

**Governor's Wood to Energy Task Force
Final Meeting Augusta, Maine
August 27, 2008**

Members of the Governor's Wood to Energy Task Force

Les Otten, Chair	Maine Energy Systems, LLC
Pat McGowan	Commissioner, Dept. of Conservation
Charlie Agnew	Biomass Commodities Corp.
Doug Baston	Small Woodlot Owners Assoc. of Maine
Bill Bell	Maine Association of Conservation Districts
Ian Burnes	Maine Office of Energy Independence
Jack Cashman	Governor's Office, Senior Economic Advisor
Dana Connors	Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Paul Davis	Plum Creek Timber Company
Jim Delamater	Northeast Bank
Dutch Dresser	Maine Energy Systems LLC
John Fitzsimmons	Maine Community College System
Doug Gardner	Prof of Wood Science, UMaine
Chip Gavin	Bureau of General Services
Jon Hinck	Attorney/State Representative
Wick Johnson	Kennebec Tool & Die
John Kerry	Office of Energy Independence
Sean Mahoney	Conservation Law Foundation
Dale McCormick	Maine State Housing Authority
Ed Miller	American Lung Association of Maine
Hemant Pendse	Prof & Chr ChB Eng Dept., UMaine
Doug Smith	Retired Attorney/State Senator
George Soffron	Corinth Wood Pellets
Charlie Spies	CEI Capital Management LLC
Patrick Strauch	Maine Forest Products Council
Bill Strauss	FutureMetrics
Peter Triandafillou	Huber Resources Corp.
Keith Van Scotter	Lincoln Pulp and Tissue

The final meeting of the Governor's Wood to Energy Task Force opened with the introduction of Task Force Members and interested parties in the audience.

Chairman Les Otten opened the floor to discussion of final changes to be made in the report, based on the public comments received either by writing or through testimony at the Public Hearing.

Chip Gavin

Chip provided a written handout with suggested language to emphasize the importance of the public testimonies the Task Force received, even if those testimonies didn't end up

changing language in the report. All input has been appreciated and very helpful to the deliberations of the Task Force. Public comments – both written and oral – should be noted as an appendix to the final report.

Dana Connors

Dana reiterated the point that all public testimony should be acknowledged and considered. The Task Force discussed making sure all public comments are part of a separate appendix to the final report.

Les Otten

Les discussed the suggestion in the report that dept. rules and regulations should be examined. Turning to suggested language from the Natural Resources Council of Maine, the Task Force discussed streamlining the language to reflect the intent of helping landowners, not necessarily suggesting specific changes to rules and regulations.

MOTION

To eliminate section F from the report based on concerns, to bring clarity to the issue that small landowners are the main concern, not department rules and regulations. There was a second.

Pat Strauch

This was an important issue to SWOAM; we should get a sign off on them before removing section F.

Alec Giffin

Alec has been working with SWOAM; also, Don Mansius and the Maine Forest Service has been working with SWOAM to put the new language in section I together to replace the language in section F. The intent is to replace section F with section I.

Les Otten

I believe the intent is to replace section F with section I and that makes sense.

Bill Bell

Asking NRCM for their opinion – does section I meet the needs of what the Task Force has to do without being too onerous?

Alec Giffin

I do believe that it does.

Doug Baston

SWOAM agrees.

Alec Giffin

It is redundant as well as confusing to sections F & I reaching for the same intent. The Maine Forest Service will work diligently on section I.

The Motion was accepted unanimously, with the assurance from the Maine Forest Service that section I will be carried out.

Chip Gavin

Chip initiated a discussion of how to add language to reflect the fact that many of the comments heard at the Public Hearing concerned issues which had already been considered by the Task Force and the necessary amendments had already been made.

Bill Bell

Bill advocates putting the language back in that creates an “energy czar” position in state government, similar to what Vermont has done for years, to provide schools with a direct resource on energy efficiencies and conversions. The Task Force heard excellent testimony from the Oxford Hills school system on what the energy crisis is doing to education in Maine.

The Task Force has the responsibility to advise the Governor on fiscal issues in terms of making recommendations that may cost the state money at first – but the savings down the road would be well worth it. The Governor could say no to this position – but Bill feels strongly that the recommendation should be in the report.

Ian Burnes

The term “energy czar” is too strong a term. Ian suggested something like “Fuels for Schools Coordinator”. Remember that there already is an Office of Energy Independence within our state government.

