



## Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

**April 11, 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 February 14, 2023 meeting (Attachment A)**

The minutes from the February 14, 2023 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. Roundtable discussion with asylum community leaders (60 minutes)**

**Staff report:** The MRC will have an opportunity to learn first-hand about asylum seekers and their experiences. A small group of asylees (people who have been granted asylum) and people who work with asylum seekers will talk about the asylum process, their experiences and answer questions.

Our guests will be **Helio Mateas** (an asylee and Executive Director Angolan Community of Maine), **Jacqueline “Jacky” Mugwaneza** (an immigrant from Rwanda and the Multicultural Relations Lead at the

Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition), Fatima **Saidi** (an immigrant from Afghanistan and the Development and Relations Manager at the Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition), and **Mardochee Mbongi** (president the Congolese Community of Maine).

**Action:** Information and discussion regarding the asylum experience.

#### **4. Legislative Updates (10 minutes)**

**Staff report:** Chris Hall will update members on several legislative issues related to housing and General Assistance reform, including opportunities for members to participate in important legislative hearings coming up later in the month.

**Action:** Information and discussion regarding legislative priorities and testimony on legislative priorities.

#### **5. Shelter Housing Updates (10 minutes)**

**Staff report.** Belinda Ray will update members on recent progress on two projects – Safe in Maine and the Blueberry Road Shelter, both seeking to provide additional shelter space for unhoused people.

**Action:** Information and discussion about the continuing shelter housing crisis in our region.

#### **6. MRC Member Roundtable (10 minutes)**

**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)**

May 9, 2023

June 20, 2023

## Attachment A



# DRAFT Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

February 14, 2023

### In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Pete LaFond	Falmouth
Jon Anderson	Scarborough
Tom Hall	Scarborough
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Jeremey Gabrielson	Cape Elizabeth
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Snyder	Portland
Danielle West	Portland
Travis Kennedy	Cumberland County
Sarah Lawrence	Office of Representative Pingree
Gail Kezer	Office of Senator King
<b>Guest</b>	Kate Dufour, Maine Municipal Association
<b>For GPCOG</b>	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Belinda Ray, Sara Mills-Knapp, Matt Panfil, Tom Bell

### 1. Welcome and introductions

Chair Michael Foley called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm and welcomed everyone. Attendees gave brief introductions.

### 2. Acceptance of minutes from the January 10, 2023 meeting

Chair Foley moved acceptance of the minutes of the January 10, 2023 MRC meeting by unanimous consent. The motion was passed without objection.

### 3. Public Comment

None.

### 4. Legislative Updates

Chris Hall provided a brief update on MRC housing efforts. Since the January MRC meeting, staff has worked with members and Senator Jill Duson on submitting legislation to address General Assistance. With Belinda Ray's help the Senator has submitted a bill that both directs state funding toward the creation of new temporary shelter housing in locations across Maine and directs Maine state government to support services to unhoused people at these new temporary shelter facilities.

Hall noted that testimony from members would be essential to advancing Senator Duson's bill. He urged members to communicate their support to their local legislators and consider testifying when the bill is scheduled for a public hearing in the future.

### 5. Long-term Resilience Update

Sara Mills-Knapp, GPCOG's Director of Sustainability, followed up the January MRC discussion in the wake of December storm damage with an update that focused on several long-term resilience building GPCOG initiatives in the region, including how communities can access resources, and how GPCOG is supporting regional planning for resilience.

Sara's slide deck can be [found here](#). She recapped the losses from the December 2022 storm for context, then detailed GPCOG efforts that boost coastal resilience including the Climate Ready Casco Bay grant from US National Fish & Wildlife that is funding work from Scarborough to Brunswick, and state funded Maine Won't Wait municipal climate action plans that help map climate hazards, craft vulnerability assessments, and implement adaptive action plans.

Sara shared many potential sources of federal and state funding for increased resiliency, and briefly discussed regional partnerships that are leveraging these resources. She concluded by noting that GPCOG tracks funding opportunities and shares them with members, helps members actively scope potential projects, and collects information on existing shovel ready projects to assist in positioning them for available funding. She urged members to contact her for more information.

During Q&A members noted that:

- All our Congressional offices are available to help support appropriate funding requests;
- State resources, for example DEP culvert grants, are also a valuable source of funding;
- Data on road closures due to storms would be a valuable regional resource – Sara said she would investigate collecting that data.

### 6. Housing Strategies Preview

At the December MRC meeting Kristina Egan presented a preview of GPCOG's draft Housing Strategies which has been revised based on member input and Executive Committee review. She presented a

revised and refined housing strategies draft that eliminated the earlier 'Housing Leadership Council' and refocused on a more 'bottom-up' structure that includes:

Three goals (subject to continuing refinement):

- **Amount** - 24,000 new homes and apartments in greater Portland by 2030
- **Accessibility** - 75% of them near jobs, schools, and services, and
- **Affordability** – Priority on middle- and low-income households

Four Strategies:

**1. Identifying local housing needs.** Listen to elected officials and professional staff in our member communities to find out what they need to make housing work for their community, and how (or if) we can help.

