

GPCOG Executive Committee AGENDA

February 15, 2022

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82855747276?pwd=ZUJMOUITTDhiTlpXcDFIbElvemdOZz09>

Or join by phone by calling: 1-646-558-8656

Note: At the direction of the GPCOG Executive Committee, all committee meetings are being held via [Zoom conferencing technology](#) due to the continuing pandemic. We remain committed to full public participation in our meetings through remote access during the COVID-19 crisis. Remote meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of [LD 32, 2021 Public Law 290](#) and [1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1](#).

1. Welcome

This meeting is being recorded and will be made available at gpcog.org/AgendaCenter.

2. Public Comment

Residents of the region are invited to share up to 3 minutes of comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.

3. Executive Committee Vacancy (5 min.)

Staff Report:

Justin Poirier's departure from his post with the Town of Chebeague Island created a vacancy on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is empowered to appoint new members to fill vacancies between General Assembly meetings. Considering regional balance, and the balance of elected and appointed officials on the committee, John Hawley, Town Manager in Naples was asked whether he'd be interested in filling the vacancy. He expressed interest in doing so, both for the short-term, and, if the Nominating Committee so chooses, to be part of the Executive Committee slate for FY23.

Recommended Action:

Appoint John Hawley to the Executive Committee through June 30, 2022.

4. Conversation with Speaker Fecteau on Housing (30 min.)

Staff Report:

Speaker of the House, Ryan Fecteau, will join the GPCOG Executive Committee to discuss the legislation proposed to implement the recommendations of the Housing and Zoning Commission's work to expand diverse housing choices.

Recommended Action:

For discussion.

5. Acceptance of 1/18/22 Minutes (Attachment A)

6. Executive Director's Report (Attachment B) (5 min.)

7. Brownfields Grant (Attachment C) (10 min.)

Staff Report:

The Portland Housing Authority (PHA) is planning to redevelop its Front Street Phase 2 project to provide 45 income restricted units for seniors ages 55 and up and persons with disabilities. Once all three phases are complete, the 113 new units will more than double the 50 units they replace, provide greatly needed affordable housing in the Greater Portland region, and support the housing goals in the region's [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#).

The PHA requests a grant of \$200,000 from GPCOG's Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). GPCOG typically accepts applications to the city's program for its program as well. The funds, in combination with \$200,000 each from the City of Portland and DECD will be used for soil mitigation, remediation, and building demolition at 83 Front Street at a total estimated cost of \$1.1 to \$1.2 million. The total cost of Phase 2 is estimated to be \$13 million.

The PHA intends to start demolition of the building in early 2022 and complete the demolition and soil remediation in the Spring. Construction on the Front Street Phase 2 buildings will commence in mid-2022. EPA has allowed subgrants to be approved by the GPCOG Executive Committee, a process followed by many other Brownfields grantees. Loan requests will continue to be reviewed by the GPCOG Loan Committee.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends the approval of up to \$200,000 in Brownfields revolving loan fund grant subaward funds to the Portland Housing Authority for Phase 2A of its housing redevelopment project located at 83 Front Street in Portland.

8. Resettlement of Asylum Seekers (15 min.)

Staff Report:

The Metro Regional Coalition met on 2/8/22 to discuss the challenge of resettling recently arrived asylum seekers, which total over 700 of the 1200 people experiencing homelessness, on 2/8/22. The Coalition's seven member communities voted to advocate in support of two requests from the City of Portland.

First, the City is asking the Governor to provide state funding for the City's General Assistance costs incurred while housing and serving people suffering homelessness. Second, the City is asking state government to establish a state Office of Resettlement Services to provide coordinated service delivery to asylum seekers.

Additionally, the Coalition agreed to work with Portland and GPCOG to identify innovative housing solutions for people suffering homelessness, to explore potential new locations for new or rehabbed housing in their communities, and to support communications efforts that reinforce the opportunity these New Mainers offer to the state's workforce and economy.

Recommended Action:

Adopt the advocacy position that the asylum seeker challenge and opportunity is a regional and statewide issue that requires state funding and state coordination. Provide guidance on whether to expand the housing solutions and locations conversation to members outside of the Metro Regional Coalition geography.

