



DRAFT

Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2022

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Michael Foley, Chair	Westbrook
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Pete LaFond	Falmouth
Amy Kuhn	Falmouth
Kevin Jensen	Gorham
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Snyder	Portland
Danielle West	Portland
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Sarah Lawrence	Office of Representative Pingree
Gail Kezer	Office of Senator King
For GPCOG	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Tom Bell

1. Welcome and introductions

Michael Foley called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the June 23, 2022 meeting

Mike Foley moved acceptance of the minutes of the June 23, 2022 MRC meeting without objection.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Asylum Housing Crisis Progress Report

Kristina Egan gave a brief update on the continuing progress of GPCOG's work over the summer to advance regional temporary shelter facilities for asylum seekers. Progress includes continued discussions on developing a site in our region, and another discussion about a possible campus location

outside our region, as well as GPCOG's recent application to the City of Portland for ARPA funding to support the Safe in Maine effort, which has also received financial contributions from the Cape Elizabeth and Westbrook Councils. Belinda Ray, who leads the work for GPCOG, was unavailable for the meeting but will join the next MRC meeting with a fuller report.

Danielle West updated members on how the crisis has evolved over the summer. New arrivals continue to come to Portland and the region at a steady rate, and people are dispersing to families, friends, etc., making support from the Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition even more important and valuable.

Scott Morelli updated members on South Portland's ongoing efforts, and looked forward to discussions with the Governor's Office on future state support for asylum seekers and municipalities.

5. Metro Regional Coalition Work Plan for 2022-23

GPCOG staff drafted a proposed 2022-2023 MRC work plan for member review and approval (see Attachment A). The work plan is centered on three outcomes:

- Continuing work to expand housing options for everyone struggling to afford a home,
- Advancing regional homelessness solutions, and
- To better welcome and retain asylum seekers in our region.

Chris Hall presented the goals and action items from the plan. Members discussed each goal and action. During review of the work plan the following comments were made:

- Efforts to reform General Assistance will require close collaboration and consultation between MRC municipalities, likely including a smaller working group and one or more full group work sessions, all in coordination with the MMA.
- A new piece of legislation will likely be needed, prepared in coordination with the Governor's Office and legislative leaders. That bill will need statewide support.
- The outcomes of the November election at the State House will need to be a part of any GA reform strategy.
- Members agreed that the Work Plan is appropriately focused, and agreed that other priorities like transportation may need to be left to other venues, including PACTS.

After discussion Virginia Wilder-Cross moved to accept the Work Plan as presented and Matt Sturgis seconded the motion. A roll call was held. All members present voted yes, except for abstentions from Gail Kezer and Sarah Lawrence.

6. Adjourn

At 1:02 pm Chair Foley adjourned the meeting by acclamation at 12:55 pm.

Attachment A

Metro Regional Coalition 2022-2023 WORKPLAN FINAL

These are the Metro Regional Coalition's goals for fall 2022 through summer 2023 and its planned actions to achieve those goals.

Priorities for Action and Advocacy

1. Expand Housing Choices

Goal: To continue expanding housing choices and increasing the supply of workforce housing in MRC communities for low- and middle-income households, while implementing the new state requirements of LD 2003.

Actions:

- Publish third annual report on member communities' progress in expanding housing choices in the spring of 2023.
- Coordinate local member housing strategies in response to LD 2003 through GPCOG's new staff capacity.
- Generate information and analysis about ways to expand local and regional housing growth in places that make sense, limit sprawl, and efficiently link with transportation investments.

2. Advance Regional Homelessness Solutions

Goal 1: To house more people experiencing homelessness in the Greater Portland area through a regional strategy that distributes the costs of homeless services more equitably across communities.

Actions:

- Advocate for a regional homeless services strategy that includes state and other resources to implement that strategy.

Goal 2: Achieve meaningful General Assistance reform in the 2023 legislative session.

Actions:

- Support efforts to engage with the Governor for state action.
- Conduct the policy development necessary to identify specific General Assistance reforms that all MRC members will actively support at the State House.
- Organize MRC members to provide data and information that supports the requested reforms.

3. Welcome and retain asylum seekers

Goal: For the state to lead efforts to resettle asylum seekers in Maine.

Actions:

- Coordinate member support for a single legislative proposal in the fall of 2022 to establish an Office of Resettlement in state government designed to provide financial, housing, economic, and social services support to newly arriving immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- Work with lawmakers, administration officials, and the Governor to submit and pass legislation for the 2023 legislative session.

Goal 2: To catalyze the development of a transitional housing campus.

Actions:

- Continue to convene state, local, immigrant, and private sector parties to identify and develop transitional housing.
- Continue to raise Safe in Maine funding for temporary shelter options.

Education Priorities

- **Regional Resilience** - GPCOG staff will share new information about local and regional climate action, to reduce emissions and build community resiliency to shocks and stresses from the climate crisis.
- **Economic Development** – Learn about proposed and emerging new developments in the region, and contribute to the development of the new GPCOG 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) plan, and identify member opportunities to engage.
- **Workforce** – To grow and retain the region’s workforce, the MRC will reach out to the region’s private sector to learn more about ongoing efforts and identify opportunities for municipal engagement.