**2. Advising.** As needed and where wanted, GPCOG can provide a wealth of technical expertise to share with our members to help them find housing solutions, including technical land use and zoning assistance, planning support, and project analysis and development services.

**3. Assessing and Sharing.** GPCOG will establish a Housing Solutions Clearinghouse that includes housing data that tracks and reports on local and regional progress toward building more new homes and apartments, best practices drawn from around the state and the country, and success stories that highlight local and regional housing accomplishments, sharing what works (and what doesn't), and enabling communities to collaborate on housing initiatives.

**4. Engaging and Educating.** Our housing shortage has many faces, and many different aspects. To help everyone in our region understand why the expanding housing choice matters, and what they can do about it, GPCOG will tell the region's many stories about why housing choice matters, offer educational presentations upon request to help people understand how their community can shape new housing, instead of being shaped by it, and celebrate the progress that communities make toward a better housing future for all of us.

Kristina indicated that these revised strategies will be up for approval by the Executive Committee later in February.

The new approach recognizes that all housing is not created equal, and that poorly located housing can harm a community, while well-located development can enhance economic, quality of place, equity, and climate progress.

Member reactions were positive, and the following points were made and discussed:

- Westbrook is seeing delays in construction driven by rising costs and interest rates. Smaller in-fill projects are advancing faster but encountering greater local opposition.
- Scarborough is reviewing its Growth Management ordinance and could benefit from education for residents to help explain increases to growth allowances.

- Falmouth is revising its comp plan and faces a similar immediate need for resident education.
- With interest rates climbing, the region needs new incentives to make middle and low-to-moderate income housing construction economically viable. A discussion is ongoing with MaineHousing about this topic.
- Education should include visualizations and expand the public dialog beyond its current rate of growth focus to a broader understanding of the benefits of properly located density.
- Education should also debunk myths, such as all housing growth brings higher K-12 school enrollments.
- Falmouth shared a housing chart ([found here](#)) that relates median income to housing affordability by type.

Kristina asked for any objections to the strategies. There were none, and members gave a thumbs up to advancing the draft as presented.

## 7. Member Roundtable

Member discussions centered on the unhoused crisis:

- Ginny Wilder-Cross shared that her church has applied for MaineHousing funding to provide temporary shelter for 4 families at the church.
- Mayor Snyder and Danielle West gave an update on the situation in Portland, where shelter options are maxed out and every night presents the possibility of children sleeping in the street, despite heroic work being done by City staff. In 2019 400 unhoused people were in Portland – today that number is over 900, with more arriving daily.
- The Mayor stressed that temporary shelter spaces are desperately needed, immediately, and asked everyone to look again at any possible options.
- Several members discussed the regulatory barriers to using spaces for shelter, but also expressed their willingness to find ways to help.

## 8. Adjourn

Mayor Foley adjourned the meeting by acclamation at 1:32 pm.

## **Attachment B**

GPCOG Draft Housing Strategy  
2.7.23

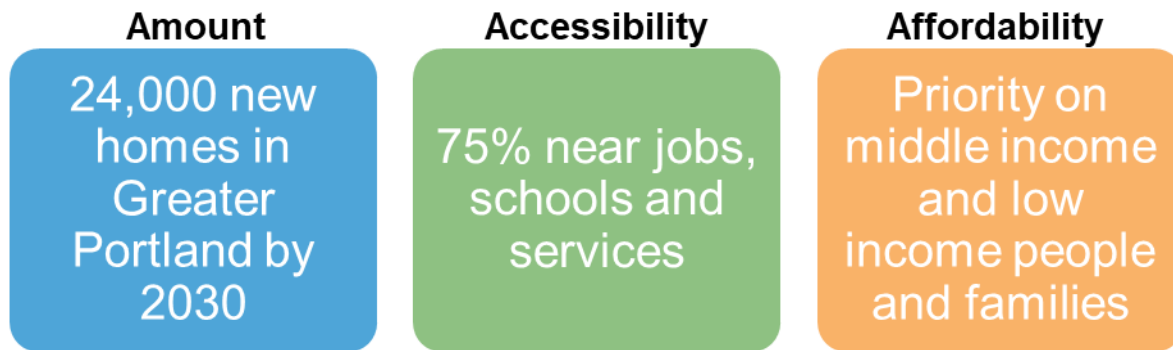
GPCOG's Housing Strategy is designed to help our member communities build more housing in the right places, for all the people who need it, in ways that each community wants.

Our strategy will help our members by listening to their housing plans and challenges, and then advising them on how to build homes and apartments that make sense for their community and produce the best outcomes for their residents and the region.

- GPCOG will provide education, best practices, and planning expertise to interested communities.

- We'll track the region's housing progress and provide data-based reports.
- And we'll tell the region's housing shortage story through the voices and lived experience of the people who need and want housing but can't find it.

**Goals by 2030:**



**Problem: Our region has a critical housing shortage for low to moderate- and middle-income people.**

To meet current housing demand, we need 24,000 new homes and apartments built as soon as possible, and priced so that low to moderate- and middle-income people can afford them.

