



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

February 14, 2023

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:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85676857436>

Webinar ID: 856 7685 7436, or call 646.558.8656

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)

Chair Michael Foley 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 10, 2023 meeting (Attachment A)

The minutes from the January 10, 2023 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. Legislative Updates (20 minutes)

Staff report: Since our January meeting staff has worked with members and Senator Jill Duson on submitting legislation to address General Assistance. With Belinda Ray's help the Senator has submitted a bill that both directs state funding toward the creation of new temporary shelter housing in locations across Maine, and also directs Maine state government to support services to unhoused people at these new temporary shelter facilities.

We will discuss the bill's contents and the legislative process for the bill as it makes its way forward in the weeks ahead.

Action: Information and discussion regarding supporting Senator Duson's bill.

5. Long-term Resilience Update (20 minutes)

Staff report. Sara Mills-Knapp, GPCOG's Director of Sustainability, will follow up our January discussion in the wake of December storm damage. Sara will focus on long term resilience building efforts in the region, how communities can access resources, and how GPCOG is supporting regional planning for resilience.

Action: Information and opportunities to identify resources and planning opportunities in response to increased storm damage.

6. Housing Strategies Preview (30 minutes) (Attachment B)

Staff report: At our December meeting Kristina Egan presented a preview of GPCOG's draft Housing Strategies. She will present a revised and refined Strategies draft that reflects input from the GPCOG Executive Committee and additional staff work.

Action: Provide member perspectives and input on the revised GPCOG Housing Strategies draft.

7. MRC Member Roundtable (15 minutes)

Staff report: This standing agenda item gives MRC members a chance to share updates with each other, and to discuss common issues outside the regular meeting agenda.

8. Adjourn

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

March 14, 2023

April 11, 2023

May 9, 2023

June 20, 2023

Attachment A



DRAFT Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2023

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Pete LaFond	Falmouth
Jon Anderson	Scarborough
Tom Hall	Scarborough
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Jeremey Gabrielson	Cape Elizabeth
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Snyder	Portland
Danielle West	Portland
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Sarah Lawrence	Office of Representative Pingree
Gail Kezer	Office of Senator King
Guest	Kate Dufour, Maine Municipal Association
For GPCOG	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Belinda Ray

1. Welcome and introductions

Chris Hall called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm and welcomed everyone.

Sarah Lawrence from Representative Pingree's Office shared information about a new FEMA funding opportunity contained in the FY23 omnibus appropriations bill that Congress just passed which included a significant increase for FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), from \$150 million up to \$800 million, specifically to help migrant-receiving communities respond to the crisis at the border and elsewhere in the U.S.

Sarah urged members and eligible Maine entities to apply immediately. More information including links to the funding opportunity are included in Sarah's follow up email, found below as Attachment A.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the December 13, 2022 meeting

Matt Sturgis moved acceptance of the minutes of the December 13, 2022 MRC meeting, seconded by Virginia Wilder-Cross. The motion was passed without objection.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Legislative Updates

Kate Dufour, Maine Municipal Association's Director of Advocacy and Communications, joined us to discuss the upcoming legislative session and preview MMA's legislative agenda.

Kate provided an introduction to the MMA legislative policy process, including the Legislative Policy Committee's [membership](#) and [meeting schedule](#). She urged everyone to communicate directly with our region's LPC members on issues of concern.

Kate previewed the MMA policy platform for the upcoming legislative session which includes roughly a dozen proposals to change existing law in the following areas:

- School Budget referendum timing
- Sharing revenues from recreational marijuana sales
- First responder preventative health
- Shared cost of training for EMS/Dispatcher personnel
- Non-residential Law Enforcement Officer training
- Amendments to tax increment financing laws to incentivize greater housing production
- Amendment of the Tree Growth law
- Reforms to General Assistance, including increased reimbursement and amended municipal responsibilities. See below.
- Reworking LD 290, last session' Property Tax Stabilization law, by repealing last year's law and replacing it with an enhanced resident homestead exemption that is available to people 65+ years old, is means-tested with eligibility determined by the Maine Revenue Services, and which reimburses municipalities 100% of lost revenues.

