
GPCOG Executive Committee

MINUTES

May 12, 2021

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Sandy Carder	Gray
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Susan Witonis	Cumberland County
Mary Fernandes	Casco
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Chris Hall, Andrew Butcher, Josh Kochis	GPCOG Staff

Welcome

Nat Tupper, President, opened the meeting, which was held via Zoom. The Committee reached quorum.

Acceptance of 4/14/21 Minutes

Kristina noted that there were corrections for the minutes. She explained that June 1st is not the deadline for the CDBG program. The program will continue until there are no funds remaining. In addition, there have been 26 loans administered, not 36. Nat Tupper moved approval of the 4/14/21 meeting minutes. Sandy Carder seconded. The roll was called. Susan and Jarrod abstained. The remaining members were in favor.

Public Comment

George Rheault commented that the hiring process for the Director of Strategic Services made him uneasy since GPCOG hired an elected official that had served on GPCOG's Executive Committee. He said he assumed the position was to be a lobbyist and that the new hire would lobby Portland for more funding. He asked if the job had been publicly posted. Ken Capron stated that he agreed with George's statement and said that GPCOG is working in areas that aren't GPCOG's business. He asked how the decision was made for the new hire.

Kate Lewis asked whether there is time allotted in the Executive Committee meeting to answer questions from the public. Kristina said that whether to respond to public comment is a board decision. Kate suggested that it might be a good idea to create space to respond to public comments and/or follow up with individuals in writing after the meeting has concluded, and Kristina offered to provide additional information on George's and Ken's inquiries.

Kristina explained that the job posting for the Director of Strategic Services was publicly posted, an internal committee selected finalists, and she made the final decision based on the hiring committee's recommendation. The Director of Strategic Services will not be working as a lobbyist. The position will strengthen GPCOG's relationships with philanthropic foundations and develop grants for federal funding.

Executive Director's Report

Tony Plante estimated that cooperative purchasing accrued over \$545,000 in savings over the last 12 months headlined by road salt, which is the bid with the most participation.

Kristina highlighted that PACTS advanced three regional priorities to Congresswomen's Pingree's office for transportation earmarks. The highest priority was to replace the Maquoit ferry which, if chosen, will free up about half of the yearly total allocation of transit agencies.

Chris highlighted two bills for which the organization has testified:

- LD 32 – Continue remote meetings after the pandemic is over, subject to all requirements of open meetings and proper accessibility.
- LD 953 – Housing and homelessness. Allow municipalities to use their tax increment financing power to fund housing and homelessness efforts in their respective areas.

LD 1694 is a new bill that GPCOG is analyzing. This bill enables municipal, regional, and state to land bank. GPCOG is still analyzing the bill and will keep the Executive Committee updated on their progress.

Kristina stated that GPCOG has created the Vaccine Access Map, which shows how individuals can access vaccination sites via bus service in the region. Commissioner Heather Johnson has requested that Andrew Butcher to serve as one of the leads on a small working group to develop the Maine Connectivity Authority. One of the biggest issues is the changing of standards of uploads and downloads.

Windham and Bridgton received the Pilot Allocation for Community Resilience from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. This comprises of 3 community workshops on understanding climate risks, addressing vulnerability, and prioritizing resilience solutions. At the end of the pilot, GPCOG will work with Windham and Bridgton to put together a funding application to fund solutions identified during the pilot.

FY22 Budget

Josh presented the FY22 budget proposal. The proposed \$4.85 million budget is larger than the

FY21 budget, primarily because the agency has been called to do more during the pandemic. This role is expected to continue into FY22.

The proposal includes \$800,000 in new revenue, a large portion of which is from unidentified sources. The budget is based on the current dues rate with a 10% credit to continue to financially support municipalities as the country struggles with the pandemic. Six of the seven new staff positions have already been hired.

Jarrod asked about whether the increase in budget sets GPCOG up for future staff lay-offs or other liabilities. Kristina responded that the pandemic has required GPCOG to expand its capacity, and the resources associated with that expansion will end at some point. It's a challenge to manage an expansion and a potential contraction. To mitigate the risk of contraction, some staff positions are term limited or grant dependent, GPCOG is hiring consultants for some of the work, and the new fund development position will focus more agency effort on finding new resources for regional priorities, like sustainability and resilience. If the budget shrinks, she and the leadership team will before the agency faces negative consequences.

Tony added that GPCOG's budget is unlike most municipal budgets. It is more prone to rapid changes due to new funding sources during a budget year. When funds run out for programs, GPCOG works to find new replacement funding to ensure the work can continue and talent is not lost due to lack of resources.

Kristina commented that member dues are a small portion of GPCOG's budget. When GPCOG looks for new funding sources, it looks to the federal/state government and philanthropic sources.

Matt made a motion to approve the budget for the annual meeting. Justin seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Matt congratulated GPCOG staff, specifically Josh, for the hard work that was put into the budget and the overall financial health of the organization.

FY22 Executive Committee Members and Officers

Kristina noted that Kate Lewis and Mark Dion are willing to serve on the FY22 Executive Committee and asked the group to consider adding them to the proposed slate of Executive Committee members.

Nat stated that there are 11 nominees, which are the following:

1. Jerre Bryant, **Westbrook** City Manager
2. Sandy Carder, Chair, **Gray** Council
3. Carmen Lone, **Bridgton** Select Board

4. Mary Fernandes, **Casco** Select Board
5. Jarrod Maxfield, Chair, **Windham** Town Council
6. Justin Poirier, **Chebeague Island** Town Manager
7. Matthew Sturgis, **Cape Elizabeth** Town Manager
8. Nat Tupper, **Yarmouth** Town Manager
9. Sue Witonis, **Cumberland County** Commissioner
10. Kate Lewis, **South Portland** Councilor
11. Mark Dion, **Portland** Councilor

Matt made a motion to nominate and recommend this slate of the FY22 Executive Committee to the General Assembly. Sandy Carder seconded the motion.

