



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

September 13, 2022

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 June 23, 2022 meeting (Attachment A)

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. Asylum Housing Crisis Progress Report (30 minutes)

Staff report: Belinda Ray will give an update on progress being made toward finding innovative solutions to the region's asylum seeker housing crisis. Belinda will share the latest information on efforts to locate temporary and permanent shelter housing, as well as the status of ongoing work with local, regional, and state partners.

Action: Information and discussion regarding next steps to implement solutions to the region's shelter housing crisis.

5. Metro Regional Coalition Priorities for 2022-23 (45 minutes) (Attachment B)

Staff report: Staff has drafted a proposed 2022-2023 MRC work plan for member review and approval (see Attachment B). This year's work plan is centered on three outcomes: the continuing work to expand housing options for everyone struggling to afford a home, to advance regional homelessness solutions, and to better welcome and retain asylum seekers in our region. As we have in the past, we've also highlighted educational opportunities for the MRC.

Action: Review, amend as desired, and approve the 2022-2023 MRC Work Plan.

6. MRC Roundtable (10 minutes)

Staff report: This standing agenda item is intended to provide a forum for MRC members to share with each other their questions, learning, and community updates.

Action: Information exchange.

7. Adjourn

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

October 11, 2022
November 8, 2022
December 13, 2022
January 10, 2023
February 14, 2023
March 14, 2023
April 11, 2023
May 9, 2023
June 20, 2023

Attachment A
DRAFT
Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

June 23, 2022

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Amy Kuhn, Chair	Falmouth
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Pete LaFond	Falmouth
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Kevin Jensen	Gorham
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Susan Gillis	Cape Elizabeth
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Snyder	Portland
Danielle West	Portland
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Sarah Lawrence	Office of Representative Pingree
Guest presenter	
Rep. Teresa Pierce	Co-Chair, Appropriations & Financial Affairs Comm.
For GPCOG	Belinda Ray, Chris Hall, Tom Bell

1. Welcome and introductions

Amy Kuhn called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the May 10, 2022 meeting

Mike Foley moved acceptance of the minutes of the May 10, 2022 MRC meeting. Matt Sturgis seconded. A roll call vote was held. The motion passed with all voting in favor (West and Morelli abstained).

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Legislative Update – Guest Representative Teresa Pierce

Representative Pierce is the House Chair of the Legislature’s Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee. She began by noting what an extraordinary session it had been, navigating the pandemic and remote meetings, and still accomplishing a great deal.

From her perspective on the Appropriations Committee, she shared a summary of the just-concluded legislative session which included:

- A bipartisan 2-year budget, and a bipartisan supplemental budget, both demonstrating the ability of the two major parties to work together at the State House.
- Successful allocation of unexpected federal funding (ARPA), and state revenue surpluses (in both budgets). She noted that lawmakers were prudent, allocating funding to capital investments and one-time pilot programs, and staying away from long-term programmatic spending increases.
- The state budget fully funded municipal revenue sharing at 5% and general purpose aid to K-12 education at 55% - both major municipal priorities. It also included a new Education Stabilization Fund, designed to keep GPA at 55% if there is a downturn. The state's Rainy Day Fund is also at its highest level ever, again designed to fill the gap if an unexpected budget shortfall appears.
- Other budget accomplishments included \$850 dollar checks for Maine residents, free community college for 3 years, state funding for school lunch programs for all children irrespective of status, a substantial increase to the K-12 school renovation fund, new housing funding, and \$100 million focused on PFAS contamination and remediation.

Reflecting on the state's economic performance, Rep. Pierce said that state revenues continued to outperform expectations through this spring (March/April 2022). Corporate income tax has been a notable source of unanticipated state revenue, but personal income and sales taxes are also running strong.

She described the state procedures for forecasting state revenues and shared that lawmakers continue to take a guarded posture toward the future of state finances, given the unknown impacts of inflation and continued pandemic disruptions to the economy.

For 2023, Rep. Pierce focused on maintaining current progress and continuing to evaluate the effectiveness of the investments made by the last legislature. In response to a question about communicating with busy lawmakers, she emphasized the importance of personal relationships, and suggested email might not be the best way to reach legislators at the end of a busy session when things get hectic.

5. Asylum Housing Crisis Progress Report

Belinda Ray gave an update on progress being made toward finding innovative solutions to the region's asylum seeker housing crisis. Belinda noted the following:

- Good discussions continue between state, regional, and local officials regarding temporary and permanent shelter solutions, and the services needed to support them.
- GPCOG will launch its Safe in Maine fund on June 30th, and several MRC members will be present. The fund will provide gap funding for building temporary shelter facilities in the region.

