

## **GPCOG Executive Committee AGENDA**

**November 16, 2021**

**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](http://gpcog.org/AgendaCenter).

### **2. Acceptance of 10/19/21 Minutes (Attachment A)**

### **3. Public Comment**

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

### **4. Executive Director's Report (Attachment B) (5 min.)**

### **5. Spotlight: Conversation with Federal Delegation Staff (25 min.)**

Mark Winter, Gail Kezer and Adam Lachman, and Sarah Lawrence will join us from Senator Collins', Senator King's and Congresswoman Pingree's offices, respectively, for a discussion on federal policy and Greater Portland's regional priorities. We'll also review important elements of the recently-passed infrastructure bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Funds for Maine are diagrammed [here](#).

## **6. 2022 Advocacy Priorities (Attachment C & D) (20 min.)**

### Staff Report:

The Executive Committee adopts GPCOG's federal and state advocacy priorities. Advocacy outcomes from 2021 are summarized in Attachment C. Proposed priorities for 2022 are in Attachment D.

The 2022 draft priorities are intentionally drafted to be directional, with the understanding that as more specific policies are being developed, staff may need to return to the Executive Committee for additional guidance.

Effective advocacy demands action by our members. GPCOG will continue to mobilize city and town elected officials and staff to provide testimony.

Action: Review, modify as needed, and adopt GPCOG's 2022 advocacy priorities.

## **7. FY23 Member Dues (Attachment E) (10 min.)**

### Staff Report:

In May 2017, GPCOG's General Assembly adopted a member dues rate of \$2 per capita, which was fully implemented in July 2019, effective for FY20. For FY21 dues, GPCOG's Executive Committee provided a 20% discount on dues to mitigate for municipal losses due to the pandemic. For FY22 dues, the Executive Committee extended a discount, but reduced it to 10%.

As GPCOG begins to develop its budget for FY23, the Executive Committee will consider whether to continue to extend a discount for pandemic-related losses.

The year, the Census released new population data. Because dues are pegged to population, the member dues will change to reflect population changes in each municipality. Attachment E shows the estimated FY23 dues amounts based on the new Census data. Note, these figures reflect our dues rate and do not include any discount. Our three island members and Cumberland County pay flat fee dues, so are not included in the table.

### Recommended Action:

Provide guidance to staff on the FY23 member dues amounts to use in the development of the FY23 annual budget.

## **8. Strategic Plan Update (Attachment F) (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. Today, we'll discuss the level of effort, scope and budget for this work. See Attachment F for a draft proposal.

**Recommended Action:**

Provide guidance to staff on the proposed scope and budget for the strategic plan update.

## Adjourn

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### Upcoming Meetings

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

January 18	FY21 Audit Report Filling Executive Committee Vacancy
February 15	
March 15	Strategic Plan Update – Review of Stakeholder Input FY23 Priorities Executive Director Annual Review
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  
October 19, 2021**

**In Attendance:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Mark Dion	Portland
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Sandy Carder	Gray
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Cathy Conlow (guest)	Maine Municipal Association
Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Chris Hall, Vincent Edwards, Andrew Butcher, Vanessa Farr	GPCOG Staff

**Welcome**

Sandy Carder, President, called the Zoom meeting to order at 12:03 pm.

**Acceptance of 9/21/21 Minutes**

Mark Dion moved acceptance of 9/21/21 minutes. The motion was seconded by Sandy Carder. The roll was called, and all were in favor.

**Public Comment**

None received.

## **Executive Director Report**

Kristina Egan said that Maine has received CARES and ARPA funds, which includes transportation and broadband funding. The infrastructure bill and President Biden’s Build Back Better budget have an uncertain path forward, but could prove hugely beneficial. Funding from these sources could help address the chronic transportation maintenance backlog, and could provide a boost to our workforce with funding for childcare and early education. GPCOG staff remain focused on how we can help the region maximize the funds we’ve already received, and prepare for the funds we may receive.

Internally, GPCOG is bidding farewell to our inaugural group of Resilience Corps Fellows, and will welcome our second year Fellows in November.

Recently GPCOG has identified multiple projects and funding opportunities for the agency to pursue. Staff is preparing climate, housing, and economic development grants. Some of these funding opportunities would provide short-term support, and others would provide more sustainable funding for the agency.

Because of the growing demands on the agency, and the need to focus as much as possible within the region, staff has set the table for a discussion today about transitioning out of our statewide work, particularly broadband.

## **Spotlight: A conversation with Cathy Conlow**

Cathy is the new Executive Director of the Maine Municipal Association. She shared that municipalities had a good year in the legislature, winning more K-12 education funding and seeing revenue sharing restoring.