9. Future of Loan Program (10 min.)

Staff Report:

As detailed in GPCOG's FY21 work plan, the focus of GPCOG's Revolving Loan Program shifted in response to the economic impacts of the pandemic. By offering partially forgivable microloans to small employers, along with administering Community Development Block Grants (funded by Cumberland County), GPCOG was able to support over 50 employers and their employees during the pandemic. GPCOG also continued to run its traditional business lending program during this time period, but at a reduced volume of loans.

In the last six months, demand for microloans has stopped, while applications for traditional loans has resumed.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends that the Executive Committee vote to return the GPCOG loan program to its previous, long term purpose of supporting small employers who sustain and increase good paying jobs throughout our service region.

10. Strategic Plan Update (10 min.)

Staff Report:

In March 2021, the Executive Committee decided GPCOG should do an interim, 2-year update to its 5-year strategic plan, rather than a full update. The current strategic plan was adopted in May 2017 and expires in May 2022. Scoping the work has been planned as an agenda item for the last two GPCOG Executive Committee meetings, but other items were higher priority.

The challenge the GPCOG staff team faces is time. With the ongoing pandemic impacting current staff and the agency having several vacant positions, and with the enormous opportunity before us with federal funds, the staff team has not been able to devote focus on the strategic plan update.

The current strategic plan, with its three priorities of serve our members, build regional prosperity, and operate with excellence, continues to provide a solid framework for us to set annual priorities.

Recommended Action:

Extend the current strategic plan for one year, through June 30, 2023, and develop a 2-year update in FY23.

Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings

All meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month at noon. Upcoming meetings are noted below with potential agenda items:

March 15	FY23 Priorities Executive Director Annual Review
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April 19	FY23 Budget – First Draft
May 17	FY23 Budget – Final Recommendation to General Assembly FY23 Officers and Executive Committee Nominations Adoption of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update FY23 Meeting Calendar Affirm Investment Policy
May XX	General Assembly and Summit

Attachment A

GPCOG Executive Committee

**MINUTES
January 18, 2022**

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Sandy Carder	Gray
Jarrod Maxfield	Windham
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Mark Winter	Sen. Collins
Gail Kezer, Adam Lachman	Sen. King
Sarah Lawrence	Congresswoman Pingree
Kristina Egan, Josh Kochis, Sara Mills-Knapp, Tony Plante, Chris Hall, Vincent Edwards, Chris Chop, Julia Bruel, Vanessa Farr, Tom Bell	GPCOG Staff

Acceptance of 11/16/21 Minutes

Sue moved acceptance of the 11/16/21 meeting minutes. Nat seconded. A roll call was conducted. All were in favor.

Public Comment

Eamonn Dundon, Portland Regional Chamber, said that expanding affordable housing for the region’s workforce is a high priority for the business community. He urged GPCOG to lead on the issue as the



legislature considers the Housing and Zoning Commission's recommendations. While some provisions are controversial, such as the elimination of single-family zoning, the Maine Municipal Association has endorsed many of the recommendations. GPCOG's advocacy should not be limited to MMA's position.

Executive Director's Report

Kristina encouraged Executive Committee members to participate in the spring "Ride with Me" event to learn about our public transportation network. GPCOG will be hosting a Coffee with COG on 1/25 at 2 p.m., hosting Mayors Foley and Levesque about successful development. Sara Mills-Knapp spoke to the new state opportunity for 2 – 5 communities to join a grant application with GPCOG to ready themselves for climate resiliency state funding.

Spotlight: Resilience Corps

Julia Bruel reviewed the accomplishments of GPCOG's first year of the Resilience Corps and shared the hosts and partnerships for the second year. She noted that recruitment in today's labor market is much more difficult than last year. View the [Resilience Corps Spotlight \(PDF\)](#)

FY21 Audit Report

Don Gaudet from the audit firm RKO presented the FY21 audit. He thanked Josh Kochis for a smooth audit, despite the remote work environment. Don reported a clean, unmodified opinion, consistent with prior years, noting that the audit was as good as an agency can get. RKO tested internal controls and found no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. An indirect cost rate is required by the federal government. RKO reviewed our indirect rate and found no exceptions to the indirect expenses. GPCOG's federal and state grants increased by about \$1M in FY21, not counting the Maine Economic Recovery Program, which represented a one-time increase of \$67M. Josh added that GPCOG continues to administer federal relief funds and will be distributing another \$5M this spring. View [Don Gaudet's audit presentation \(PDF\)](#).