Why is the housing shortage so critical?

- Young people can't find a place to live, and without homes and apartments they will leave. Our region is still too old – it can get younger, but only if young people can afford to live and work here. Without young people, our region's vitality will drain away.
- Employers can't find employees, and without housing that workers can afford, they will leave. When current workers retire, there won't be new workers to take their place. New employers won't find the workers they need. Our economy will be hobbled.
- Low- and moderate-income people can't find a place to live, and without more affordable housing racial and social equity gets even worse, and our unhoused population grows. We can't be an equitable region without homes and apartments that everyone can afford.

**Solution: Build more housing!** But just building new housing anywhere and everywhere is not a good solution.

**Problem: Not all housing is created equal.** In the wrong locations, new housing can:

- Destroy community character with incompatible, poorly located structures.
- Increase property taxes with inefficient new buildings located far from infrastructure and services.



- Reduce open space by failing to coordinate new buildings with existing high value ecological and recreational lands.
- Add to climate change with more cars, commuting and congestion, and with poorly built energy-inefficient structures.

**Solution: Well designed and well-located new homes and apartments can improve a community.** Well located new homes and apartments can:

- Improve Municipal Fiscal Health. Locating housing near existing infrastructure, like water, sewer, public transportation, broadband and more, reduces fiscal demand on municipalities and the state to extend services further and further.
- Preserve Rural and Community character. By encouraging denser housing in villages and downtowns, we reduce growth pressure on farms, fields, and forests and preserve the places that make Maine so special.
- Increase Social and racial equity. Encouraging more affordable housing across all communities helps address historic inequities in housing and land use development that have segregated people by race and income.
- Advance Climate action. Providing housing choice in walkable and bikeable places, and in areas served by public transportation where possible, supports the goals of *Maine Won't Wait* by reducing reliance on cars and supporting cleaner ways of getting around.

#### **Four Housing Strategies**

**1. Identifying local housing needs.** Our first step is to listen to elected officials and professional staff in our member communities to find out what they need to make housing work for their community, and how (or if) we can help.

Every one of GPCOG's members are discussing housing in their community. Developers are bringing new projects forward in many places. State government has increased housing density in existing zoning (LD 2003), opening the door to new housing projects in places where they weren't expected. And teachers, police, and municipal employees in every community are struggling to find housing they can afford in the community where they work.

Finding solutions to any community's housing challenges starts with listening and understanding what the community needs and wants – and then finding a path forward.

**2. Advising.** As needed and where wanted, GPCOG has a wealth of technical expertise to share with our members to help them find housing solutions, including:

- LD2003 technical assistance to help communities prepare for and implement LD 2003, including reviewing, revising, and developing zoning and other land use ordinances.
- Housing assessment to help communities identify the types of housing they need, set goals, and align zoning and policies to encourage its development.

- Housing impact analysis can develop accurate information as to the costs and benefits of expanding housing choice, including impact on property taxes, municipal revenue, schools, traffic, and natural resources.
- Technical assistance to develop or use tools that negotiate obstacles, like TIFs, trust funds, municipal-owned land, housing authorities, and more.
- Village and neighborhood plans for priority centers identified in *Connect 2045* and in municipal comprehensive plans (in non-PACTS communities).
- Zoning and ordinance development to help encourage the types of housing municipalities value in places they want it.
- Site analysis and project development that provides information about the suitability of a site, including which sites are more valuable for preservation and open space. For promising sites, additional services could include market and return on investment analysis, matchmaking and/or facilitation between developers and municipalities, and support in identifying funding for needed infrastructure investments or brownfields clean-up.
- Short term rental tracking and policy development. With a new software package currently being piloted, GPCOG expects to offer communities a valuable tool to help communities. The software package assists in licensing, tracking, and enforcement of all short term rentals. It will be offered at no charge in 2023 for communities willing to be beta testers.
- Visualizations of multifamily and mixed use development in sites under consideration for new homes.

**3. Assessing and Sharing.** GPCOG will establish a Housing Solutions Clearinghouse that includes:

- Housing Data that tracks and reports on local and regional progress toward building more new homes and apartments in good locations and meeting the needs of communities and the region for greater equity and increasing economic opportunity.
- Best practices drawn from around the state and the country, including innovative housing ordinances, zoning models, tax policies, and housing support structures (like housing trusts) designed to advance good housing outcomes.
- Success stories that highlight local and regional housing accomplishments, sharing what works (and what doesn't), and enabling communities to collaborate on housing initiatives.

**4. Engaging and Educating.** Our housing shortage has many faces, and many different aspects. To help everyone in our region understand why the expanding housing choice matters, and what they can do about it, GPCOG will:

- Tell the region's many stories about why housing choice matters through people-centric stories and credible data, using various media and incorporating community-specific materials.
- Offer educational presentations upon request to help people understand how their community can shape new housing, instead of being shaped by it.
- Celebrate the progress that communities make toward a better housing future for all of us.

