



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

February 11, 2020

Noon to 1:30 pm

GPCOG, 970 Baxter Boulevard, Portland

1. Welcome and introductions (5 minutes)

Chair Amy Kuhn will call the meeting to order.

2. Acceptance of minutes from January 14, 2020 meeting (Attachment A)

3. Contract proposal on land use regulation impacts on housing (Attachment B) (15 minutes)

Staff report: Levine Planning Strategies is led by former Portland Planning Director Jeff Levine. Attached is Levine's proposal to help Metro Regional Coalition member communities understand how existing land use regulations are contributing to limiting housing development in the region. The proposed white paper and analysis will form the basis for advancing policies that expand housing choices in individual communities.

Action: Review and approve the proposal from Levine Planning Strategies.

4. Regional response to Roux Institute (Attachments C and D) (30 minutes)

Staff report: At last month's MRC meeting members noted that the growth resulting from the Roux Institute, and from other landmark developments like Rock Row and The Downs, will require a regional effort to manage successfully. The attached PPH editorial and BDN news article make similar observations (attachments C & D). We invite members to discuss with staff how the Metro Regional Coalition might meet the challenge outlined by the PPH Editorial Staff:

Despite all of its charms, Portland is a city with high housing costs, limited transportation options and a growing gap between rich and poor. Despite all of its recent real estate development, Portland is struggling to support its public schools and house its homeless. A new economic engine that aggravates the problems that already exist is not in anyone's interest.

It will take a thoughtful approach by all the nonprofit, for-profit and government players to make sure this wave of growth does not erase the qualities that made Roux pick Portland and Maine to locate his namesake institution in the first place.

Portland can be a national model for how to expand the innovation economy and spread its financial benefits more widely. We are excited to see what comes next.

Action: Members will define a framework, and potential action items, focused on housing, transportation and equity to manage new growth in the region.

5. Update on Supportive Housing Tour and Regional Housing Fund (20 minutes)

Staff report: Last Friday several MRC members attended a supportive housing tour in Portland. One clear opportunity for MRC engagement was identified: GPCOG's formation of a regional housing trust fund, funded by individual municipal member contributions, dedicated to providing financing to enable more workforce and affordable housing projects to be built throughout the region.

Action: Members will assess the viability of a regional housing trust fund and the likelihood of municipal contributions.

6. Update on State Economic Development Plan engagement opportunities (5 minutes)

Staff report: Following up last month's MRC discussion of the new State Economic Development Plan, staff has identified two State Plan areas for MRC focused engagement: **Establish an adequate and sustainable funding system for public transportation** and **Expand the production of workforce housing in Maine**. Staff will continue to work on relevant MRC priorities and look for opportunities to connect MRC work to administration and State House initiatives.

Action: None – information only.

7. Making MRC minutes available to GPCOG members (5 minutes)

Staff report: Currently minutes from MRC meetings are posted on the GPCOG website a month in arrears as a part of the next meeting's agenda. Staff is considering posting the meeting minutes separately on the GPCOG website, soon after each meeting. Staff would notify all GPCOG members that they can sign up to automatically receive the minutes when they are posted, making the minutes as widely available as possible.

Action: Discuss proposal and if appropriate approve it.

8. Priority Updates (as time permits)

Staff Report: We will briefly summarize progress on other MRC priorities including the successful launch of the Portland Opioid Pilot.

Action: None required, information only.

9. Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings

March 10, 2020

April 14, 2020

May 12, 2020

June 9, 2020

Attachment A



Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2020

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Virginia Wilder Cross	Gorham
Kate Snyder	Portland
Sue Henderson	South Portland
Amy Kuhn	Falmouth
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Belinda Ray	Portland
Ephrem Paraschak	Gorham
John Cloutier	Scarborough
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Jon Jennings	Portland
Ted Poirier	Gorham
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
For GPCOG:	Kristina Egan Chris Hall

1. Welcome and introductions

Amy Kuhn called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of minutes from December 10, 2019 meeting

Mike Foley moved to accept the minutes of the December 10, 2019 Metro Regional Coalition meeting. Matt Sturgis seconded the motion. Members voted unanimously in support the motion.