Cathy said there are two issues that are coming down the road, and would benefit from regional agency participation. The first is in implementing Maine’s climate action plan and the second is to support regional broadband planning.

She described MMA’s work with the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions (“zoning commission”), and said that her members recognize that the state wants and needs to do something to address the rising costs of housing all across the state. MMA is working to ensure municipalities take meaningful action, while preserving choice and flexibility in land use.

Kate noted that some of the changes the zoning commission is considering include making it easier to build accessory dwelling units. She said that not all places are good places for more housing, and that we should be cautious about turning our communities into too many Airbnb’s. Matt agreed that short-term rentals are a big challenge because they are taking units off the market.

Cathy said that some feel that zoning is used as a tool to prevent affordable housing, and an MMA working group is looking at these issues, recognizing that municipalities will face some new requirements, and that being at the table is important in shaping the decisions.

## **Housing and Zoning Policy**

Chris Hall provided background on how GPCOG has participated in the MMA working group which Cathy described during the spotlight agenda item. He also shared the elements of GPCOG's testimony, which are in line with the MMA working group's input. Sandy asked about the timeline for the zoning commission's work, and Chris said that the commission is expected to complete its work in the next four weeks. Legislation that includes the commission's recommendations will be introduced in the short legislative session, which runs from January to April. If legislation passes, it will become effective in June.

Nat noted that GPCOG's proposed \$200,000 investment in technical assistance in each region is a bargain. At the heart of the housing issue is community attitudes and values, as well as the perceived and/or real impacts on traffic and schools. Another challenge is to ensure that new housing is not transformed into short-term rentals. Providing flexibility to municipalities is key. Sandy noted that Gray doesn't want to increase its village traffic levels, and to welcome more housing, Gray needs transit.

Chris said that staff will stay the course, participating in the MMA working group, tracking the commission's work, advocating for regional technical assistance and for flexible approaches that recognize the differing needs of cities and towns.

### **Menu of Regional Investment Options for ARPA Funds**

At the direction of the GPCOG Executive Committee, members were surveyed to understand how cities and towns in our region may want to work together to invest in regional solutions with American Rescue Plan Act funds. The survey closes this coming Friday, and polls GPCOG members on their interest in ARPA compliance support, housing, homelessness, broadband, and water and sewer.

Mark described Portland's struggle to find housing for the newest asylum seeker arrivals. There are about five hundred people that have recently arrived, fleeing political and climate disasters. He invited other communities to join with Portland in a regional approach to homelessness, and said the City needs help.

Kate shared that South Portland is housing a lot of people, mostly in hotels. The volume of public safety and other service calls to the sites is staggering. Housing and services are strained.

Matt added that there are different populations that need different safety net services. The challenges demand state and federal help, and cannot be solved by the host city or the region.

### **Future Direction of GPCOG's Broadband Work**

Andrew Butcher, GPCOG's Director of Resilience and Innovation and the Director of the Maine Broadband Coalition, announced that he will be leaving GPCOG to become the new Director of the Maine Connectivity Authority. He was nominated by Governor Mills earlier today.

Sandy and others congratulated Andrew, saying that he's the exact right person for this important job.

Kristina explained that GPCOG's broadband portfolio has two parts. The first is regional organizing, which is mostly in the Lakes region communities. The second is serving as the host and providing staff capacity for the Maine Broadband Coalition. With Andrew's departure, this is a good moment to help the Coalition establish itself as an independent entity.



Nat said that GPCOG's statewide work through the Coalition has been a slam dunk victory. It's now best for GPCOG to focus on concrete things we can do within the region, and play a support role in state level advocacy. Yarmouth may be interested in potentially investing some ARPA funds in regional broadband efforts.

Sandy agreed with the change in direction – providing a runway for the Coalition to become independent and continuing GPCOG's commitment to regional broadband organizing within our geography of membership.

Nat moved adjournment; Justin seconded. The meeting ended at 1:32 PM.

