



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

April 14, 2020

Noon to 1:30 pm

Via ZOOM Conferencing

<https://zoom.us/j/987494499>

Or join by telephone: 1 (646) 558 8656

Webinar ID: 987 494 499

Note: As of March 31st, 2020 PACTS and GPCOG will be holding all committee meetings via [Zoom conferencing technology](#). We remain committed to full public access and participation in our meetings through remote access during the COVID-19 crisis. Remote meetings will be held in accordance with the requirements of [LD 2167, Public Law Chapter 618](#).

1. Welcome and introductions (5 minutes)

Chair Amy Kuhn will call the meeting to order.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the February 11, 2020 meeting (Attachment A) and the 3-26-20 emergency meeting (Attachment B)

3. Regional COVID response (60 minutes)

Staff report: Since the outset of the COVID-19 emergency GPCOG has engaged in many member service response efforts. We will review GPCOG's work to date as a context for identifying additional member needs and GPCOG response efforts, particularly new advocacy efforts to support regional issues that are emerging or unaddressed, including:

- Property tax deferrals
- Election procedures and policies, including relief from budget ratification elections
- Use of CARES Act funding to directly reimburse municipalities for COVID-19 expenses and lost revenues

Since the COVID crisis began GPCOG has provided members:

Regional Advocacy. Staff arranged a 3/27/20 meeting with the Governor, in which Westbrook, Portland, Scarborough, Naples, and Falmouth participated. Participants requested a regional stay-at-home order

and described various conditions on the ground relative to short-term rentals, vacation homes, and gatherings of small crowds. The Governor issued a statewide stay-at-home order on 3/31/20.

Staff is following up with MMA and the Governor's office, as appropriate, on various other items, including authority for municipalities to align property tax deadlines with the federal and state deadlines.

Public Transit Funding. The region's transit operators have reduced or suspended service, creating operating deficits. With leadership from METRO, GPCOG staff worked with PACTS to communicate with our Congressional delegation about the need for emergency funding for public transit. The recent stimulus bill included \$25B for transit nationwide. Of this, PACTS transit agencies can be reimbursed up to \$53M for expenses related to COVID-19.

Support for Remote Public Meetings. With the passage of LD2167 (now [P.L. Chapter 617](#)), public meetings were allowed to be held remotely for the first time. On Thursday, April 2, GPCOG held another "Coffee with COG" to train our members.

GPCOG also established an online meeting support "strike team" to assist members with setting up and running online public meetings. This team will be able to complement the tech support from our members' online meeting platform providers by addressing issues specifically related to online meetings, their setup, conduct, and management, especially on Zoom.

Economic relief and innovation. Working with municipal leaders GPCOG has deferred all payments for its small business borrowers in our revolving loan fund program. Additionally, staff is working to establish a Resiliency Exchange for the region, dedicated to matching available resources with public and private needs arising from the COVID crisis. The Resiliency Exchange will form a foundation for creating new public-private relationships that leverage community response to the crisis.

Information for our members. On Wednesday, March 4 GPCOG held a "Coffee with COG" on the looming coronavirus crisis. A Cumberland County/Southern Maine Managers meeting was held on Thursday, March 12 in Durham, the same day Maine announced its first confirmed positive case of COVID-19. Almost immediately after the crisis took shape GPCOG created a "[COVID-19 Resources](#)" landing page

Action: Members will identify additional COVID response opportunities for GPCOG to focus on, particularly new advocacy actions that will best help members.

4. Beyond COVID – MRC priorities for the recovery (30 minutes)

Staff report: Later this year the COVID crisis will abate, but the disruptions it has caused will still be with us. To the extent members feel able we will discuss MRC priorities in light of the recovery, and how best to position the region for what comes next.

Action: Identify longer-term MRC priorities in response to COVID recovery needs..

5. Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings

May 12, 2020

June 9, 2020

Attachment A



DRAFT Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2020

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Amy Kuhn, Chair	Falmouth
Virginia Wilder Cross	Gorham
Belinda Ray	Portland
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Jeremy Gabrielson	Cape Elizabeth
Kevin Jensen	Gorham
Peter Morin	Senator Collin's Office
For GPCOG:	Kristina Egan Chris Hall

1. Welcome and introductions

Amy Kuhn called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of minutes from January 14, 2020 meeting

Belinda Ray moved to accept the minutes of the January 14, 2020 Metro Regional Coalition meeting. Matt Sturgis seconded the motion. Members voted unanimously in support the motion.