Kate shared many details of MMA's General Assistance legislation, which she emphasized was the product of good discussion and collaboration by a working group of representatives from large and small municipalities. Copies of the MMA bills on General Assistance and Property Tax Stabilization will be shared with MRC members. Highlights include:

- 120 days for newly appointed municipal GA administrators to complete their training
- Acceptance of GA applications during regular working hours
- Increase of state reimbursement from 70 to 90% in all cases

- State reimbursement of 100% of 'beyond maximum' costs, as well as costs of administration and interpreters
- Extension of municipal responsibility for GA cases from 30 days to 6 months for relocated applicants
- Extension of municipal responsibility from 6 months to one year when GA applicants are in shelters, motels, nursing homes, etc.
- Better state GA administration including written decisions, consistent interpretation of laws and regulations, a 24-hour hotline to support municipal GA officials, and a web portal

Kate discussed the implementation of last session's LD 2003. She noted that the law's promised technical assistance and funding have not been provided, and the law's regulations have not been released (they are expected in March or April). She suggested that LD 2003's effective date of 7.1.23 should be pushed back to give municipalities enough time to prepare zoning changes and other planning before the law goes into effect.

During Q&A members asked Kate to carefully consider impacts of the Law Enforcement Officer non-resident training proposal. They were supportive of repealing LD 290, which many said was unworkable, in favor of targeted property tax relief to those who need it.

5. Shelter Housing update

Chris Hall and Kristina Egan conveyed requests from the community for any shelter housing facilities that might be available to respond to the growing numbers of unhoused people in our region. Members were asked to contact Kristina or Belinda Ray if they had any thoughts about possible shelter locations that might be put into use and staff will investigate them.

6. CEDS development

Chris Hall gave a brief update on the ongoing work GPCOG staff is doing to produce a new 5-year Regional Prosperity Plan (otherwise known as our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) plan). This work is part of GPCOG's responsibilities as the Economic Development District for the Greater Portland region. Public engagement meetings are in progress, and members were welcomed to provide their thoughts on the opportunities and barriers to greater regional prosperity by contacting Chris Hall.

7. Member Roundtable

Members discussed several items.

- Ginny Wilder Cross shared her experience with constituents' misunderstanding of public service and the need to educate people to reverse misinformation that circulates in the community.
- Jeremy Gabrielson asked if any other communities were giving thought to re-positioning failed bond proposals from last fall.
- Several members discussed storm damage from the recent December storm, and Jim Gailey noted that Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency has compiled an inventory of storm damage in support of a requested FEMA disaster declaration that he will share.

- Nathan Poore noted how essential municipal communications have become, and the great value that a municipal communications professional can provide.
- Tom Hall noted his staff's great response to a '1st Amendment audit,' something that other members had also experienced.

8. Adjourn

At 1:30 pm Chris Hall adjourned the meeting by acclamation.

Attachment B

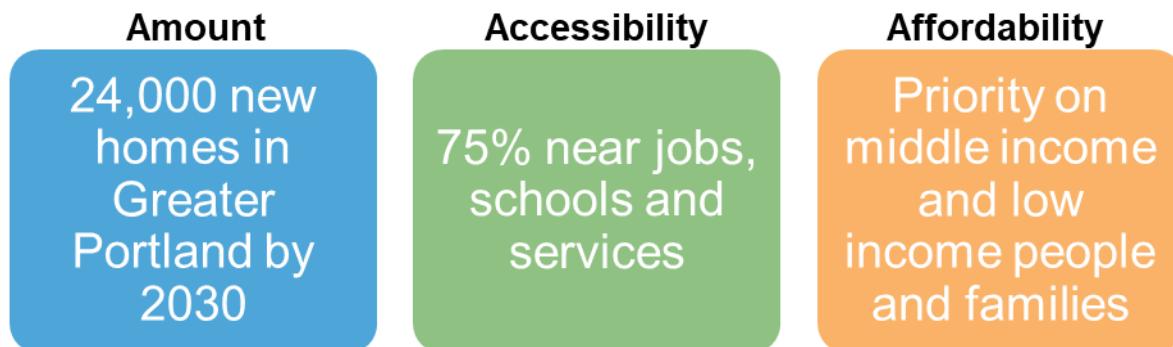
GPCOG Draft Housing Strategy
2.7.23

GPCOG's Housing Strategy is designed to help our member communities build more housing in the right places, for all the people who need it, in ways that each community wants.

Our strategy will help our members by listening to their housing plans and challenges, and then advising them on how to build homes and apartments that make sense for their community and produce the best outcomes for their residents and the region.

- GPCOG will provide education, best practices, and planning expertise to interested communities.
- We'll track the region's housing progress and provide data-based reports.
- And we'll tell the region's housing shortage story through the voices and lived experience of the people who need and want housing but can't find it.

Goals by 2030:



Problem: Our region has a critical housing shortage for low to moderate- and middle-income people.

To meet current housing demand, we need 24,000 new homes and apartments built as soon as possible, and priced so that low to moderate- and middle-income people can afford them.

Why is the housing shortage so critical?

