



DRAFT

Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2021

Noon to 1:30 pm

Via ZOOM Conferencing

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Amy Kuhn, Chair	Falmouth
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Snyder	Portland
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Travis Kennedy	Cumberland County
Guest:	Auburn Mayor Jason Levesque
For GPCOG:	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Vanessa Farr, Julia Dubovsky

1. Welcome and introductions

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

2. Acceptance of the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes

Matt Sturgis moved acceptance of the minutes from the April 13, 2021 MRC meeting, seconded by Michael Foley. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3. Public Comment

George Reault offered comments on housing and land use.

4. Presentation and Housing Discussion with Auburn Mayor Jason Levesque

Guest presenter Jason Levesque has served as Mayor of Auburn since 2017. In his January 2021 [State of the City](#) speech, as a part of his growth agenda, he called for the creation of 2,000 new affordable market rate homes in Auburn.

Given the many similar housing issues facing Auburn and Metro Regional Coalition communities, Mayor Levesque was invited to share Auburn's experiences, lessons learned, and insights. The Mayor's PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes.

The Mayor framed his remarks with a review of Auburn's situation before he took office, noting the need for greater growth and vitality.

He described a process that included development of a strategic plan, creation of a new brand for Auburn, and the identification of obstacles to growth. Using data and substantial public engagement, the city produced a 2020 report detailing the path forward.

The plan recognized that Auburn already possessed many advantages, but critically lacked population. The plan responded with a focus on market rate housing growth, streamlined municipal regulations, municipal staff reorganization and restructuring, and dedicated communications efforts to educate residents, understand their concerns with a growth agenda, and respond to those concerns effectively.

The plan also included incentives for market rate housing development, including \$1 million dollars in grants to developers, free or reduced cost city land, and other incentives including a veteran's incentive.

The Mayor discussed how the plan has accelerated discussion of zoning changes in the city, advancing form based code approaches that offered greater flexibility for development, and proposing to simplify Auburn's zones by reducing the number of different zones from 32 to 8. He identified other zoning changes that have either been implemented or are in the process of adoption, including elimination of secondary dwelling unit restrictions, and elimination of parking requirement in parts of the city.

To further advance land use reforms in Auburn the City is currently engaged in an intensive 4 month Comprehensive Plan review focused on housing, transportation, and recreation. The review combines an emphasis on equity with expanded public engagement, and the Mayor hopes that the city Council will approve the next set of comprehensive plan changes before the end of this year.

In sum, the Mayor's goal of 2000 new market rate housing units is already happening, with 100 units built and another 150 units in the pipeline for construction. Using a careful analysis of existing municipal capacities, Auburn has determined its current services can accommodate growth up to 30,000 residents (a gain of more than 6,000).

As a result, the Mayor also hopes that 2000 new market rate homes will produce additional revenues that can also lower property taxes by as much as 20 percent over time.

During Q&A, and in conclusion, the Mayor stressed that land use policies have restricted the supply of housing in Auburn, limiting growth, and reduced equity and opportunity in his

community. His efforts are focused on educating Auburn residents about the benefits of growth and addressing market rate development opportunities (he indicated the city is not addressing subsidized housing at this point), and ‘building for people, not cars.’

By doing so he hopes to support equitable expansion of prosperity in his community, and open the doors to future growth in Auburn.

Attachment – Mayor Levesque’s PowerPoint



GPCOG
Presentation.pdf

5. Broadband Update

Andrew Butcher, GPCOG’s Director of Innovation and Resilience, is leading GPCOG efforts on broadband expansion. Andrew’s work includes staffing for the statewide Maine Broadband Coalition, and close collaboration with the legislature’s bipartisan Broadband caucus and the Mills Administration’s implementation of new broadband investments.

Andrew, along with Travis Kennedy from Cumberland County, updated members on the rapidly evolving local, regional, state, and federal opportunities to expand connectivity. Andrew highlighted a number of programs and opportunities, including:

Funding

- Federal
 - Funding is coming from various federal agencies including NTIA, USDA, EDA, FCC
 - Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
 - Eligible households can enroll through an approved provider or by visiting <https://getemergencybroadband.org>.
 - For more information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, please visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>
- State:
 - Connect Maine Community Planning Grants. [Open now through May 27th](#)
 - Infrastructure / expansion grants likely to include another open round this summer
 - Use of 2020 Bond funds
 - Maine Connectivity Authority - \$150M: Pending legislative approval and organizational development
- Local
 - Federal U.S. Treasury Interim rules on the American Rescue Plan Act shared on 5.10: [All the info](#).

- [Broadband info pg. 69-77.](#)
- Lots of flexibility on a local level. Encouragement for regional collaboration, municipal network,
- Maine Community Foundation - ideal for community planning processes. [Open again in summer '21](#)

Policy

- [LD 1484](#): The Maine Connectivity Authority. More robust State Authority to own and finance middle mile assets
- [LD 1432](#): The Municipal Gigabit Fund: Restructure existing fund to incentivize ultra-high speed and municipally owned networks.
- [LD 1219](#): Setting up a third party administrator to track, maintain and facilitate the one-touch make ready pole attachment process.
- Connect Maine designation of 100/100mbs for broadband standards Written comments must be submitted by emailing Connect.ME@maine.gov with the subject Public Comment

Sample Language to include: "____ (town/municipality) supports the Connect Maine designation of 100/100 mbs as a way of enabling a more robust, reliable, and future oriented standard for the State's connectivity needs."

Speed testing

- Generate real time insights to help inform community planning and funding development. [Take, share, and reshare the speed test.](#)

Digital Frontiers

- Learn about Municipally Owned Networks on Thursday May 13th and May 20th. [Register here.](#)

Main Broadband Coalition

- Policy, Programming, Partnerships.
 - Bi-weekly Legislative Caucus sessions: See them [here:](#)
 - Regional Dialogues to prepare for ARPA opportunities at a regional scale.
 - Get more involved. www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org

Capacity via GPCOG

- Lakes Area RFP for technical assistance building from ongoing education and engagement
- Resilience Corps: Current Fellows supporting Broadband in Harrison, Naples, Standish, Sebago

- Interested in hosting a fellow starting in November 2021? Contact Julia Breul at j.breul@gpcog.org

6. Adjourn

At 1: 31 pm Amy Kuhn adjourned the meeting by unanimous roll call.