3. Contract proposal on land use regulation impacts on housing

Levine Planning Strategies is led by former Portland Planning Director Jeff Levine. Levine submitted a 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.

Members reviewed the proposal and made several points:

- Member communities should receive positive and negative information from the project without judgement.
- A regional zoning map will be a valuable tool for managing regional growth challenges.
- Local planning staff should be consulted by Levine.
- The project will be paid out of member dues.

On a motion by Belinda Ray, seconded by Matt Sturgis, members voted unanimously to approve the proposal from Levine Planning Strategies.

4. Regional response to Roux Institute and regional growth

Chris Hall introduced this agenda item by recalling that 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. Hall highlighted a PPH editorial and a BDN news article that made similar observations.

Members discussed a variety of aspects of the regional challenge of growth, both in Portland and throughout the region. Among the points made were the following:

- Could the MRC establish principles for local municipal council action that would help frame a regional response to growth? For example, could the MRC suggest that councils adopt a policy that new parking garages have EV chargers?
- Another principle might be a framework for addressing parking minimums in zoning ordinances. Some members noted that councilors still hear a lot about the need for more parking from constituents. Education was flagged as a possible MRC deliverable on parking and zoning (see below). Coordinating parking garage prices (where government owns the garage) was also noted as a priority.
- Transit expansions were discussed, with interest from many member communities in seeing additional transit service. An MRC principle regarding transit expansions as an aspect of managing local and regional growth issues was supported, possibly as an MRC regional declaration on transit.
- Members identified other possible principles including ones addressing density bonuses, the encouragement of autonomous vehicles, and the deployment of smart community technology.

As action items members identified the following:

- At the May MRC meeting members asked for a presentation on [Transit Tomorrow](#), our long-range public transportation plan that will create a 30-year pathway for investments in the

region's public transportation network. The Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) is undertaking Transit Tomorrow to improve the region's economy, environment, and quality of life.

- Staff development of educational information on parking minimums and how they can be lowered to support density and growth.
- Development of educational information on best practices regarding density – for instance a matrix of MRC communities showing an inventory of existing zoning and where density can exist (or not). [Note – the Levine project approved earlier will likely provide this matrix].

Members concluded by acknowledging the need for continued focus on the challenges of growth at the regional level and looked forward to continuing the conversation in the context of Transit Tomorrow.

5. Update on Supportive Housing Tour and Regional Housing Fund

On January 31st several MRC members attended a supportive housing tour in Portland. Belinda Ray, who organized the tour, shared the experience with other members and described the financial model and operating structure of the two buildings visited. Both were [Community Housing of Maine](#) (CHoM) projects.

In brief, CHoM's supportive housing model is a mixed-use apartment model with outside support services available to tenants, some of whom need services, other who do not. Because 24/7 on-site support staff are not required the CHoM projects are less expensive to run than a project like Huston Commons that has full time staff. CHoM projects pay taxes, are usually built with low income tax credit investor capital and look like regular apartments. CHoM projects serve the homeless, but also serve other needs for low income housing.

Members discussed whether their communities might be interested in working with CHoM to site a project in their municipality – several members said they would and were encouraged [to contact Cullen Ryan](#), CHoM's Executive Director (who also hosted the tour).

Members also discussed the need for additional investment funds to build this type of project. Members agreed they would like to explore the establishment of a regional housing trust fund as a means of providing financial support to projects that can increase low income housing in our region.

Members noted this Fund would be paid into by municipalities and/or individual contributions and would not be dedicated to any development organization – all would be welcome to apply for assistance. Members suggested the Fund might be housed at the County, or at GPCOG.

As an action item, members asked staff to develop a framework for moving ahead with further discussion of creating a regional housing trust fund.

6. Other Updates

Members in attendance received a bound copy of GPCOG's new Toolkit: [Communities Addressing Addiction and Opioid Misuse](#). In addition to the toolkit document there are more resources available in the [GPCOG Documents Center](#) in the Public Health folder.

Chris Hall briefly noted that the MRC work on housing and transportation is fully aligned with the State Economic Development Plan.

Hall also noted that staff will be posting draft MRC meeting minutes on the GPCOG website separately and shortly after each meeting so that members and the public can see meeting outcomes in a timelier way. If members or their colleagues would like to receive MRC minutes (or many other GPCOG and PACTS meeting documents) just [follow this link](#) and sign up.