3. Priority Updates

Kristina Egan gave members several priority updates, including:

- Portland has launched its opioid project, following successes in Gorham and Falmouth. Ginny Wilder-Cross and Ephrem Paraschak shared the value of the Gorham project which has positioned the Council well for follow up action. Kristina indicated that the GPCOG opioid 'toolkit' for municipalities will be available soon.
- Five of the seven MRC communities have passed Council resolutions on expanded housing choices in the region. Scarborough is considering their version of the resolution. After discussion members agreed GPCOG should wait until Scarborough has had a chance to evaluate the resolution before making a public announcement.
- Kristina shared that GPCOG will be receiving a zoning barriers to growth study proposal that would look at MRC communities' zoning and evaluate how current zoning may impact growth and density potential. The study would be dues funded. Kristina asked for reactions and members were supportive of the work while cautioning against the negative public perception of the word 'density.' The study would be a spring deliverable, and members suggested that it include an overlay for climate change vulnerability.
- Kristina and Belinda Ray reminded members that the supportive housing tour is set for January 31st from 2 to 4 pm in Portland. If you have not signed up yet but would like to attend please contact Chris Hall at GPCOG.

4. Update on Regional Emergency Shelter meeting

Chris Hall led a review of the 1/10/20 emergency shelter meeting. Members who attended described the meeting as productive, pragmatic and comprehensive. Minutes from the meeting are attached to these minutes.

Members will be working with Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency to conduct local inventories in preparation for local and mutual aid planning. Chris Hall at GPCOG will be working with Joe Chappell and Emily Kaster at CCEMA to help get inventories completed and planning work underway. The working group will meet again in two months to review progress.

Members discussed asylum seekers and emergency shelter needs, noting special service requirements like cultural ambassadors and translators who are not generally needed in all emergency shelter scenarios. Jon Jennings shared discussions the City has begun with Catholic Charities and the Governor's Office, exploring whether the City might be removed from its current role as shelter provider for these populations. If these discussions advance then GPCOG's work with CCEMA will be integrated as appropriate.

5. Engaging the State's New Economic Development Strategy

Chris Hall provided a background summary of the new [State Economic Development Plan](#) and highlighted its three top level goals: : 10% wage growth, 10% productivity growth, and the addition of 75,000 more people to Maine's talent pool all by 2030.

Hall began walking members through several Plan elements with particular relevance to our region, including:

- Attract New Talent/B5: **Promote “Quality of Place” investments**
- Provide Supporting Infrastructure/E2/ **Establish an adequate and sustainable funding system for public transportation**
- Provide Supporting Infrastructure/E3/ **Expand the production of workforce housing in Maine.**

Members discussed these and related Plan elements together, making the following comments and observations:

- Every community in the region has made significant ‘quality of place’ investments – they can be promoted as a part of the implementing the Governor’s Plan.
- Growth in the MRC region raises questions about the ‘tipping point’ – how much more can we absorb without upgrading public transportation, workforce housing and other infrastructure?
- Economic growth needs to be sustainable and inclusive
- Growth is essential to meet current and future demands on municipal services. Communities are being strategic with the tools at their disposal (impacts fees were one example).
- Deferred maintenance from past decades is imposing severe financial burdens on municipal budgets today (stormwater was one example).
- Public resistance to growth remains a central concern for economic development
- Portland’s growth is fueling regional growth, and managing that growth is increasingly a joint undertaking

Chris Hall will develop additional recommendations for engaging the Governor’s Plan for MRC review later this winter.

Members concluded this part of the agenda with reactions to an exciting upcoming announcement that Jon Jennings shared.

6. Adjourn

Amy Kuhn adjourned the meeting at 1:37 pm.

Attachment B

LEVINE PLANNING STRATEGIES PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTING SERVICES for the GREATER PORTLAND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

We propose to develop a white paper and supplemental analysis that outlines the existing land use regulations in the Greater Portland Council of Governments service region and how they limit housing development in the region. Working with GPCOG staff, we will outline the housing need in the region and how land use regulations might need to be modified to meet it.

FIRM BACKGROUND

Levine Planning Strategies, LLC (LPS) is a small consulting firm that specializes in housing policy and land use planning in Maine and Massachusetts. LPS was founded by Jeff Levine, AICP, most recently the Director of Planning & Urban Development for the City of Portland, ME, where he managed a forward-thinking new comprehensive plan for the City, and created an effective set of tools for housing for the city that leveraged new development to achieve more affordable units. Levine was able to build positive relationships between city staff, developers, and positive participants in the development process from the community to allow for good urban infill development and housing production.

In addition to leading Levine Planning Strategies, Levine is a faculty member at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. He has access to world-class expertise in development practice through the relationship of that department with MIT's Center for Real Estate and other research centers.

