

# GPCOG Executive Committee

## MEETING MINUTES October 17, 2023

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Krista Chappell	Gray
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Mark Dion	Portland

### **Welcome**

Krista opened the meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Nomination of Executive Committee Member**

Nat nominated Nathan Poore, Town Manager of Falmouth, to fill the vacancy on the Executive Committee. Carmen seconded. The roll was called. All voted in favor.

### **Approval of 9/5/23 Minutes**

Nat moved approval of the 9/5/23 minutes from the annual retreat. Carmen seconded. Mark and Sue abstained and the remaining members voted in favor.

### **Spotlight: Vision Zero for Rural and Island Communities**

Rick Harbison, Senior Planner and Data Manager for GPCOG, presented a [slide deck](#) on this new project to make streets safer for all users in GPCOG's rural and island communities. The Vision Zero plan, once completed, will make communities eligible to apply for federal implementation grants for road safety improvements.

Several members asked how to ready their communities to apply for project funding. Krista asked if Gray could apply for demonstration project funds without an action plan in place. Rick responded that he would check with Belinda Ray but explained that the town would certainly be eligible next year before the Safe Streets and Roads for All Round 3 deadline and that there are possibly other sources of grant funding out there. (Post meeting follow up: an action plan is indeed a requirement to apply for demonstration project funds; another potential source of funding is the Community Action Grant program if the community is in the state Resilience Partnership).

Krista also wondered what the implications would be if a town is not identified as a priority safety area. Rick explained the factors that go into identifying priority safety locations (high injury network, high risk network, community identified concerns, equity zones), how the larger region will be split into smaller subregions, and mentioned that in all likelihood each community will have several priority safety locations identified (note: in the action plan these locations will be called “critical safety corridors” and “critical safety intersections”).

Nat asked what types of roads this plan will consider (i.e., are local roads included?). Rick responded that local roads are included but the plan will not address safety issues on the highways (I-95 / I-295).

Nat and Carmen both inquired about MaineDOT’s level of commitment to Vision Zero as well as their willingness to fund projects once the plan is complete. Rick noted that MaineDOT’s Director of Safety is on the project’s advisory panel, but acknowledged there may need to be a more significant Vision Zero culture shift that happens within MaineDOT as well.

With respect to funding projects, Kristina explained that having a project identified in a plan gives it more heft than if it’s just a community making the request alone. Rick described how for the last implementation grant GPCOG staff met collectively with member municipalities to identify the best projects to apply for. Additionally, since implementation grants are so large (maximum grant amount is \$25 million) GPCOG would likely submit a regional application with many projects bundled together to be more competitive. Kristina added that Safe Streets and Roads for All funding is designed to go straight to MPOs, not state DOTs. Since state DOTs often work collaboratively with U.S. DOT, we have reason to believe there will be stronger local-state-federal alignment with these funds.

Carmen expressed her hope that this project and GPCOG’s influence will shift MaineDOT’s culture to be more responsive towards a community’s safety concerns. Nat shared his experience that these kinds of programs and conversations do tend to change the mindset and culture of MaineDOT, as well as that of residents.

Matt asked about the timeline and application parameters for submitting the next proposal. Rick explained that the Round 3 Safe Streets and Roads for All deadline will likely happen in July of 2024. At that time GPCOG will issue a call for projects and convene a regional discussion.

### **Executive Director’s Report**

Chris Hall clarified that the “tech hub” grant is a new business grant program for businesses that started during the pandemic and can now qualify for relief.

### **Executive Director’s Performance Goals**

Nat asked how the ED’s goals differ from the agencywide goals, noting that the ED’s responsibility is to

make sure the agency achieves its goals. Kristina agreed and added that the goals, as drafted, are to guide her in what she can uniquely do to advance those overall goals.

Sue moved adoption of the Executive Director's performance goals for FY24 as printed. Matt seconded. The roll was called and all were in favor.

### **Advocacy Priorities**

Chris Hall said that the short session begins in January and is scheduled to end in April. There will be a supplemental budget as more revenues come into the state. With a strong rainy day fund, Chris anticipates there will be discussion on what to do with these funds. He presented the proposed priorities, and reminded the group that ongoing discussion with members will be needed as the session plays out. Staff will continue to coordinate with MMA, prioritize areas of regional need, and try to find the areas of most consensus amongst our diverse member municipalities.

Sue moved approval of the advocacy priorities as printed. Nat seconded. The roll was called and all were in favor.

### **Adjustment to Loan Fund**

Nat noted that the proposed adjustment is an internal transfer. Jerre added that the proposed action is a correction for an error from eight or more years ago. Sue asked how it happened and how to ensure it doesn't happen again. Kristina acknowledged that this error happened before hers and Josh's time, and the accounting system doesn't provide clarity on why it happened, just that it happened. There are safeguards in place to ensure GPCOG doesn't bill a higher operational cost than interest generated for the loan fund. These include bi-weekly review and approval of all timesheets and internal financial reports generated by Josh that enable Kristina and Tony to ensure our labor costs stay with budgeted expenses.

Nat moved to authorize the transfer of \$278,000 from the Reserve Fund to GPCOG's Loan Account for FAME business loans. Matt seconded. The roll was called and all were in favor.

### **Strategic Plan Work Session**

Kristina began a short presentation on member and stakeholder input gathered through surveys and interviews. About 1:15 p.m., the building's fire alarm went off. By the time the group was able to return to the conference room, it was too late to continue the meeting.

The remaining group adjourned.