Kate moved acceptance of the FY21 audit and indirect cost rate audit reports. Nat seconded. A roll call was conducted. All were in favor.

FY23 Member Dues

Staff reviewed the history of the dues rate and of recent pandemic-related discounts. Kate asked whether people experiencing homelessness are included in the census numbers. Kristina said she didn't know but would find out. The group discussed the importance of addressing homelessness, with Mark noting the importance of addressing the needs of the recently-arrived asylum seekers. The group agreed it would be a good for GPCOG staff to incorporate work on these pressing issues into GPCOG's work. Staff will incorporate this into the development of the draft FY23 budget.

Nat expressed concern that with the increase in population and an elimination of FY22's 10% dues credit, members would see an increase in dues of 19%. He added that GPCOG is delivering value for the dues. Jerre added that we need to wean ourselves from the pandemic credits. Consensus emerged that

the dues should be adjusted for the population increase, as reported in the decennial census, and that GPCOG should offer a 5% dues credit for FY23 with a plan of returning to the full dues amount (no credit) for FY24. The group did not vote, but provided this guidance to staff for the development of the FY23 budget.

Housing Advocacy

Chris Hall reviewed the Housing and Zoning Commission's recommendations and recapped the discussion at the recent Metro Regional Coalition meeting. Members expressed the importance of local control, how mandates of 'one size fits all' do not work for diverse communities, that municipalities need flexibility in how they approach increasing housing choices, and a concern that accessory dwelling units will become short-term rentals and fail to address local housing need. Jerre remarked that the recommendations, as drafted by the legislature's commission, are 'too much stick and not enough carrot'. Kate agreed that as municipalities build more housing, particularly accessory dwelling units, housing should be for people in Maine. Matt agreed.

Kate noted that if single family zoning is eliminated, she would want to be sure that municipal services, like emergency services, were not stretched thin by serving more density in outlying areas. Jarrod expressed that Windham wants to preserve its farmland, that the state already incentivizes priority development areas through tax increment financing districts, and that he generally disagreed with the recommendations. Matt suggested that rather than eliminate growth caps or allow them to be permanent, they should sunset.

Sandy said that we all agree there is an affordable housing issue that was exacerbated by the pandemic. Where new growth is located makes a big difference to a municipality like Gray, which wants to preserve open space, protect its lakes, and reinforce its village. Growth permits allow the town to incrementally control the costs of new municipal service costs associated with growth. Mark said that the commission's recommendations are a starting point for a conversation, and the legislature will likely be mindful of the importance of Maine's long history of local control.

The group considered the recommendation in the agenda packet, and agreed that GPCOG recognizes the importance of the housing challenge and the role of municipalities in addressing it. GPCOG will advocate for the state to set housing goals and provide technical assistance and meaningful financial incentives to municipalities to meet those goals. The state also needs to articulate clear metrics to determine if policies changes are generating new, affordable housing.

While there was no vote, each member expressed support for proceeding with GPCOG's position, as described by staff and written in the recommendation in the packet.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Attachment B

Executive Director's Report

Strategic Priority – Serve our Members

- **Federal Funding Opportunities.** Staff is actively absorbing information on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the opportunities it provides for GPCOG's members, transit agencies, and the region. As the GPCOG team's analysis crystalizes, we'll be sharing information, convening members, and aiming to develop agreement around regional priorities.
- **Events:**
 - **Chairs in a Circle.** The annual gathering of Council and Selectboard Chairs and Vice Chairs is scheduled for the evening of 2/24/22. Craig Freshley will facilitate.
 - **Will you come ride the bus with us?** GPCOG is recruiting decision-makers like you to participate in our ["Ride With Me" event](#), scheduled for spring 2022. "Ride With Me" will provide an opportunity to ride public transit with someone who regularly rides transit. You'll learn first-hand about their daily public transportation challenges by experiencing them yourself. To sign up to ride, or to learn more, contact Marcel Ntagora at mntagora@gpcog.org.
- **Community Resilience Grants.** GPCOG received interest from multiple towns interested in partnering with us to apply for the Service Provider grant, due Feb. 15th. We are in process of putting together a cohort. There will be another opportunity to enroll a cohort in the August 2022. More program information at <https://www.maine.gov/future/climate/community-resilience-partnership>.

