

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.