- Belinda plans on finalizing a white paper on shelter resources and options in the near future.

During Q&A Scott Morelli thanked Belinda for all her work, which he said was very valuable.

Scott also shared that the South Portland Council followed Portland lead and passed a resolution ([link](#)) urging greater state action on this crisis. Kate Snyder shared a copy of the Portland Resolution (copied below), and said that Biddeford had passed a similar resolution earlier in the week. Michael Foley said that he would be bringing a similar resolution before the Westbrook Council on July 11th.

If other MRC members are interested in doing something similar, Mayor Snyder said she would be happy to consult.

6. Metro Regional Coalition Priorities for 2022-23

Members had a first opportunity to look ahead to the next year's MRC workplan. [LD 2003](#) was identified as an emerging priority as every GPCOG community assesses the law and the zoning and land use changes it requires, including the development and implementation of regional housing goals.

Members also urged keeping the new format of the workplan, separating action/advocacy items from educational priorities. Staff will bring a draft workplan forward at the September MRC meeting for further discussion and finalization.

7. Next Metro Regional Coalition Chair

Amy Kuhn announced her intention to step down as MRC Chair for next year and thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve as chair for the last two and a half years. She also shared that Mayor Foley was happy to step up as the next MRC Chair. She invited others to express interest, but seeing none she invited a motion. Matt Sturgis moved to elect Michael Foley as MRC Chair, and Scott Morelli seconded the motion. A roll call was conducted, and all members voted in support of the motion (Lawrence abstaining).

8. Metro Regional Coalition schedule for 2022-2023

Chris Hall offered members an opportunity to discuss changing the standing MRC meeting date which is currently the second Tuesday of the month from September through June from noon to 1:30 pm. Members were happy to keep the same schedule. Hall noted that the June meeting always conflicts with Election Day, and he would make an adjustment to avoid the conflict.

9. COVID-19 Roundtable

No updates.

10. Adjourn

At 1:02 pm Nathan Poore moved to adjourn, seconded by Mike Foley. A roll call vote was held, and all voted in favor of the motion.

Attachment B

Metro Regional Coalition 2022-2023 WORKPLAN *DRAFT*

Below is a draft summary of the Coalition's goals for fall 2022 through summer 2023 and its planned actions to achieve those goals.

Priorities for Action and Advocacy

1. Expand Housing Choices

Goal: To continue expanding housing choices and increasing the supply of workforce housing in MRC communities for low- and middle-income households, while implementing the new state requirements of LD 2003.

Actions:

- Publish third annual report on member communities' progress in expanding housing choices in the spring of 2023.
- Coordinate local member housing strategies in response to LD 2003 through GPCOG's new staff capacity.
- Generate information and analysis about ways to expand local and regional housing growth in places that make sense, limit sprawl, and efficiently link with transportation investments.

2. Advance Regional Homelessness Solutions

Goal 1: To house more people experiencing homelessness in the Greater Portland area through a regional strategy that distributes the costs of homeless services more equitably across communities.

Actions:

- Advocate for a regional homeless services strategy that includes state and other resources to implement that strategy.

Goal 2: Achieve meaningful General Assistance reform in the 2023 legislative session.

Actions:

- Support efforts to engage with the Governor for state action.
- Conduct the policy development necessary to identify specific General Assistance reforms that all MRC members will actively support at the State House.
- Organize MRC members to provide data and information that supports the requested reforms.

3. Welcome and retain asylum seekers

Goal: For the state to lead efforts to resettle asylum seekers in Maine.

Actions:

- Coordinate member support for a single legislative proposal in the fall of 2022 to establish an Office of Resettlement in state government designed to provide financial, housing, economic, and social services support to newly arriving immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- Work with lawmakers, administration officials, and the Governor to submit and pass legislation for the 2023 legislative session.

Goal 2: To catalyze the development of a transitional housing campus.

Actions:

- Continue to convene state, local, immigrant, and private sector parties to identify and develop transitional housing.
- Continue to raise Safe in Maine funding for temporary shelter options.

Education Priorities

- **Regional Resilience** - GPCOG staff will share new information about local and regional climate action, to reduce emissions and build community resiliency to shocks and stresses from the climate crisis.
- **Economic Development** – Learn about proposed and emerging new developments in the region, and contribute to the development of the new GPCOG 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) plan, and identify member opportunities to engage.
- **Workforce** – To grow and retain the region’s workforce, the MRC will reach out to the region’s private sector to learn more about ongoing efforts and identify opportunities for municipal engagement.