Members were reminded of three upcoming GPCOG events:

- [2/27 Chairs in a Circle](#): Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions will facilitate a leadership training event for chairs and co-chairs of councils and selectboards in communities that are members of GPCOG or PACTS.
- [3/13 Coffee with COG](#): Responding to Rising Use of Methamphetamine and Cocaine. While communities have focused on addressing the opioid problem, stimulant use has been steadily rising. Now, methamphetamine and cocaine have first responders and addiction treatment providers struggling to handle the different behaviors and treatment needs. This session will offer information on: - What police and first responders are seeing – and best practices for responding - Treatment and recovery for stimulants – how they are unique and less available - What leads to stimulant use in the first place and how we can prevent it - Ideas for local and regional responses.
- [3/25 State of the Region](#): We're launching a new annual event, the State of Region, to bring our communities together to discuss mutual opportunities and challenges. The year's event, which will take place at Ocean Gateway, will focus on building a transportation system that works and how to pay for it. There will be hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar.

7. Adjourn

Amy Kuhn adjourned the meeting at 1:32 pm.

Attachment B



DRAFT

Metro Regional Coalition Emergency Meeting Minutes

Via Zoom conference

March 26, 2020

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Amy Kuhn, Chair	Falmouth
Tom Poirer	Gorham
Belinda Ray	Portland
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Jeremy Gabrielson	Cape Elizabeth
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Kate Snyder	Portland
John Cloutier	Scarborough
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Tom Hall	Scarborough
Caleb Hemphill	Falmouth
Guest	Senator Cathy Breen
Public	Ken Capron
For GPCOG:	Kristina Egan Chris Hall Tony Plante Tom Bell Victoria Pelletier

1. Welcome and introductions

Amy Kuhn called the meeting to order at 8:02 am and welcomed everyone.

2. Regional Response to COVID-19

Kristina Egan provided background on the purpose and content of the meeting. On 3/25, city and town managers in Cumberland and York counties identified regional responses that would be helpful to protecting public health, flattening the curve, and supporting the region's most vulnerable residents. They identified several topics for further consideration and action:

- **More consistent, coordinated steps among municipalities** regarding emergency orders and other guidance to the public, including shelter in place and closure of non-essential businesses. Many communities, especially - but not only - the smaller ones, struggle with how to make good fact-based decisions on steps to take when they lack the public health expertise and resources internally to inform those decisions.
- **Coordination to secure appropriate supplies of protective gear** to protect first responders and local response capacity.
- **Retooling services to vulnerable populations.** Communities are working to continue or augment services and create more direct connections and channels from sources through providers to residents in need.
- **Support for online public meetings.** Communities are, for the most part, adapting to conducting public businesses online, though some communities are struggling with the lack of internal resources to make the jump.

Members discussed regional coordination of public health measures. Members made the following comments and observations:

- There was unanimous support for regional coordination and alignment of business closure, shelter at home and related municipal actions. Members noted that the state has access to better information and expertise than do local officials.
- It was noted that every community is different regarding their municipal legal authority to take emergency action, and their geographic and political circumstances
- State action on the regional level was a preferred means of achieving coordination and alignment of emergency orders and related measures
- State action would include uniform requirements on when residents should shelter at home, how short-term rentals should be handled, how people suffering homelessness should be accommodated, and how symptomatic residents should be dealt with (including the sufficiency of testing). State action would also address enforcement of emergency measures.
- Members agreed that a small delegation should be assembled by Chair Kuhn to meet with the Governor to discuss the desire for state action in the greater Portland/Cumberland County region.

- Jim Gailey provided a brief overview of how personal protective equipment is being managed in the region.

Amy Kuhn moved to enter executive session pursuant to 1 MRSA Sec.405 (6)(C) because discussion of personal protective equipment sources and acquisition opportunities could result in the premature disclosure of information that would prejudice the competitive or bargaining position of member municipalities. Matt Sturgis seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted. All members voted in the favor of the motion except Belinda Ray, who was absent.

Belinda Ray moved to exit executive session. The motion was seconded by Amy Kuhn. A roll call vote was conducted. All members voted in support of the motion.

Members discussed formation of a working group to continue to monitor the crisis and react to developments as quickly as possible. Staff will work with the Chair to determine how to proceed in this regard.

Members agreed to reach out to the Governor to explore her willingness to issue a region-wide order for the region. Kristina Egan will speak with the Governor's office and coordinate a meeting with Chair Kuhn.

Belinda Ray moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Matt Sturgis. A roll call vote was conducted. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Amy Kuhn adjourned the meeting at 9:32 am.