## Attachment B

### Executive Director's Report

#### Strategic Priority – Serve our Members

- **ARPA Survey Results.** The survey exploring our members' interests in collaborating and/or pooling funding on regional opportunities revealed:
  - Of the 6 responses from the Lakes region towns working together on broadband, 5 said they were extremely or very interested in broadband.
  - Of the 13 responses from Metro Region Coalition communities, 12 were extremely or very interested in housing and 10 in homelessness. Interestingly, 8 of the 16 responses from non-MRC communities also were extremely or very interested in housing, while only 4 were extremely or very interested in homelessness.
  - Of the 18 responses from Portland Water District communities, 8 were extremely or very interested in regional water/sewer projects.
  - Compliance interest is mainly in medium-size and smaller communities.
- **Resilience Grant.** On behalf of *Windham* and *Bridgton*, *Bridgton* received an implementation grant of \$28,000 to integrate resilience considerations into investment plans and ordinances.
- **Resilience Corps.** Nine new Resilience Corps joined our team in early November. We will have six openings, starting in the New Year.
- **Call for Transportation Planning Projects.** GPCOG and PACTS members submitted project proposals for transportation planning support, totaling \$191,000, which exceeds the \$115,000 available. There will be another call for rural transportation projects next year.

#### Strategic Priority – Regional Prosperity

- **Regional Voice.** GPCOG, along with eight peer regional planning agencies, submitted a proposal to the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to provide technical assistance through regional entities to expand housing choices.
- **Homelessness.** The Metro Region Coalition voted to support Portland's application to the County for ARPA funds to support the new service center for people experiencing homelessness. The Coalition also voted to support South Portland's application for

County ARPA funds to defray municipal operating costs for people experiencing homelessness.

- **Broadband events:** The broadband annual summit will be two virtual half-days on November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Register [here](#).
- **Regional traffic signals.** PACTS approved funds to upgrade the regional server for traffic signals in the region.

### **Strategic Priority – Operate with Excellence**

- **Staff changes.** Zoe Miller, Director of Community Engagement, will be leaving GPCOG at the end of the calendar year to start her own consulting firm. Kelly Rehberg, a Resilience Fellow, is starting full-time employment as Sustainability Program Coordinator. Jonathan Gagne has started with GPCOG as a Sustainability Associate.

## Attachment C

### 2021 Advocacy Accomplishments

9/14/21

GPCOG was an active advocate for our region in 2021. Our work rested on strong relationships, careful understanding of the issues and policy options, and a continual focus on our region's needs as expressed by our members.

At the State House, we continued our tradition of weighing in on key legislative initiatives by testifying with a uniquely regional perspective and giving our members access to the legislative process so they could make their voices heard.

At the federal level, we worked closely with our Congressional delegation by providing information, regional insights, and advice as our Senators and Representatives worked to help Maine recover and build resiliency as the pandemic continued.

Finally, our staff and our volunteer GPCOG leaders continued our focused efforts to build and sustain close working relationships with the Mills Administration and state legislative leaders, working to implement state economic, transportation, and environmental plans and priorities.

#### Federal Accomplishments

- Met with senior staff for Senators Collins and King to outline GPCOG's 2021 federal priorities centered on maximizing regional access to and deployment of federal CARES Act, ARPA, and stimulus funding.
- Helped our members identify 98 priority projects in our region that were either 'shovel ready' or 'shovel worthy,' and continue to use that list as the basis for additional federal and state advocacy for allocation of recovery and stimulus funding.
- Worked closely with the offices of Senators Collins and King, and Congresswoman Pingree, to help them each submit 'Congressional Designated Spending' priorities (aka 'earmarks') for funding in our region.

#### State House Accomplishments

GOCOG testified nine times during the 2021 legislative session:

- In support of LD 32, which became law with bipartisan support and allowed municipalities to use remote access (like Zoom) during public meetings for the first time. GPCOG members and volunteers added their voices to help support the need for remote access at public meetings.
- In support of LD 161, the Department of Transportation's biennial budget that became law with bipartisan support.
- In support of LD 221, Governor Mills' budget, focusing on expanded revenue sharing and general purpose aid to education as critical state/municipal partnerships. Many members also testified in support, and the Governor's budget became law with bipartisan support.
- In support of LD 446, focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of regionally implementing state policies and programs like economic recovery and climate action. The bill passed the House but did not become law.
- In support of LD 609, establishing a Commission to Study Zoning and Housing. Our testimony addressed our region's needs for new state law support of innovative approaches to expanding housing choice. The bill became law with bipartisan support and the Commission is currently meeting.
- In support of LD 722, establishing the Maine Climate Corps. Julia Breul delivered GPCOG's testimony, sharing our experience with the GPCOG Resilience Corps, and urging the state to use our work as a foundation for their own. The bill became a resolve and was unanimously enacted into law.
- In support of LD's 740, 1185, and 1195, each proposing increases in municipal revenues derived from legalized marijuana operations. The bills were consolidated into LD 1185 and carried over to the next legislative session.
- In support of LD 953, expanding the use of Tax Increment Financing to allow greater municipal support for the development of affordable housing and homeless facilities. Vanessa Farr delivered GPCOG's testimony which detailed the advantages our region would derive from the legislation. The bill was passed unanimously and became law.
- In support of LD 1733, directing how state ARPA funds would be spent. GPCOG's testimony before the legislature's Appropriations Committee made a strong case for regional approaches to recovery and resilience initiatives. The bill was enacted with bipartisan support and became law.