Chip Gavin

Chip opposes adding this language in – if the language is added and the Governor asks about it, Chip must be clear that he doesn’t support the new language.

Pat McGowan

We will continue working after today on the conversion of public buildings – looking specifically to conversion to biomass. The survey which will determine the status of public buildings in Maine in terms of their current energy use is in the field now. There

are resources out there to be saved with these types of conversions – millions of dollars in savings – which could be used to fund this proposed new position. However, we need to work with Chip and his office as they have responsibilities over public buildings in Maine.

Pat reiterated that he feels strongly that we could fund the position with savings realized through energy conversions.

Dutch Dresser

Dutch asked Chip to outline the reasons for his opposition to this “energy czar” type position, especially when the Vermont model has worked so well.

Chip Gavin

There are several reasons, some being: (1) the difficulty of find resources in the current state budget; (2) the difficulty of creating a whole new position within state government; (3) mechanically, this report is about wood to energy, and is not the appropriate place to advocate for a new position.

Pat McGowan

We need to get to the intent of this issue – if we can get to a position that can be funded out of savings (from converting schools to more energy efficient heating systems), then we can get there and maintain that position. Pat advocated for putting the language back in the final report.

John Parsons

John is attending the meeting on behalf of Superintendent Mark Eastman of the Oxford Hills school district. John advocated that the Task Force look inside the Bureau of General Services and the Maine Dept. of Education to see what persons of authority are there who could dedicate their time and resources to this effort. Certainly, the savings at the state and local levels could more than pay for this new position.

What savings could be realized, again both on the state and local levels, warrant that this position be created.

Dale McCormick

Getting a new position in state government or assigning new responsibilities to a current position can be tricky. We often face a “Sophie’s Choice” situation. Perhaps we should recommend the position be funded through the Maine School Management Association, or some type of local funding formula.

Chip Gavin

Items 8A and B address this issue (page 26). A revolving loan fund through the Department of Education may be a good model.

Doug Baston

We all certainly appreciate the tough situation the school systems are in. The position in Vermont started with federal funding and also some private foundation donations. Do we really want to enshrine this position within state government? Let's suggest some outside funding.

Les Otten

It is irrefutable that we must do everything we can to lower the cost of heating our schools. Those costs are eating up our education budgets. The other irrefutable fact is that there are many forms of readily available, alternative sources of energy schools can turn to. But, with the state government on a limited budget and cutting positions, not adding positions, we need to be realistic.

The larger problem is that we need to fix the overall heat and energy crisis in Maine – we are not addressing the core issues by spending so much time debating one position. We could use positions, also, to inspect the wood stoves which may prove dangerous this winter.

Les asked that a consensus vote be taken:

MOTION

The report will include language that states solutions to the energy crisis – conservation, efficiencies and alternative sources of energy – be addressed by every department with Maine state government, but no new positions will be created.

There was a second

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Dale McCormick

Dale moved “The Task Force does not suggest the funding of a specific position in state government.” There was a second.

Bill Strauss

There is such a cost advantage to school systems to save money and the private sector as well. There is no need for government to solve this problem – this is not a typical “government solution” type of problem.

Bill Bell

I support the motion, but I just want to show the frustration of school systems to get help and get answers to their specific needs.

Dana Connors

I favor the motion; the policy is what is important, not the specific position. Again, this issue came up in public testimony by several people, so those testimonies will be attached to the final report in the appendix.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chip Gavin

Discussion continued on the language Chip brought forth at the beginning of the meeting, to make sure all testimonies were attached at the end of the Final Report.

Amendments to Chip's wording were discussed and agreed upon, such as adding the sentence "The Task Force has incorporated many of those comments or sentiments directly in the text of this report although it acknowledges it may not have done so fully satisfactorily to those who submitted the comments."

Dana Connors

It's important that we respect the unresolved issues which may still exist within the context of the final report. We should duly note that all items were tried to reach by consensus. Also, we need to append the testimonies received to the final report, out of respect to those who may have differing opinions

George Soffron

Many testimonies that we heard at the Public Hearing came from special interest groups. Since this is the first meeting we've had since that Hearing, we haven't had a chance to debate those issues thoroughly. Putting all those testimonies as an attachment to the final report would give them more legitimacy and allow readers to be more informed. We should include them with a disclaimer that we respect all viewpoints.

