

# Governors Council on Maine's Quality of Place

Minutes of the Ninth Meeting, November 15th, 2007<sup>1</sup>

Public Utilities Commission Room, Augusta

**Next Meeting of the Council (Tentative): Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. 1-5 p.m., Augusta, location to be announced.** Meeting Date with Governor to be scheduled same day or the same week if possible.

NOTE: These minutes do not contain revisions made to the Council's draft recommendations. The revised report and recommendations will be circulated shortly.

**Present:** Council members: John Rohman, , Ed Barrett, John Marsh, , Richard Barringer (chair), Jay Espy, Chuck Lawton, Eleanor Kinney, Ken Young, Mary Kate Reny and Martha Freeman. **Staff:** Jody Harris, Sue Inches, Kate Reilly, John Del Vecchio **Absent:** David Whitney, Bruce Hazard, Hank Schmelzer, Barbara Trafton, Evan Richert, Tracy Michaud Stutzman, Hilary Basset, and Kevin Mattson. **Others Attending:** Jeremy Payne, Carolyn Manson, Jeff Romano, James Cote, Greg Dougal, Michael LeVert, Frank O'Hara, Maggie Drummond

**Introductions & Greetings:** Richard Barringer opened the meeting at 9 a.m. with introduction of Council members, staff, and guests. He reviewed the proposed agenda and meeting expectations, including review of the proposed recommendations, discussion of possible funding approaches, and integration and presentation of the recommendations.

## **Discussions of Recommendations (Jody Harris and Sue Inches, facilitators) Downtown Draft Recommendations**

Sue Inches asked for Council members' thoughts and comments on the draft Downtown Recommendations. Mary Kate Reny suggested that it would be productive for the state to review and evaluate downtown assistance effectiveness for all groups and organizations in the state which support downtown revitalization. She also suggested that the recommendation regarding assistance be broadened to support both Main Street Maine and non-Main Street Maine program communities. Ed Barrett suggested that the MaineDOT coordinate with existing trail efforts in carrying out Recommendation 4.

## **Regional Landscape Conservation Draft Recommendations**

Chuck Lawton suggested that the Premise for these recommendations highlight Maine's uniqueness on a national scale attributable to the quality and magnitude of our natural landscapes. He also suggested reversing the order of Recommendations 1 and 2, in order

to amplify the importance of private lands that are open to public access. It is also important to mention the rise in land values and to note that the Council recognizes the need for adequate funding to address this need. Eleanor Kinney asked that the Council report mention the popularity and effectiveness of the Land for Maine's Future Program. Ken Young noted that recommendation 4 b. regarding new conservation tools should acknowledge that private protection efforts are substantial and that ways to enhance private efforts should also be sought. There is a critical need for adequate and reliable state funding necessary to "leverage" private dollars that are available for conservation purposes. Jay Espy added that private landowner easements should be tied-in to this recommendation. Eleanor Kinney noted that recommendation 3 a. does not reference the fact, given to the Council at an earlier meeting, that over 70% of new structures over the past 20 years in LURC territory are on subdivisions not reviewed by LURC. She indicated that including this and other related facts will strengthen the report.

### **Regional Asset-based Development Draft Strategies**

Ken Young explained the organizational structure of the various regional councils in the state, and the qualification process, roles and responsibilities of Economic Development Districts which have combined with a number of councils of governments. He pointed out that currently Council of Governments could be created to include only three municipalities, which is too small to effectively carry out the roles and responsibilities contemplated. He suggested that the recommendation be clear in indicating that the regional entity is an Economic Development District that is also a Council of Governments. This pairing will assure regional capacity to carry out the responsibilities intended. Eleanor expressed her desire that the need and rationale for creating a stronger regional capacity in the state should be strengthened in the Premise. Ed Barrett suggested that the current model works well in the Bangor and downeast region, all of which is covered by Eastern Maine Development District, within which two COGs are: Penobscot Valley and Washington County Councils of Governments.

