



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

February 13, 2024

Noon to 1:30 pm

Hybrid meeting – In Person at GPCOG and Via ZOOM Conferencing

If attending via Zoom, please click the link below to join the webinar:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87406527810>

Webinar ID: 874 0652 7810

This meeting will be conducted in person and remotely in accordance with the requirements of GPCOG Executive Committee policy, [LD 1772, PL 2022 Ch. 666](#), and [1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1](#).

Participants are reminded that this meeting will be recorded and posted on the GPCOG website.

1. Welcome and introductions (5 minutes)

The Chair will call the meeting to order, remind attendees that the meeting is being recorded, and ask attendees to briefly introduce themselves.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the January 9, 2024 (Attachment A)

The minutes from the January 9, 2024 MRC meeting are found below as Attachment A. A motion for acceptance is in order.

3. Public Comment (3 minutes per person)

Residents of the region are invited to share up to 3 minutes of comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.

4. Rebecca Hatfield and Mark Swann - Housing First Update (45 minutes)

Staff report: Longtime members of MRC will recall our 2017 trip to visit Huston Commons in Portland to see Housing First in action, as well as our 2020 trip to two Portland supportive housing projects run by Community Housing of Maine. However, much has changed in the last seven years and many members are new to the MRC since our last housing visit.

To bring us up to speed, Avesta Housing President & CEO Rebecca Hatfield and Preble Street Executive Director Mark Swann will join us to discuss what Housing First is, how it works, and what the 2024 outlook is for additional Housing First developments. We'll learn how state investments in Housing First have supported the model, and what MRC communities can do to support Housing First in the region.

Action: Better understanding of Housing First and opportunities to consider how any MRC community might host a Housing First project.

5. Housing Summit Update (10 minutes)

Staff report: Planning Director Matt Panfil will preview the upcoming GPCOG Housing Summit on March 26th (1 to 6 pm at Ocean Gateway in Portland – [register here](#)) and share any available early insights into the work that GPCOG staff are preparing for presentation at the Summit

Action: Information.

6. Legislative Update (10 minutes)

Staff report: Chris Hall will provide current updates on three legislative issues that directly impact our region:

- [LD 1721](#), *An Act to Create Transitional Housing Communities for Homeless Populations in the State*, submitted by Senator Jill Duson in collaboration with the MRC.
- [LD 602](#), *An Act to Provide Regional Support to Deliver State and Federal Programs to Cities and Towns in the State*, legislation to strengthen regional planning organizations in Maine.
- General Assistance reform, following up last month's meeting with Rep. Graham with any recent developments.

Action: Learn about recent legislative developments and prepare for engaging in legislative action in the remaining portion of the session.

7. MRC Member Roundtable: Housing Forecast for 2024 (15 minutes)

Staff report: For today's meeting, this standing agenda item will ask Metro Coalition members to share their thoughts on the housing pipeline in their community. Will 2024 see as much housing built as last year? And is public support for greater housing growth changing, either for or against growth?

Action: Information and an opportunity to share member experiences with each other.

8. Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings (all Noon to 1:30 pm both in person and remote via Zoom)

March 12, 2024
April 9, 2024
May 21, 2024
June 18, 2024

Attachment A

January 9, 2024

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Hope Cahan	Falmouth
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Misha Pride	South Portland
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Mark Dion	Portland
Danielle West	Portland
Tom Hall	Scarborough
Patti Smith	Cumberland County
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Gail Kezer	Office of Senator Angus King
Sarah Lawrence	Office of Rep. Chellie Pingree
Guest	Peter Osborne, Maine Municipal Association
For GPCOG	Kristina Egan, Belinda Ray, Paul Johnson, Matt Panfil, Dani Deason

1. Welcome and introductions

Chair Michael Foley called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm and welcomed everyone. He welcomed new Metro Regional Coalition member South Portland Mayor Misha Pride. Attendees gave brief introductions.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the December 12, 2023 meeting

Jim Gailey moved acceptance of the minutes of the December 12, 2023 MRC meeting seconded by Hope Cahan. The motion passed without objection.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Municipal Workforce – Challenges & Opportunities

Peter Osborne, Maine Municipal Association’s Director of Educational Services, made remarks and led a conversation about municipal workforce challenges and how to meet them. He shared MMA’s perspectives, shared resources, and discussed emerging workforce strategies with members.

Osborne began by recapping MMA's existing work in education and training. MMA supports 65 meetings by affiliated organizations (municipal clerks, or planning board members, for example), as well as 35 larger meetings for the entire municipal community.

Summarizing the workforce challenges MMA has identified, Osborne listed attraction, retention, demographics resulting in more retirees and fewer new workers, less formal education offerings than in the past (example – USM's Public Administration program), increased friction between municipal workers and the public, and changing worker expectations surrounding the work place (for example increased demand for remote working).

Osborne asked members for their thoughts on challenges and barriers – responses included increased competition for workers with other municipalities, declining availability of housing that is affordable to municipal workers and decreasing municipal worker satisfaction.

Members discussed the need to increase job satisfaction for existing workers, including new flexibility in the workplace and better-defined career paths.

Osborne discussed MMA's 'Maine Hometown Careers' program, noting successes and sharing the results of a review by outside consultants that forms the basis of new initiatives around this program in the year ahead.

Turning to training barriers, Osborne noted several, including limited staff, limited staff time, long travel times, scheduling conflicts and infrequently scheduled trainings, and elected officials' low perceived value of training. In response MMA is developing a new training portal that aims to expand offerings, utilize remote learning, and focus on emerging needs.

Osborne detailed a number of resources and recruitment opportunities summarized in Attachment A below, including apprenticeship programs with high rates of hiring and retention and scholarships to support training.

5. Economic Development Update

Paul Johnson, GPCOG's Economic Development Director, gave members an update on the progress GPCOG has made administering two recent contracts from the Department of Economic and Community Development, both providing grants to new and expanding Maine businesses. Please see Attachment B for Johnson's slides which summarize his presentation.

6. Legislative Update

Belinda Ray provided an update on [LD 1721](#), *An Act to Create Transitional Housing Communities for Homeless Populations in the State*, submitted by Senator Jill Duson in collaboration with the MRC. The bill remains before the Housing Committee for additional action, and Belinda was hopeful for a good outcome that adopted the policies suggested in the bill.

Belinda also updated [LD 602](#), *An Act to Provide Regional Support to Deliver State and Federal Programs to Cities and Towns in the State*, legislation to strengthen regional planning organizations in Maine. The

bill has received a public hearing that went well, and the Housing Committee is expected to act on the legislation this month.

Finally, Belinda noted that General Assistance reform is still under discussion at the State House. Danielle West, who is following the issue very closely, confirmed that the Health and Human Services Committee has not made any decisions yet, but continues to urge that the proposed Office of New Americans take a lead role.

Members discussed the current state of new arrivals and emergency shelter in Portland. People continue to arrive, the new shelter on Riverside Street is filling up with asylum seekers, and the Homeless services Center is also approaching capacity.

7. MRC Member Roundtable: Extreme Weather

Members shared their thoughts on the impact of recent extreme weather events, and the capacity of municipal staff and resources to continue to deal with accelerating damage from weather events. Among the items discussed were:

- CMP has notably increased its efforts to be responsive
- Continued shortages of CDL license holders are limiting how many plows and response vehicles can be deployed during weather events
- Flooding has been a challenge
- Sarah Lawrence and Gail Kezer reminded everyone that our Congressional offices are all willing and able to help with resources in response to extreme weather events.

8. Adjourn

Mayor Foley adjourned the meeting by acclamation at 1:22 pm.