



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

January 10, 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 December 13, 2022 meeting (Attachment A)

The minutes from the December 13, 2022 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 (60 minutes)

Staff report: First, Kate Dufour, Maine Municipal Association’s Director of Advocacy and Communications, will join us to discuss the upcoming legislative session. We’ll have a chance to hear about MMA’s agenda, and also discuss the Metro Regional Coalition’s priorities including General Assistance reform, state support for asylum seekers, and expanded housing opportunities.

After Kate Dufour's presentation staff will provide an update on legislation submitted by Senator Duson as a follow up to the December MRC meeting. The Senator has submitted three concept draft bills focused on directing the state to fund and implement housing and supports for asylum seekers, removing those services from General Assistance and municipal financial responsibility.

Action: Information and discussion regarding high priority legislative issues. Facilitate MRC member communications with their legislative delegations.

5. CEDS development (15 minutes)

Staff report: Chris Hall will update members on GPCOG's work developing a new 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) report. As an Economic Development District appointed by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, GPCOG is responsible for working with the region to write and implement economic development and resilience strategies that build on our region's strengths and mitigate current and future economic disruptions.

Action: Information and opportunities to provide input into the next CEDS.

6. MRC Member Roundtable

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.

7. Adjourn

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

February 14, 2023

March 14, 2023

April 11, 2023

May 9, 2023

June 20, 2023

Attachment A



DRAFT Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2022

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Michael Foley, Chair	Westbrook
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Pete LaFond	Falmouth
Amy Kuhn	Falmouth
Ephrem Paraschak	Gorham
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Kate Lewis	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
Guests	Senator Teresa Pierce, Senator Jill Duson
For GPCOG	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Belinda Ray, Tom Bell

1. Welcome and introductions

Michael Foley called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the October 11, 2022 meeting

Michael Foley moved acceptance of the minutes of the October 11, 2022 MRC meeting without objection.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Legislative Update

Senators Teresa Pierce and Jill Duson joined the members to discuss the upcoming legislative session, including the status of the Governor's heating and housing relief bill ([LD 1](#)). The Senators shared their impressions of the debate over LD 1 and noted that the bill awaits further legislative action when lawmakers return to the State House on January 4th.

Staff reviewed GPCOG's 2023 legislative priorities including support for new housing policies, General Assistance reform, state support for asylum seeker housing and services, new funding for regional implementation of state strategies, and fair distribution of state and federal funding.

Members shared their community's experiences with these priority issues with the Senators and each other. Discussion included the following points:

Maine Municipal Association is working on a bill to reform General Assistance that several members are involved with – they emphasized the importance of changes to GA that redistribute the burdens faced by service center communities and saw value in regional approaches to GA reform.

Creating new state aid for asylum seekers was identified as a top priority. Mayor Snyder suggested that the state should work with local government officials and nonprofits service providers to craft a legislative proposal that could win broad support in the legislature.

The specifics of that bill have not been drafted, and Senator Duson encouraged members and GPCOG to frame out a legislative proposal with sufficient detail to be submitted by the Senator before cloture (on 12/30.22). One member noted that a bill title has been submitted that could be a vehicle for this type of initiative, but more information is needed. Also, the Speaker had a similar bill in the last legislative session that might be of use.

As with GA reform, members emphasized the need for regional approaches, funded by the state, to achieve a system that is fair, effective, and efficient. Elements of the legislation should include a single point of intake, a single service provider coordinator, a means to relieve additional school costs, and coordination of community resources.

Members with hotels in their community spoke to the unsustainable financial burden that is created by housing asylum seekers in hotels. Many members noted that GA maximums (after 30 days of emergency eligibility) are essential to avoid large property tax increases.

The housing crisis facing asylum seekers – and all people experiencing homelessness – is exacerbated by the many barriers to new housing construction. Members encouraged one another to think creatively about shelter housing options – for example, using available existing facilities that are currently closed.

GPCOG staff will work with members and Senator Duson to evaluate the best approaches to the challenge of gaining new state funding to support asylum seekers.

5. GPCOG Regional Housing Strategy Preview

Kristina Egan provided a first look at a draft GPCOG regional housing strategy and led a discussion about its elements. Members provided feedback to help refine the strategy as it moves toward final approval by the GPCOG Executive Committee, hopefully next month.

Kristina reviewed the work that the MRC and GPCOG have done on expanding housing choices since 2018 and noted the strong foundation that work provides for GPCOG's new regional housing strategy. The new strategy will engage more local officials throughout the region and provide a more comprehensive approach to housing strategies that local governments can deploy.

GPCOG's draft regional strategy includes the following elements:

Form a Task Force. This group of members and regional partners will be the architects of GPCOG's regional housing work, setting housing goals, overseeing public education efforts, tracking housing progress, publicizing success, spotlighting barriers to progress, and sharing best practices throughout the region. Members were encouraged to suggest people for the Task Force (including themselves).

Conduct a Public Education Campaign. This effort, aimed at local leaders and influencers, would help explain the benefits of expanded housing choices and detail the impacts of housing policies, both positive and negative. An emphasis on human impacts, and visual communication, will highlight the campaign's themes.

Integrate Open Space into the Housing Discussion. Expanding housing choices also expands the opportunities for preserving and expanding open spaces and natural ecosystems. GPCOG staff will work with the land conservation community to help produce a regional open space plan that compliments housing choice policies.

Deliver Place-Based Neighborhood Work. GPCOG staff will provide member municipalities with support and assistance as they advance housing choice policies at the project and neighborhood level. GPCOG's expanded staff capacity will enhance local land use, conservation, and economic development resources to maximize housing opportunities in line with community values.

Members provided positive reactions to the housing strategies outlined by Kristina. Many emphasized the importance of a regional approach to the complexities of expanded housing choices.

6. Adjourn

At 1:37 pm Chair Foley adjourned the meeting by acclamation.