On behalf of the Maine Broadband Coalition, GPCOG staff:

- Co-lead the successful Broadband Bond Campaign in July 2020 mobilizing 75% of the voter electorate in favor of the state's first broadband bond for \$15 million.
- Helped craft legislation in support of development of the new Maine Connectivity Authority.
- Testified to Legislative Committees eight times relevant to broadband specific legislation and policy.
- Coordinated the Legislature's bi-partisan Broadband Caucus.
- Was asked by Commissioner Johnson (Department of Economic & Community Development) to participate in and help structure the planning and development of the new Maine Connectivity Authority.

#### Other Advocacy

GPCOG advocacy goes beyond the legislative process, often providing information and an opportunity for the region to collaborate. For example:

- In 2021 GPCOG commissioned a two-part study of zoning, multifamily housing, and transit. The findings have appeared in the press, and helped our members think through the issues surrounding expanded housing choice.
- GPCOG is working with our members to understand how federal ARPA funds can be spent, and to examine how our members might work together to use ARPA to address issues together that they cannot address separately.

In 2022 GPCOG will continue to be a focused advocate for our member communities, our region, and our future. We will work at the federal, state, and regional levels to attract resources, develop good policy, and educate our region.

## Attachment D

### 2022 Advocacy Priorities

DRAFT for GPCOG Executive Committee Consideration  
11/9/21

GPCOG will focus its advocacy on policy and investment proposals that support shared and sustainable prosperity in our region. For policies that impact GPCOG's member cities and towns, GPCOG works to ensure municipalities have choice and flexibility in implementing policies, and that our advocacy aligns with Maine Municipal Association efforts.

#### FEDERAL ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

We will work with our federal partners to ensure federal pandemic relief, infrastructure, and budget funds flow to regional priorities.

- Investment in the region. Continue to identify and direct CARES Act, ARPA, Infrastructure, and Build Back Better federal funds into our region, with a focus on regional priorities.
- EDA grant application. Advocate for GPCOG's integrated planning Economic Development Administration application to boost the region's prosperity. This application is under development.

#### STATE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

We will work with our state partners to position regional agencies to be efficient, effective mechanisms through which the state can work to achieve state goals. We will work to address housing, infrastructure, climate and equity challenges our region faces.

1. **Housing** – Expand housing choices by boosting housing production in places that make sense and increasing the availability of affordable housing for all income levels. A more diverse and larger housing stock is key to attracting and retaining a talented workforce.
  - Zoning barriers. The Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions will complete its recommendations this winter. These recommendations will become drafted legislation in LR 2299/LR 2339 –

An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission on Zoning & Housing Recommendations. GPCOG will advocate for reforms that expand housing choice while providing municipalities flexibility, resources, and incentives. This includes GPCOG's proposal for regional zoning technical assistance.

- Affordable housing. Outside the Commission's recommendations, support other housing policy changes that expand housing choice and enable housing construction/conversion for households that are suffering from the housing affordability crisis.
  - State funding for homeless services. Secure state support for Portland's new center for homeless in recognition that one of GPCOG's members bears disproportionate funding responsibility for providing housing and services to those suffering homelessness.
- 2. Economic Development** – Address the region's significant workforce shortage and expand economic opportunity to those who have historically been disadvantaged.
- State plan implementation. Support economic development strategies that advance the Governor's 10-year economic development plan in our region, including regional implementation and funding. This includes addressing childcare deficits in our region and supporting workforce training.
- 3. Climate** – Support the state's bold climate goals by helping our communities get ready to weather the stresses and shocks of climate change while taking meaningful action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, the state's largest source of climate pollution.
- State plan implementation. Support climate action policies that advance *Maine Won't Wait's* goals in our region, including regional implementation strategies, long-range transportation planning ("Connect 2045"), and funding. Support policies that advance climate-friendly transportation, municipal implementation of resilience and mitigation strategies, decarbonization of the energy sector, and beneficial electrification.
  - Climate Corps. Support LR 2234 – An Act to Incorporate Maine Climate Corps into the Maine Commission for Community Service, which would expand opportunities for young workers to support the implementation of *Maine Won't Wait*.
- 4. Transportation** – Prioritize limited funds for regional transportation priorities and seek opportunities to support new transportation revenues.
- Funding for regional priorities. Advocate for funding for our region's transportation priorities, including implementation of PACTS' *Transit Tomorrow* and *Connect 2045*

plans. Support new revenue sources for transportation investments in our region, aligned with climate action goals.