His experience in housing policy and development includes:

- Interactive workshop at the GrowSmart Maine summit in October 2019 on developing a "Municipal Housing Toolkit: Housing for Healthy Communities"
- Work with the Bath Housing Authority and City of Bath on a housing needs assessment;
- Creation and implementation of an inclusionary development policy for Portland, ME;
- Creation and implementation of a program in Portland that ensures that new hotels provide a fair share contribution to affordable housing development to help house their lower-wage workers;
- Work with several affordable housing developers to entitle hundreds of units of affordable and workforce housing developments;
- Creation of a robust Housing Trust for Portland that has funded over 200 units of low-income and workforce affordable housing;
- Changes to City codes to encourage development of affordable housing along key corridors and nodes identified in the City's plans;
- Work with developers and City Committees on Affordable Housing Tax Increment Finance Districts for several large developments.
- Management and oversight of the Affordable Housing Trust and other housing funding sources in Brookline, MA, where a \$6 million Town subsidy allowed for development of a 59 unit mixed-income adaptive reuse project with underground parking and a new public open space.

Levine's previous experience includes planning for the redevelopment of the 140-acre Assembly Square district of Somerville, MA, into a mixed-use district centered on a transit hub, as well as permitting complex projects in the highly organized community of Brookline, MA.

SCOPE OF WORK

This work would consist of the following steps:

- a. GPCOG staff will develop a working base map and provide a collection of land use regulations in the region;
- b. We will analyze the land use regulations and gather any key additional data required;
- c. We will assess the region's housing needs based on current and expected future populations;
- d. We will explore general regional land use regulations and, working with GPCOG staff, choose three sample communities for further analysis;
- e. We will study the three sample communities in further depth;
- f. We will overview national best practices in housing policy and summarize them, as well as provide some guidance as to which ones might best be applied in GPCOG communities;
- g. Based on overall analysis, and three sample communities, we will outline general barriers to housing production in the region and suggest a place-based approach to removing regulatory barriers and providing the proper incentives to help address regional housing needs.
- h. Summarize findings in final report of approximately 25-50 pages.

This project will include two meetings with committee or the public as requested by the client. Additional meetings are possible if needed, but may require additional compensation on an hourly basis.

GPCOG ROLE

We will rely on GPCOG's extensive experience in data analysis and GIS to leverage our work given a limited budget. Specifically, GPCOG staff will be responsible for:

- Providing a regional base map for use during the study;
- Providing general zoning classifications in the region for analysis, by acreage and location, in map and spreadsheet form;
- Provide a baseline of information regarding regional housing need in terms of number and types of units, to be refined by LPS;
- Work with LPS staff to identify three communities for more detailed analysis;
- Provide more detailed data on land use regulations in those communities, including rough buildout analyses given existing zoning; and
- Provide all maps required for this report.

COMPENSATION

This work can be completed for a cost of \$5,000. This amount is a lump sum but will be tracked using an hourly rate, with an estimated budget of 49 hours. While the usual LPS is \$135 plus expenses, we will offer a discounted flat rate of \$100 an hour due to the nature of this work and the public status of the client.

TIMEFRAME

This work would be completed over the first half of 2020, with a target date of July 1, 2020. Additional time may be needed if data collection or the process requires it.

Attachment C

[PPH 1/28/20](#)

Our View: Roux Institute a giant leap for Maine

Armed with a \$100 million gift, a new center for data study could build a community of companies and workers.

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Maine has been living through the little-by-little part for decades, as traditional industries like commercial fishing and paper-making have declined.

Promising shoots of new industries, like biotechnology and alternative energy, have shown promise, but they still seem far away from taking the place of steady job producers that supported communities in every corner of the state.

On Monday, Maine got a glimpse of what a sudden leap into the future could look like, with the announcement of [the Roux Institute](#), a professional graduate school and research center in Portland, which will grant degrees up to the doctoral level in artificial intelligence and machine learning with a focus on life sciences.

The institute will be a branch of Northeastern University and was created with a \$100 million gift from David Roux, a Lewiston native who founded a tech-oriented private equity firm, Silver Lake Partners, two decades ago. The new venture has partnerships with 10 of the state's largest employers in its fastest-growing industries. These companies will sponsor employees to attend the institute to expand their skills and qualifications, increasing the labor pool for high skill jobs that have been hard to fill in Maine.

The first students will begin taking classes this summer in temporary space. In three years, a permanent facility will be built for 2,000 students, along with faculty and support staff.

Roux's goal is not just to build a successful academic institution, but also to build a community of tech companies that benefit from each other's presence, allowing established companies to expand and new ones to get a foothold. That would create economic dynamism that would bring more people into the workforce and generate economic opportunity across the state.

