEDS committee could be revamped so that part of what they do is serve as a committee to develop the CEDS and such other duties as may be envisioned by GPCOG.

Brownfields. Six RFP's have been received. Interviews will happen and then the Advisory Committee will be formed in October.

Center for Global Engagement. Neal reported that there is no money available right now but Deb Andrews has agreed to be a volunteer director to get this effort jump-started. We would provide her with office space, and initially she would help with web site development, formation of an advisory committee made up of a cross section of the community, and would reach out to the media. It will take some time to get this going and to find some money. Tom thought it was a good idea to have Deb start it rolling.

- (3) **Regional Planning Memorandum of Understanding: GPCOG & State Planning Office.** Neal had a meeting yesterday with Kat Fuller, Liz Hertz, and Evan Richert. We are ready to move forward on the MOU. Kat and/or Liz plan to attend the next Executive Committee meeting. *Tony made a motion that the Steering Committee recommend approval of the MOU to the Executive Committee. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*
- (4) **Briefing: Cooperative Purchasing Issue. (Executive Session)** Neal briefed the Committee on the Salt Bid Transition explaining that because the issue involves confidential deliberations involving a number of parties including the Federal Trade Commission and the Maine Attorney General, it was necessary to brief the Committee in Executive Session.

- (5) **Status Report.** The status report was distributed.
- Gordy mentioned the legislative breakfast scheduled for tomorrow in Gray.
 - Peter Crichton, Bill Whitten, Neal and Gordy met together last week.
 - Neal would like to talk to the group about the General Assembly meeting and the amount of time and money that goes into the meeting and then the attendance is often small. He suggested we consider the idea of having the Executive Committee serve as the authority rather than having a full General Assembly. We would need a higher threshold for a quorum. Currently the quorum for the General Assembly is at 25%, so it would probably have to go to 50 or 60%. The bylaws would need to be modified. We could still do the awards, etc. We could, of course, continue to leave things as they are. Tom suggested that a GPCOG presentation to each of the member communities might prove to be helpful.
- (6) **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.