

**Steering Committee Meeting  
January 19, 2011 Minutes  
12:00 at GPCOG**

**In attendance:** Cathy Breen, Falmouth; Tom Blake, South Portland; Tony Plante, Windham; Mike Reynolds, Raymond

**GPCOG Staff:** Neal Allen, Ann Thompson, Eben Marsh, Caroline Paras

1. **Welcome.** Cathy Breen opened the meeting at 12:05.
2. **Minutes of October 20, 2010 meeting.** *Tom Blake moved approval of the October 20, 2010 minutes, seconded by Tony Plante. All were in favor.*
3. **Review of Economic Development Activities.**  
Partnership with DECD re: Business Development Services. Caroline distributed a handout of economic, community and business development services. Neal recently met with the new acting DECD Director, Mr. Congdon, along with Senator Chris Rector and Representative Terry Prescott. The Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development Committee has been formed with these people. This group was briefed on economic development services provided by COG and the other RPC's/COG's.

Caroline provided some statistics about economic development. She spoke about the decline of jobs -- we've lost about 8,000 payroll jobs since 2008. The hard-hit areas are construction jobs, manufacturing and financial services. We have a new contract with DECD that will beef up our services. For the last decade, DECD has had a full-time Economic Development Specialist. The State recently eliminated that position and now it is served by the RPC's -- Caroline at GPCOG, and Chuck Morgan at SMRPC. They have received training and they are continuing to work with municipalities and the private sector on economic development. Caroline serves as the single point of contact for the Pine Tree Zone, Efficiency Maine and all the numerous state programs, so customer service is a big part of the position. She provided some examples of the assistance she has been providing. Businesses call her directly. If she gets a contact from a business in a GPCOG town, she asks if they have contacted the town first. Neal explained that this new arrangement is superior to what was happening before. For instance, we have been able to involve some of our other resources -- brownfields people, Vin DiCara for RLF loans, etc.

State Economic Development District Realignment Plan. The State worked with all the EDDs to modify all of the EDD boundaries through a realignment plan. The plan includes the restructuring of SMEDD into two separate economic development districts. The proposal was submitted in November by Governor Baldacci. We will be starting to push our delegation to get this moved along.

Mobilize Maine. Representatives from Mobilize Maine made a presentation to the Steering Committee in October. The plan is for Vital Economy to come back in February to have a meeting here in the Greater Portland region with a representative group (economic development directors, private sector people, Chamber) to get some feedback. Mobilize Maine could be the umbrella process for economic development planning and would then be able to work with the various economic development corporations and other interests. COG would convene the meeting. The Mobilize Maine process is an asset-based process and could become our CEDS process. The biggest challenge will be to bring the business community in. The process has been going well in Bangor and northern Maine.

Economic Development Corporations. Five of the six member communities of the Metro Regional Coalition (Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Portland, Scarborough and South Portland) have adopted a Resolution to move the process forward (Westbrook hasn't signed on yet). Once that is done, they will file Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. A side organization, the Greater Portland Economic Development Fund, is controlled by State Statute. This group is more focused on the urban area; it can grow to a bigger group.

Bridgton has just established an Economic Development Corporation as well (501c3). Their guiding principles are in sync with their comp plan. The Bridgton group is a town-led group; they want to acquire and redevelop property. The Falmouth Economic Development Committee is a private group that started about eight years ago. They are a membership organization and exist to make sure that developers have their say. Windham has an Economic Development Corporation; it was chartered as a private nonprofit. They are a subsidiary of the town with their own bylaws, their own meetings, etc. The Economic Development Director of Windham serves on the Windham Economic Development Corp.

Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund. A handout was provided of an e-mail exchange between Neal and GPCOG's legal counsel. A Brownfields RLF would be a good service to our membership but we need to nail down the legal issues.

Phase 2 of the Brownfields process includes sampling of soil, water and air. Through the assessment process, we've removed two underground storage tanks (one in Gray and one at the Adams School in Portland). We received \$400,000 in assessment funds and we've spent \$300,000 to date. We've applied for another grant. We can't redevelop the sites with the money and that is what the Brownfield RLF would do. Our role ends when we confirm or dismiss the environmental contamination. Having a fund would allow us to assist with redevelopment of sites.

GPCOG Revolving Loan Fund Program. We are looking at a rate adjustment which will go to the RLF Committee for review. We also need to market the program. It's gap financing (secondary funding).

Listening Session with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston – About 25 people from around the region attended. The Federal Reserve Bank will come back and present a full report in February or March. They said they would be willing to participate in our spring forum and would help sponsor the event. They were very interested in working with us. For this Listening Session, they teamed up with GPCOG and the Maine Development Foundation; they also did a presentation in the Bangor area.

#### **4. Updates**

Census 2010. The U.S. Census previously used a short form and a long form. The 2010 Census did away with the long form. A new method called the American Communities Survey gets the data that used to be provided by the long form of the Census. ACS is administered annually to a less than 1% sample; it is a snapshot in time. The ACS should not be compared to the Census long form. The ACS is not available in the same format as the Census information was. State counts for Census 2010 data were released in December. The ACS data is available on the Census web site. Caroline explained the process used for the ACS.

HUD Sustainable Communities Grant. The full consortium got together in November, and some bylaws were drafted. We are negotiating the budget with HUD and it is nearing completion. Once the budget is approved, that will establish the effective date, triggering a 60-day requirement to

complete the work plan and 120 days to develop the formal consortium agreement. Rebecca Schaffner-Tousignant will be the day-to-day programmer. Others that will be actively involved include Neal Allen, Ann Thompson, Aaron Shapiro at the County, some planners, USM Muskie School, and SMRPC.

Lakes Region Planning Initiative. We have had two meetings with the design team; another meeting is scheduled for February.

Energy Working Group. We've been working with a broad group of public and nonprofits – EmPowerMe. We are embarking on a public involvement process. We are now starting a meet-up process to help identify issues. A web site is also being developed. The Maine Energy Handbook was completed last summer and will be available on that site. It might make a nice program for a future Executive Committee meeting.

State Planning Office Technical Assistance Program. There is no money left for Technical Assistance. This funding was particularly helpful for smaller towns without planners.

GO Maine. We are having conversations with MaineDOT; we anticipate that we will see a reduction in funding in the next two-year funding cycle. There may be reductions in the current contract as well. It's a very successful program but it may require some scaling back.

Cumberland County/GPCOG Discussion. Next November there will be two additional commissioners due to the new charter. Neal has met with Peter Crichton and Valerie Landy and they are drafting a Memorandum of Understanding to clarify the relationship between GPCOG and Cumberland County. The Steering Committee will be presented with a draft MOU before the next meeting of the Committee and County Commissioners.

Cathy requested that the handouts, including the HUD summary, be e-mailed to Committee members.

- 5. Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 1:27 pm