Strategic Priority – Regional Prosperity

- **Loan services for municipalities.** Staff were asked to explore whether other municipalities would be interested in bundling loan programs together with GPCOG. We have not received any interest so we will not pursue this idea any further.
- **Broadband.** GPCOG continues its work with the Cumberland-Oxford Lakes Area Broadband (COLAB) collaborative, a group of eleven communities (mostly members, mostly in the GPCOG region) to assess, plan for, and meet the region's broadband needs. We are about halfway through a process that should result in proposals from a range of vendors to either build a new network or work with existing and prospective providers to expand and fill in the networks already in place. This process will include

the ability of communities to add alternates that address local coverage and performance expectations.

We brought on GEO Partners under another Connect Maine Authority grant to do desktop network planning and fiscal analysis, and are working with Maine-based Mission Broadband on the RFP development, coordination, and community engagement phases. We will be meeting with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) over the next week or so and will have a combined COLAB meeting late this month to make decisions about the final shape of the RFP. We expect any proposals in response to an RFP to be submitted later this spring, and to work with communities on a structure and plan for building out the parts and pieces of a regional network.

- **Transit Together.** Transit Together, a study led by GPCOG in conjunction with the region's seven transit providers, will make specific recommendations for a more seamless regional transit system. The project team is holding a virtual public meeting to identify opportunities for increased coordination and integration among the region's seven public transit providers. The meeting will be held on Thursday, February 17 from 5:30pm – 7:00pm. Visit www.transittogether.org/overview to learn more about the study and sign up for the Transit Together e-mail list.
- **In the News.** The Maine Sunday Telegram on Feb. 6 published a [comprehensive story](#) about efforts to create more housing, with quotes from Sandy Carder and Kate Lewis. The Press Herald on Feb 7 published a [front-page story](#) about pandemic funding being used to address homelessness. While the story doesn't mention GPCOG, this has been an important issue for the Metro Regional Coalition, which had advocated to the County that a portion of the ARPA allocation be spent to help fund a new emergency shelter in Portland and study emergency housing needs in the Lakes Region. A [Jan. 26 story](#) about the new Climate Ready Casco Bay on WMTM (Channel 8) by reporter Phil Hirschhorn included video and drone footage of a living shoreline project in Brunswick shot by GPCOG staff members Tom Bell and Rick Harbison.

Strategic Priority – Operate with Excellence

- **Remote Meetings.** Since August 2021 GPCOG has conducted all meetings via Zoom under the emergency declaration and policy this Committee enacted at that time. State law (1 MRSA Sec. 403-B (2)(b)) allows remote meetings during a state of emergency or when an 'urgent issue' makes in person meetings impractical. As the pandemic recedes, the time will arrive for resuming in person meetings. The Executive Director and the Chair will consult each month in advance of Executive Committee meetings and

determine when to resume meeting in person. When we reach that point an Executive Committee vote to resume in person meetings will be requested.

- **Communications Associate.** [Teagan Betori](#), who previously worked as a transportation planning intern for Green Mountain Transit in Burlington, Vermont, has joined the staff team supporting communications. In Vermont, she created and implemented a communications plan that targeted college students and informed them about services at the Burlington-based public transportation system. Teagan holds a bachelor's degree in English and Environmental Studies from the University of Vermont.
- **Recruitment.** We extended the search for Community Engagement Manager through February 6 and are screening those applications now. We have completed a first round of interviews for Senior Economic Development Manager and will be scheduling a second round in the next few days. We will be interviewing candidates for Operations Support Associate and have just posted for an Administrative Support Associate (open to either part-time or full-time), which will allow for division of labor with our current Administrative Support Associate and increased support for both finance and general administrative functions. The [Senior Planner](#) position will be re-posted in the near future. Please spread the word to good candidates in your networks!
- **Grants & Contracts.** In January, GPCOG partnered with two other regional planning offices – Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission (SMPDC) and Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) – to apply for a Regional Coordinator grant from the Governor's Office of Planning, Innovation, and the Future (GOPIF).