That's the plan, anyway, and we hope that it comes to fruition.

We also hope, as they build this new tech economy, that Northeastern and its partners will work with the city and state to do more than just create jobs.

Despite all of its charms, Portland is a city with high housing costs, limited transportation options and a growing gap between rich and poor. Despite all of its recent real estate development, Portland is struggling to support its public schools and house its homeless. A new economic engine that aggravates the problems that already exist is not in anyone's interest.

It will take a thoughtful approach by all the nonprofit, for-profit and government players to make sure this wave of growth does not erase the qualities that made Roux pick Portland and Maine to locate his namesake institution in the first place.

Portland can be a national model for how to expand the innovation economy and spread its financial benefits more widely. We are excited to see what comes next.

Attachment D

[BDN 1-29-20](#)

Northeastern promises more students and jobs, but it's unclear if can Portland handle the influx

By [Lori Valigra](#), BDN Staff • January 29, 2020 1:17 pm

Updated: January 31, 2020 6:39 pm

PORTLAND, Maine — [Northeastern University](#) made waves Monday when it revealed plans to bring up to 4,000 graduate students and 300 jobs to Portland at its new technology institute over the next eight years.

But some development experts question whether the city — with high rents, low office and residential vacancies, limited parking and scant regional public transportation — can absorb the changes needed for the \$100 million project.

“There’s probably not room downtown today,” said Justin Lamontagne, a partner at Portland real estate firm NAI The Dunham Group, referring to space available to build the new institute. “But there could be some loosening with a couple of companies thinking of moving to the suburbs because of the lack of parking. All it would take is one large company to move out.”

Greg Mitchell, director of Portland’s economic development department, said there is room for growth when considering both downtown and the surrounding areas. He pointed to empty buildings, including the [Time and Temperature Building](#) on Congress Street, that could be redeveloped.

“We’re continuing to look at our entire community and make sure that we’re handling growth in a responsible way both on the peninsula, which is the center of our business base, and off the peninsula,” Mitchell said. “I would direct you to Northeastern’s campus in Boston. They’re used to operating in an urban footprint, so I don’t see this as any different.”

The institute, which has goals to train critically needed workers and to eventually attract new businesses to Maine, is seeking temporary space now and plans to build a new campus in downtown Portland in three years.

Lamontagne said the new Roux Institute might do better looking beyond the downtown to areas including South Portland and Westbrook.

That also goes for rental and other housing needed to serve students and staff.

“There is housing being built in greater Portland. But there’s very little housing being built in downtown Portland,” said Brit Vitalius, principal at Portland’s Vitalius Real Estate Group. “I think it’s an exciting opportunity for the whole area and the state, and will continue to challenge this community to think about housing and transportation in a bigger way than we have in the past.”

Portland’s mayor and its councilors have prioritized plans for affordable housing and transportation.

Mitchell said there are a number of transportation projects in the works, including an autonomous vehicle launch planned for Commercial Street this year. Traffic lights using artificial intelligence are already in place on Forest Avenue and Franklin Street. They can monitor traffic, communicate with one

another and move traffic through intersections rather than waiting for a fixed signal time. The next planned location for an AI traffic light is Commercial Street, he said.

The city also is working with new businesses on ways to accommodate workers and traffic, he said. When WEX said it would move more than 1,000 employees to the Portland waterfront, the city asked it to consider transportation to relieve congestion. WEX bought three shuttles for employees in its South Portland offices and other locations, Mitchell said.

Available and affordable housing in downtown Portland remains a challenge. Vitalius said the apartment vacancies have been nearly zero for more than a decade. And one-bedroom apartments in Portland now average \$1,250 a month, he said. But some planned housing could relieve the pinch from the expected influx of new people.

The [University of Southern Maine](#) this week proposed building a 577-bed dormitory with rooms and apartments ranging from \$800 to \$1,200 per month.

“That could take some of the pressure off housing that is currently being used in and around Deering and in and around downtown,” Vitalius said. “We’re also seeing growth and revitalization in Westbrook, South Portland, Biddeford and Saco, where hundreds of more units are going in.”

Some of the students are expected to come from existing businesses in Maine to get advanced training. That’s part of the effort to help retain employees who otherwise would have to move out of state to get an advanced degree, Josh Broder, CEO of Portland technology company Tilson, said at the institute’s announcement Monday.

“It’s not clear how many of the people will be new to the area,” Vitalius said.