Ed Barrett emphasized that it is critical to create the desired state-regional-local relationship by devolving certain state functions and funding to the regions. Ken Young added to this by offering that for the Community Development Block Grant Program there is no substantive regional role, whereas there is a substantive regional role with federal Economic Development Administration and MaineDOT programs. There needs to be a regional role in the municipal funding stream. Ed Barrett pointed out that the City of Bangor takes the transportation planning process much more seriously than the current COG planning process because of the funding implications. If over time there is to be effective influence at the regional level to support regional efficiencies and Quality of Place goals, the state needs to seriously offer up resources and responsibilities to the regions that will allow this to happen. Dick Barringer suggested that staff try to fashion a paragraph to reflect this need. Chuck Lawton suggested that a third recommendation be added: 1 c. which describes the need to devolve both authority and funding to the regions in order to ensure that regions matter in carrying out quality of place related initiatives.

John Rohman expressed concerns with recommendation 5, since he felt that taking some of our quality-based agencies and putting them under a “line” agency would result in their original core mission being replaced by an economic development mission. “Consolidate” to John means they will lose their identity. He wants to see these agencies preserve their function and integrity. Jay Espy expressed similar misgivings and concerns that they did not want to see successful programs and desirable qualities compromised by reorganization. Chuck Lawton recommended that state agencies need to address in their mission statement how to integrate Quality of Place. Does the structure we currently have allow us to move in the direction we all want to be going? Will we achieve what we want through a simple coordinating role? Richard Barringer agreed with Chuck that a clear statement supporting change was necessary in order to implement the Quality of Place recommendations. He suggested that, taken together, the Council’s recommendations presented a new approach to economic development for which state agencies are not well organized to embrace and implement. Ed Barrett agreed and offered examples from his own experience. Richard Barringer offered language that was favorably received, to the effect that state functions and programs would need to be “organized” to assure their alignment with quality of place goals and the regional asset-based strategies effort. It was suggested that this recommendation cite a few specific state programs as examples of uncoordinated activities that would be much more effective at sustaining and enhancing Quality of Place if they were coordinated.

### **Draft Funding Recommendations**

Council members discussed the pros and cons of including specific amounts in the funding recommendations. Another discussion focused on the desirability or need to recommend an alternative funding source for the LMF program. The Council favored the Fund for Local and Regional Efficiencies support for preparing asset based strategies. The Council also favored bonding to support implementing asset based strategies and downtown investments. Jay Espy suggested that an amount be specified for supporting the Land for Maine’s Future Program, or at least describe the demand or past spending for the Program. Regarding the lodging tax proposal, Eleanor Kinney pointed out the need for a very strong justification for its supporting asset based development. She also suggested and Council members agreed that examples of asset-based strategies that could be funded under the new program be included in the report. Council members expressed support for an increase in the lodging tax, with industry support, to fund implementation of regional asset-based strategies.

### **Priorities and Presentation of Recommendations**

Ken Young pointed out the first paragraph in the draft report that ties quality of place to prosperity, which is a key concept linking all the Council recommendations. Eleanor Kinney commented that the report needed to present recommendations towards the beginning rather than the end. On assigning priorities to the recommendations, the Council felt they were all important and that the three categories of recommendations—Downtowns, Regional Landscapes and Asset Based Strategies be presented in the report on an equal basis. Ed Barrett observed that each element can stand on its own, but they

are much stronger as a package. The Council discussed how best to proceed with finalizing the recommendations. They agreed to review the next round of revisions via e-mail before deciding whether it would be necessary to meet again to do further refinement. A tentative date for a meeting was later set for Tuesday, December 4 in Augusta, 1-5 p.m.

Richard Barringer thanked all for a hard-working and very productive meeting, and adjourned the gathering at 4:30p.m.

<sup>1</sup> Note: The minutes have been prepared by staff of the State Planning Office from notes taken throughout the day; they are intended to summarize a rich set of presentations and conversations, and do not necessarily represent accurately the thoughts and opinions of those cited here.