Pat Strauch

Yes, it's important to provide a forum for perspectives that don't necessarily agree with the consensus of the Task Force. This appendix (with the public testimonies) will give the ability for those comments to be part of the official record.

MOTION

To move Chip Gavin's language in as amended under the section "The Wood-to-Energy Task Force Process. There was a second.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Nancy Smith

Representative Nancy Smith presented several passages for possible edits. Included in her remarks:

MOTION

To clarify the language in 3-b-(1) concerning the increase of weight limits on I-95. There was a second.

The Motion was accepted unanimously.

MOTION

To clarify the organizations identified in section 3-1-(i) as part of the harvesting infrastructure Task Force.

There was a second.

The Motion was accepted unanimously.

Nancy Smith

Nancy has many concerns about turning agricultural land into areas for planting woody crops (fiber). What if those acres need to be turned back to agricultural food crops?

Bill Strauss

Woody crops can be grown in a time frame of three years. Therefore, a three year rotation for woody crops could help if food crops need to be planted again

Les Otten

It has been reported to this Task Force that there are 50,000 acres of fallow agricultural land in Maine. Look at the failed beet experiments and old potato land that is now fallow. Our specific recommendation is to take that fallow land and turn it into productive land – producing the necessary woody crops.

Doug Baston

What about just using the word “land” rather than “fallow farm lands”?

Les Otten

My fear would be that it’s too general – it might be used to bring forth opposition if it appears, for example, that forest land, will be used.

Pat Strauch

Directing a question to Alec Giffin on the Maine Forest Service: 50,000 acres of fallow land – putting those into cultivation of woody crops – what would the carbon increase be?

Alec Giffin

There is not a big concern about increased carbon. There would such a big gain in terms of displacing fossil fuels. Willow trees and other types of woody crops have significant advantage over fossil fuels. Plus, there is a short rotation cycle for the woody crops as has already been pointed out, and that is a benefit as well.

Dale McCormick

Once the woody crops have been produced, it is difficult to get the acreage back to being ready for food crops? What about roots and stumps?

Alec Giffin

That wouldn’t be a big problem. There are not huge roots or stumps associated with woody crops – we are talking about small roots – they would be able to be plowed under easily.

Dale McCormick

The use of agricultural land and uses of food crops is a huge worldwide issue – let’s not step into too much of a policy discussion on that.

Pat Strauch

But let’s look at this, actually, as good public policy. This is offering farmers another alternative use for their land. Look at the example of using sludge from pulp and paper mills. Farmers need to look at new, advancing land use, and this might be a good opportunity for them to diversify their crops.

Nancy Smith

Knowing that it is such a short rotation makes it more advantageous for farmers to look at the alternative growing of woody crops. It may indeed be a good alternative for farmers.

Nick Bennett

Nick brought for a few edits to page 11 – NRCM suggested edits to the section on Cellulosic Ethanol.

Sean Mahoney

MOTION

To move in the language change suggested by Nick Bennett. It was seconded.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Bill Bell

Bill suggested we input some language to acknowledge the parallel work being done by Commissioner McGowan's Task Force, especially in terms of how we can help schools and other public buildings tackle the energy crisis.

Chip Gavin

Chip is comfortable including language about the other Task Force. It should be added on page 26, Section 8 and new section (c). The name is the Department of Conservation's Public Working Group on Wood to Energy".

MOTION

It was moved to add language about Commissioner McGowan's Task Force. There was a second.

The vote was 6 in favor, 5 in opposition and the Chair did not vote. Discussion ensued that while most votes have been unanimous and while the term "consensus" does not require a unanimous vote, it should be noted in the Final Report that this vote was 6-5.

Chip Gavin

MOTION

That a footnote be added to the Final Report to show that "the vote on this language was 6-5 in favor of the members present, not unanimous". There was a second.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Les Otten

I'm proud that we have been able to bring so many diverse opinions together to agree on two basic issues: 1. the need to conserve energy and 2. the need to encourage use of wood for energy in a responsible manner.

While no document is perfect, this document is an extraordinary piece of work. Considering we have worked the past 8 months as an ad-hoc committee, with no executive order, but with a clear directive from our Governor to bring back solid, actionable recommendations, I feel we have fulfilled that directive and thanks to all of you for your dedication and hard work. It's been a long 8 months, but well worth it.

Final Vote

MOTION

To accept the Final Report as amended today as the recommendation of the Wood to Energy Task Force to Governor John Baldacci.

There was a second.

Motion accepted unanimously.
