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## GPCOG Executive Committee

### MINUTES

April 14, 2021

#### In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Sandy Carder	Gray
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Chris Hall, Andrew Butcher, Tom Bell, Tori Pelletier, Kat Violette, Josh Kochis	GPCOG Staff

#### Welcome

Nat Tupper, President, opened the meeting, which was held via Zoom. The Committee didn't reach quorum.

#### Spotlight: Grants and Loans to Small Businesses

Tori Pelletier, Special Projects Coordinator, and Kat Violette, Outreach and Communications Associated, provided this month's spotlight on GPCOG's Loans and Grants program. The program, using new Community Development Block Grant Loans via Cumberland County, has issued 36 loans, reaching 16 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and women led businesses. Tori reviewed changes to the program to increase maximum loan amounts. GPCOG is also administering small business loans for the City of South Portland and the Town of Yarmouth. Tori provided information on the number of loans and remaining funding in the program. GPCOG has enhanced its outreach efforts in the Lakes Region.

Matt Sturgis asked about the funding timeframe and the remaining funds. The CDBG program closes June 1<sup>st</sup> and so for the next two months, outreach will be the focus.

These loans and grants have been provided to businesses that have been historically underrepresented. The GPCOG loan team is conducting outreach in different languages, and

developing relationships with the Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center, Unified Asian Communities, and Black Owned Maine.

Kat Violette reviewed the results from the Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program. GPCOG administered \$67,427,942 in loans, or about one-third of the total state funding. Three rounds of applications were administered over five months providing 1,470 businesses with grants across 24 municipalities. The grants were an average size of \$33,232.

Marcel Ntagora helped businesses owners through the application process providing language translation support. 82 businesses receiving grants self-identified as Black, Indigenous or People of Color-owned businesses. GPCOG provided recommendations to the state on how to better reach underserved populations.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Significant federal funding will benefit our region through the American Rescue Plan Act, and potentially through earmarks and the American Jobs Act. The American Rescue Plan Act, which has been signed into law, will help cities, towns and the County with direct funding, as well as provide resources for broadband, economic development, and water and sewer.

Tom Bell is leading transit recovery marketing efforts. The next phase will be to welcome back riders as vaccinations continue to be administered. GPCOG is also working with member cities and towns on a marketing campaign for outdoor dining.

Toni Plante has been working on corporative purchases, saving members money through transportation fuels and paving bids.

PACTS now has wider representation on its committees and fewer meetings overall. PACTS has also finalized a new Funding Framework, which prioritizes transportation investments. PACTS is about to launch new initiative, called Transit Together, to do a system redesign of public transportation services.

### **Public Comment**

Ken Capron said that the loans discussion was confusing, and that the public should not only be able to participate but also understand the components discussed. He wondered why there would be loan funding left over given the hardship the region has gone through. He added that Microrail is pursuing a National Science Foundation grant opportunity.

### **FY22 Budget**

Josh presented the draft FY22 budget. The proposed budget is larger than the FY21 budget. The proposed budget for FY22 is approximately \$4.85 million which is a \$778,00 increase from 2021 budget. This is primarily due to the sizeable amount of federal funds related to the pandemic. It's secondarily due to continued success in attracting competitive grant revenue.

There is a net change in staff, increasing staff by seven positions (six of whom already have joined the team in FY21 due to new grants and contracts). The budget also proposes

welcoming our second 'class' of 14 AmeriCorps Fellows, with our current group ending service in October 2021. Four of the new staff positions are grant-funded or limited in term. The leadership team's intention is to retain those positions beyond the end of the current grants by developing sustainable funding. This goal will be supported by bringing a Development Director on to the staff team. Dues are assumed to remain at \$2/per capita, with a 10% dues credit for members paying per capita, as recommended by the Executive Committee at its 2/10/21 meeting.

Kristina added that the projection for this new fiscal year is due to the organization's ability to secure more funding than projected last year.

Federal funding makes up about 76% about GPCOG's budget with 8% from state, 5% local and 10% member dues.

Nat said the budget is very clear. He noted that land-use planning was a small percentage of the budget and reminded the group not to forget how important land-use and housing are to the region and the organization's core work. Kristina agreed that land-use is not a big part of GPCOG's portfolio, adding that GPCOG primarily engages in land-use work through transportation work, since there aren't significant federal or state funds for land use funds.

Matt added that reaching out to members who would like to participate in initiatives, like the cable franchise fee project, leverages community resources.

Justin asked what Kristina would add into the budget if she could. She answered the amount of dues available to match grants is low. This limits the types of federal grants GPCOG can pursue.

Sandy added that pooling funding together is a good way to leverage funding. It is important to communicate to the towns that collaboration for funding is an important value in being part of GPCOG.

## **Maximizing Federal Funds for Members and the Region**

Chris Hall framed the goal of the region and Maine maximizing available federal funding. The treasury department regulations haven't yet been released and will provide needed guidance on eligible investments. GPCOG is teaming up with Maine Municipal Association to provide an educational seminar for cities and towns. There is another needed conversation about how the state, county and cities and towns can work together. GPCOG is identifying places where communities might want to consult, collaborate and possibly connect regionally.

Nat asked if the money could be passed from local government to non-profits or regional planning organizations and whether these new federal funds could be used to match other federal projects. Chris said we won't have clarity until the treasury provides the rules.

Sandy said that it is good to partner with MMA. She added that there is significant funding, and

if there is a regional benefit, it adds a competitive edge to potential projects and helps leverage investments in local priorities. Member communities will define the areas in which we can work together.

Since there was no quorum, Nat adjourned the meeting without a vote.