**5. High speed internet** – Help our communities get ready for new broadband investments that will expand service to un- and under-served areas and strengthen service quality throughout the region.

- Readiness support. Technical and community organizing assistance for local municipalities and regional planning organizations to ready our region for broadband investments.

**6. Agency and Municipal Operations**

- Remote meetings. Support LR 2382 – An Act to Amend the Remote Meeting Law to provide municipalities and public agencies more flexibility for virtual public meetings.

**Attachment E**

**FY23 Member Dues Amounts**

GPCOG Member	2010 Population	2020 Population	Population Change	Dues Change	FY23 Dues
Bridgton	5,210	5,418	208	\$ 416	\$ 10,836
Cape Elizabeth	9,015	9,535	520	\$ 1,040	\$ 19,070
Casco	3,742	3,646	-96	\$ (192)	\$ 7,292
Cumberland	7,211	8,473	1,262	\$ 2,524	\$ 16,946
Falmouth	11,185	12,444	1,259	\$ 2,518	\$ 24,888
Freeport	7,879	8,737	858	\$ 1,716	\$ 17,474
Gorham	16,381	18,336	1,955	\$ 3,910	\$ 36,672
Gray	7,761	8,269	508	\$ 1,016	\$ 16,538
Harrison	2,730	2,447	-283	\$ (566)	\$ 4,894
Naples	3,872	3,925	53	\$ 106	\$ 7,850
New Gloucester	5,542	5,676	134	\$ 268	\$ 11,352
North Yarmouth	3,565	4,072	507	\$ 1,014	\$ 8,144
Portland	66,194	68,408	2,214	\$ 4,428	\$ 136,816
Pownal	1,474	1,566	92	\$ 184	\$ 3,132
Scarborough	18,919	22,135	3,216	\$ 6,432	\$ 44,270
Sebago	1,719	1,911	192	\$ 384	\$ 3,822
South Portland	25,002	26,498	1,496	\$ 2,992	\$ 52,996
Standish	9,874	10,244	370	\$ 740	\$ 20,488
Westbrook	17,494	20,400	2,906	\$ 5,812	\$ 40,800
Windham	17,001	18,434	1,433	\$ 2,866	\$ 36,868
Yarmouth	8,349	8,990	641	\$ 1,282	\$ 17,980
Durham	3,848	4,173	325	\$ 650	\$ 8,346
<b>Totals</b>	<b>253,967</b>	<b>273,737</b>	<b>19,770</b>	<b>\$ 39,540</b>	<b>\$ 547,474</b>

## Attachment F

### Proposed Scope for Strategic Plan Update

#### Goals:

- Collect feedback from members, partners, staff, and communities regarding existing and potential GPCOG strategic priorities
- Confirm those strategies that remain unchanged
- Identify any needed course corrections to GPCOG’s work over the next two years
- Identify and coordinate upcoming related strategic planning work and supporting data to inform the full 5-year strategic plan update

#### Deliverable:

#### Memo that:

- summarizes feedback from members, partners, staff, and communities in our region,
- summarizes upcoming planning activities that will be integrated into the next full five year Strategic Plan, including input from stakeholders and supporting data, and
- proposes any needed FY23 and FY24 strategic course corrections for Executive Committee consideration and action in May 2022.

#### Scope of Work:

1. Learn from member municipalities, GPCOG staff, and community partners whether GPCOG should ramp up, ramp down, modify, add, or eliminate any of its work to support cities and towns, build regional prosperity, and operate with excellence. To gather this input, the following groups will be asked for input:
  - Managers – via monthly managers meeting
  - Local elected officials – via email or calls to chairs of councils and boards of selectmen
  - Staff workshop
  - Partners – via email or calls with USM, United Way, Portland Area and Lakes Region Chambers, VisitPortland, Governor’s Office for Innovation and the Future, MaineDOT, Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center, Roux Institute, and Gulf of Maine Research Institute
2. Share input and develop proposed course corrections for consideration by the Executive Committee at an upcoming spring meeting
3. Identify related strategic planning work that will be integrated into the next full five year GPCOG Strategic Plan
4. Draft memo for Executive Committee action in May 2022.

Hours and Budget: Work to be completed in-house with indirect budget of under \$7,500