- Young people can't find a place to live, and without homes and apartments they will leave. Our region is still too old – it can get younger, but only if young people can afford to live and work here. Without young people, our region's vitality will drain away.
- Employers can't find employees, and without housing that workers can afford, they will leave. When current workers retire, there won't be new workers to take their place. New employers won't find the workers they need. Our economy will be hobbled.

- Low- and moderate-income people can't find a place to live, and without more affordable housing racial and social equity gets even worse, and our unhoused population grows. We can't be an equitable region without homes and apartments that everyone can afford.

Solution: Build more housing! But just building new housing anywhere and everywhere is not a good solution.

Problem: Not all housing is created equal. In the wrong locations, new housing can:

- Destroy community character with incompatible, poorly located structures.
- Increase property taxes with inefficient new buildings located far from infrastructure and services.
- Reduce open space by failing to coordinate new buildings with existing high value ecological and recreational lands.
- Add to climate change with more cars, commuting and congestion, and with poorly built energy-inefficient structures.

Solution: Well designed and well-located new homes and apartments can improve a community. Well located new homes and apartments can:

- Improve Municipal Fiscal Health. Locating housing near existing infrastructure, like water, sewer, public transportation, broadband and more, reduces fiscal demand on municipalities and the state to extend services further and further.
- Preserve Rural and Community character. By encouraging denser housing in villages and downtowns, we reduce growth pressure on farms, fields, and forests and preserve the places that make Maine so special.
- Increase Social and racial equity. Encouraging more affordable housing across all communities helps address historic inequities in housing and land use development that have segregated people by race and income.
- Advance Climate action. Providing housing choice in walkable and bikeable places, and in areas served by public transportation where possible, supports the goals of *Maine Won't Wait* by reducing reliance on cars and supporting cleaner ways of getting around.

Four Housing Strategies

1. Identifying local housing needs. Our first step is to listen to elected officials and professional staff in our member communities to find out what they need to make housing work for their community, and how (or if) we can help.

Every one of GPCOG's members are discussing housing in their community. Developers are bringing new projects forward in many places. State government has increased housing density in existing zoning (LD

2003), opening the door to new housing projects in places where they weren't expected. And teachers, police, and municipal employees in every community are struggling to find housing they can afford in the community where they work.

Finding solutions to any community's housing challenges starts with listening and understanding what the community needs and wants – and then finding a path forward.

2. Advising. As needed and where wanted, GPCOG has a wealth of technical expertise to share with our members to help them find housing solutions, including:

- LD2003 technical assistance to help communities prepare for and implement LD 2003, including reviewing, revising, and developing zoning and other land use ordinances.
- Housing assessment to help communities identify the types of housing they need, set goals, and align zoning and policies to encourage its development.
- Housing impact analysis can develop accurate information as to the costs and benefits of expanding housing choice, including impact on property taxes, municipal revenue, schools, traffic, and natural resources.
- Technical assistance to develop or use tools that negotiate obstacles, like TIFs, trust funds, municipal-owned land, housing authorities, and more.
- Village and neighborhood plans for priority centers identified in *Connect 2045* and in municipal comprehensive plans (in non-PACTS communities).
- Zoning and ordinance development to help encourage the types of housing municipalities value in places they want it.
- Site analysis and project development that provides information about the suitability of a site, including which sites are more valuable for preservation and open space. For promising sites, additional services could include market and return on investment analysis, matchmaking and/or facilitation between developers and municipalities, and support in identifying funding for needed infrastructure investments or brownfields clean-up.
- Short term rental tracking and policy development. With a new software package currently being piloted, GPCOG expects to offer communities a valuable tool to help communities. The software package assists in licensing, tracking, and enforcement of all short term rentals. It will be offered at no charge in 2023 for communities willing to be beta testers.
- Visualizations of multifamily and mixed use development in sites under consideration for new homes.

3. Assessing and Sharing. GPCOG will establish a Housing Solutions Clearinghouse that includes:

- Housing Data that tracks and reports on local and regional progress toward building more new homes and apartments in good locations and meeting the needs of communities and the region for greater equity and increasing economic opportunity.
- Best practices drawn from around the state and the country, including innovative housing ordinances, zoning models, tax policies, and housing support structures (like housing trusts) designed to advance good housing outcomes.

- Success stories that highlight local and regional housing accomplishments, sharing what works (and what doesn't), and enabling communities to collaborate on housing initiatives.

4. Engaging and Educating. Our housing shortage has many faces, and many different aspects. To help everyone in our region understand why the expanding housing choice matters, and what they can do about it, GPCOG will:

- Tell the region's many stories about why housing choice matters through people-centric stories and credible data, using various media and incorporating community-specific materials.
- Offer educational presentations upon request to help people understand how their community can shape new housing, instead of being shaped by it.
- Celebrate the progress that communities make toward a better housing future for all of us.