Kate asked what the maximum the slate allowed for nominees. She also asked about the split between elected official and employees of municipalities.

Kristina answered that they bylaws call for 9 to 11 members (so there is a full slate) and the majority of the Executive Committee to be elected officials with the remaining being municipal staff, such as managers. With this proposed slate there are 7 elected officials and 4 municipal managers. Kristina also mentioned that the bylaws state that the Executive Committee should reflect a geographic balance and diversity of the GPCOG membership, which this proposed slate represents.

The roll was called. The vote was unanimous.

Nat called to create a slate of officers to take their seats after the summit. He opened the floor for nominations for officers.

President: Matt nominated Sandy Carder. Mary seconded.

First Vice President: Matt nominated Jarrod Maxfield. Kate seconded.

Second Vice President/Treasurer: Matt nominated Mary Fernandes. Kate seconded.

Nat called for a roll call to vote for the nominated slate of Executive Committee officers. All members were in favor.

Investment Policy

This past year, GPCOG has been able to replenish the reserve fund, which is at the highest level it has ever been in its history. Once a year, the Executive Committee affirms the investment policy which defines the split of investments between stocks and bonds. The current recommended FY22 budget does not require any withdrawals from the investment funds. The

annual investment policy is the same as last year with one proposed addition. Because GPCOG is committed to climate work, the change would be to divest from companies that have significant dealings with petroleum. These holdings comprise about 2.5% of the current portfolio.

Kate praised the move of divesting from companies even if we suffered some loss in the short term. She asked if Kristina said we would gain from the divestment?

Kristina answered that it's possible, but unknown. GPCOG promotes renewable energy and electric vehicles, and even if there is no gain, divestment aligns with the agency's values.

Kate asked if there was a report on how GPCOG's investment firm would reinvest the divested holdings. Kristina said that she asked the investment firm to consider acquiring stocks in industries that displayed growth such as broadband, renewable energies, and electric vehicles.

Matt agreed GPCOG should divest in those companies that deal in petroleum and move to investments that are in line with GPCOG's ethics such as sustainable energy. He praised the investment firm for their work over the past year.

Sandy made a motion to adopt the investment policy as presented in the agenda, which includes the policy that GPCOG will divest all individual stock holdings of companies that derive a significant portion (greater than 10%) of their revenues from the manufacture, sale, or distribution of petroleum by 6/30/2021. Mary seconded the motion.

Nat suggested that the Executive Committee extend latitude to the investment committee position the portfolio of GPCOG to be consistent with the values of the organization.

Nat called a vote. The vote was unanimous.

Framework for Member Services Fees

Tony explained that over the past years the capacity to provide additional member services has grown along with the number of requests from members. To date, there is currently no set principle or guideline to help decide which member requested projects GPCOG should take on and how to fund them. GPCOG has put together a framework to make these determinations.

Tony gave the example of the Cable TV Franchise Renewal project as a way that this framework works. GPCOG did not have the expertise in cable and telecommunication so an expert was contracted to meet those needs. This is funded by the participating member communities, while GPCOG provides the project management and coordination of this program at no additional cost.

Kristina said that the Executive Committee is the body that decides fees. While the Executive Committee does not need to be involved in setting the fee for every request GPCOG receives, it should set the framework.

Kate asked if there are ever requests that come to GPCOG from members or municipalities that they cannot do because they contradict with their goals or in conflict with another members previous decision on an issue.

Kristina answered that if there was a request that went against GPCOG's values of shared and sustainable prosperity, then the agency would turn a member down. There are existing principles around GPCOG's advocacy, which are regionally focused and ensure that advocacy for one member does not adversely affect another. Nat added that GPCOG has always used the principle of "Don't do things that divide us".

Jarrold asked if members would charge a static fee for a specific service or if it the decision is made on a case-by-case basis.

Tony explained that GPCOG is trying to address situations that are not part of an existing fee structure. The organization receives many individualized requests that do not fall under a specific project or service that GPCOG provides. Setting a fee for those specific requests would not be practical. Nat explained that the framework is a guidance for how to subsidize services instead of the actual fee.

Sandy commented that she believes this framework is a great idea because some members that do not access GPCOG with regularity do not know what services they can request. Mary agreed with Sandy stating that more fine tuning can be applied.

Sandy made a motion to approve a framework for decision-making on fee-based services. Mary seconded the motion. The roll was called, and all members were in favor.

Spotlight: Economic Resilience

GPCOG fills out reports to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) about how their funds are used and what the organization does to support the EDA's vision of recovery and resilience. These reports highlight what it means to be a regional implementing partner. For example, Cumberland County has partnered with GPCOG to distribute Community Development Block Grants for low and moderate employers to support their employees. The CDBG program is a great example of regional work at the request of municipal members and the members of their communities to support jobs, recovery, diversity, and equity. Through the Maine Economic Recovery Grant program, GPCOG was able to distribute funding to ensure individuals could keep their business open. GPCOG has been active on economic recovery and has served as a vehicle through which the community has met the needs of local businesses.. GPCOG is built to handle the distribution of funds not just in a crisis but throughout the year.

GPCOG is proud of a new partnership with the Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center because the organization wants to ensure that the resources available are not just going to white led business but to new Mainers as well.

Sandy moved adjournment; Kate seconded. The meeting ended at 1:33 p.m.