Sara Mills-Knapp was instrumental in building a strong coalition for the grant process, including the two other RPOs and 8 organizations acting as community partners to accomplish the work should the grant be funded. The 8 community partners are: Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, Darling Marine Center, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Island Institute, Maine Sea Grant and UMaine Cooperative Extension Office, New England Environmental Finance Center, and Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The application, if approved, will result in \$200,000 of new funding over two years to encourage climate action planning and implementation steps in the region stretching along the coast from York to Knox County. SMPDC would be the fiscal agent for the funding, but if funded, the three RPOs will divide the funds evenly to address projects in their particular areas. We expect a decision on the funding in the next week or two.

Chris Hall has been working with the other Economic Development Districts across the state to submit an application to the Economic Development Administration to fund economic resilience coordinators.

- **Budget vs. Actual.** The below is a mid-year financial update, prepared by Josh.

Greater Portland Council of Governments				
Budget to Actual (EXPENSES)				
As of December 31, 2021				
Description	FY22 Budget	FY 22 Actual	Difference	% Spent
Personnel				
Salaries	2,068,574	922,600	1,145,974	45%
Fringe Benefits	437,019	166,786	270,233	38%
Office				
Postage	1,500	672	828	45%
Utilities	9,500	3,848	5,652	41%
Office Supplies	12,000	1,994	10,006	17%
Printing & Copying	5,000	5,049	(49)	101%
Rent	143,074	68,686	74,388	48%
Cleaning	5,000	276	4,724	6%
Telecommunications	12,480	9,215	3,265	74%
Depreciation	8,680	-	8,680	0%
Payroll Processing Fees	3,000	1,850	1,150	62%
Copier Lease	5,053	2,527	2,526	50%
Equipment & Furniture	25,000	5,226	19,774	21%
Consulting Services				
Legal	2,000	1,752	248	88%
Audit/CPA	22,500	16,800	5,700	75%
Loan Underwriting	6,700	720	5,980	11%
Information Technology	35,000	24,203	10,797	69%
Equipment/Software Maintenance	10,000	13,422	(3,422)	134%
Website Fees	14,000	883	13,117	6%
Software Fees	50,038	32,466	17,572	65%
Consultants - Engineering	754,710	188,676	566,034	25%
Consultants - Other	515,820	162,921	352,899	32%
Meetings & Travel				
Travel - Mileage	4,100	2,267	1,833	55%
Travel - Hotel & Airfare	5,000	617	4,383	12%
Event Costs	4,333	-	4,333	0%
Meeting Registration Fees	4,500	928	3,572	21%
Meeting Supplies	5,000	4,757	243	95%
Other Direct & Indirect				
Memberships & Dues	10,000	6,206	3,794	62%
Insurance - Business Line	14,000	524	13,476	4%
Advertising	166,422	207,674	(41,252)	125%
Shredding	800	-	800	0%
Interest	121	121	(0)	100%
Professional Development	10,000	15,546	(5,546)	155%
Bank Service Fees	75	64	11	85%
Miscellaneous Expense	300	1,126	(826)	375%
Auto Lease	648	607	41	94%
Subscriptions/Books/Publications	1,500	85	1,415	6%
Doubtful Accounts	3,000	-	3,000	0%
Doubtful Accounts - RLF Loans	59,525	65	59,460	0%
Loan Forgiveness	50,000	7,565	42,435	15%
FAME Fee on Loan Funds	16,000	15,804	196	99%
In-Kind Labor from Partners	20,000	3,614	16,386	18%
Grant Funding Pass-thru	-	837,167	(837,167)	#DIV/0!
Pass-through Expenses				
Brownfields Loans	175,000	-	175,000	0%
FAME Loans	150,000	-	150,000	0%
Total Expenses	\$ 4,846,972	\$ 2,735,307	\$ 2,111,665	56%

Attachment C

[Brownfields subgrant application \(Part I\)](#)

[Brownfields subgrant application \(Part II\)](#)

[Site plan](#)

[Project narrative](#)

[Plans for redevelopment](#)