



## Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

**November 21, 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:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87406527810>

Webinar ID: 874 0652 7810

*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 October 10, 2023 meeting (Attachment A)**

The minutes from the October 10, 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. MRC Input into GPCOG Strategic Planning (30 minutes)**

**Staff report:** GPCOG is due for a new 5-year Strategic Plan. In this session, Metro Coalition members will provide input into the most important roles GPCOG plays for the Coalition and the outcomes the Coalition seeks to achieve via GPCOG by 2030.

**Action:** Provide member input into the next 5-year GPCOG Strategic Plan, with a focus on how GPCOG serves the Metro Coalition.

### **5. Economic Development Update (15 minutes)**

**Staff report:** Chris Hall will brief members two economic development grant programs ([Domestic Trade Grant Program](#) and the [New Business Recovery Grant](#) program) that GPCOG is running for the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development.

**Action:** Information and an opportunity to share grant opportunities with your employer network.

## 6. Housing Data Needs (15 minutes)

**Staff report:** Matt Panfil, GPCOG's Planning Director, will share his team's housing data needs and ask for member support as GPCOG puts together a 2024 Housing Progress Report for our region.

**Action:** Discuss available data and provide staff direction on how best to collect it from Metro Coalition members.

## 7. MRC Member Roundtable: Housing (15 minutes)

**Staff report:** For today's meeting, this standing agenda item will ask Metro Coalition members to share each community's experience with LD2003 compliance and other progress on expanding housing choices.

**Action:** Information and an opportunity to share member experiences with each other.

## 8. Adjourn

## Upcoming Meetings (all Noon to 1:30 pm both in person and remote via Zoom)

December 12, 2023

January 9, 2024

February 13, 2024

March 12, 2024

April 9, 2024

May 21, 2024

June 18, 2024

**Attachment A**  
**Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes**  
**October 10, 2023**

**In Attendance:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Hope Cahan	Falmouth
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Ephrem Paraschak	Gorham
Tom Hall	Scarborough
Mary Davis	Portland
Melissa Hue	Portland
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Gail Kezer	Office of Sen. King
Sarah Lawrence	Office of Rep. Chellie Pingree
<b>Guests</b>	Hannah Pingree and Georges Budagu Makoko, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
<b>For GPCOG</b>	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Bellinda Ray, Matt Panfil, Dani Deason, Tom Bell

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Chair Michael Foley called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm and welcomed everyone. Attendees gave brief introductions.

**2. Acceptance of minutes from the September 12, 2023 meeting**

Jerre Bryant moved acceptance of the minutes of the September 12, 2023 MRC meeting seconded by Matt Sturgis. Chair Foley declared the minutes accepted without objection.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. MRC Work Plan 2023-2024**

Each year in September the Metro Regional Coalition establishes its work plan for the coming year. Staff revised the draft work plan per member input at the September MRC meeting. The revised draft (attached below) was reviewed and approved as presented on a motion by Tom Hall, seconded by Hope Cahan, after a unanimous roll call vote of all members voting.

## 5. State Housing Report Update

On Wednesday 10/4/23 MaineHousing, Maine DECD, and GOPIF released a study entitled *State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study*. As reported in the [BDN](#), [MPBN](#), and the [PPH](#), the study sets a baseline for state housing production and anticipates the amount of new housing needed in Maine by 2030.

Matt Panfil, GPCOG's Director of Planning, provided an overview of the study's findings. Please refer to slides 1-4 in this [slide deck](#) for details of his presentation.

Kristina Egan led a discussion of the study's implications for our region and how GPCOG can help member communities meet the report's expectations. Please see slides 5-10 in the linked slide deck for details.

During discussion after their presentations the following points were made:

- GPCOG can support municipal housing efforts by educating the public and demonstrating the true impacts and benefits of new housing, which are often misunderstood or misrepresented during local housing debates.
- Funding for GPCOG technical assistance will come from the state, or from dedicated transportation funding in PACTS communities.
- Members discussed the shortage of construction workers and available firms as a barrier to expanding housing creation, something also noted in the state report.
- Members also identified other infrastructure limits as potential bottlenecks to development, such as limited sewer and water connections/capacity.
- Hannah Pingree spoke about the state report's underlying approach that focused on current and future state workforce needs, which drove the large target housing numbers in the report.
- Members discussed declining school enrollment, despite housing growth, as one of the persistent misunderstandings in the public.
- Members also discussed public resistance to large housing projects, using Gorham's 391-unit housing proposal in the Village District as an example.

Kristina concluded by emphasizing that GPCOG staff are ready to assist member communities as they assess their capacities and willingness to expand housing development in response to the state report.

## 6. Office of New Americans Update

Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), joined members to update them on her Office's work developing proposals in response to Governor's [Executive Order](#) establishing a state Office of New Americans (ONA).

Using this [slide deck](#), Pingree said ONA's core focus will be how to best engage new Mainers in our economy and society as a part of meeting the state's demographic challenges (detailed in the Housing report, above).

To do so, Pingree identified 6 objectives for the ONA (see slide 10). GOPIF's Georges Budagu Makoko explained how GOPIF is meeting with groups all across the state to get their input on prioritizing these 6 objectives (and identifying others). Members were invited to share their own input with GOPIF on what they hope the ONA will accomplish, and how you hope to work with the ONA, by using [this form](#). In addition, GPCOG staff will draft a letter to GOPIF on the ONA reflecting the MRC's discussion for member review and approval via email.

During discussion the following points were made:

- Mayor Foley emphasized that more transitional housing is needed across the state, and he urged state policy to move support for new Mainers away from General Assistance and into a more holistic state managed approach.
- Members stressed the need for more municipal workers and hoped that the ONA could connect new Mainers with training and education to position them for municipal work when they are ready and able. Members also noted that education and training are powerful tools to help new Mainers understand their new home's culture.
- The need for a statewide system to track General Assistance across municipalities was noted, and legislative action is expected this winter on that issue.
- Mayor Foley referenced [Convey911](#) as a translation service used by Westbrook which has been very helpful to municipal staff.
- Kristina Egan emphasized the importance of transitional housing as a central element in cultural and economic integration, and urged that transitional housing be a part of the ONA's mission. In response Hannah Pingree agreed and referenced the work the state has done with local and nonprofit partners in Saco and South Portland.
- Belinda Ray amplified Kristina's comments and noted that while training may be prohibited until federal work authorization is granted, education is not prohibited, and transitional housing campuses are a perfect location for education.
- In response to a question about the state's receptivity to embracing new Mainers, Hannah Pingree noted that work force shortages are driving change in public opinion, often led by employers who are desperate for new workers.

Mayor Foley concluded this portion of the agenda by thanking Hannah for joining MRC members and listening to their input.

## **7. Adjourn**

Mayor Foley adjourned the meeting by acclamation at 1:24 pm.

