

# Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place

Minutes of the Tenth Meeting, December 4th, 2007<sup>1</sup>

State House Cabinet Room, Augusta

**Next Meeting of the Council: Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 – 5 p.m., PUC Board Room, 242 State Street, Augusta**

**Present:** Council members: John Rohman, Barbara Trafton, Ed Barrett, John Marsh, Richard Barringer (chair), Jeff Romano (for Jay Espy), Hank Schmelzer, Eleanor Kinney, Ken Young, Mary Kate Reny, and Martha Freeman. **Staff:** John Del Vecchio, Jody Harris, Sue Inches, Michael LeVert, Kate Reilly. **Not present:** David Whitney, Bruce Hazard, Chuck Lawton, Evan Richert, Tracy Michaud Stutzman, Hilary Basset, and Kevin Mattson. **Others:** Patrick Strauch, Maine Forest Products Council.

**Note:** This meeting was immediately preceded by a press briefing by the Governor and the Quality of Place Council. Governor Baldacci thanked the Council members for their efforts and commitment, and spoke enthusiastically about the Council's report and recommendations. "The ideas laid out in this document will enable us to review how to make economic development more effective and efficient, preserve the quality of life in Maine, and present opportunity to Maine people," the Governor said.

**Introductions & Greetings:** Richard Barringer opened the Council meeting at 12: 40 p.m. with introductions, reviewed the proposed agenda and meeting expectations, and led a discussion of proposed actions to move the Council's recommendations forward. These include short-term actions for the Council and staff to undertake between now and April 2008 when the Council's commission expires; and longer-term actions by state agencies for the Legislature in January 2009. A list of both these items and next steps is provided below.

**Council Comments on Report:** Mary Kate commented that the Council shouldn't lose track of our natural resource- based industries and the contribution to Q of P that they make. Hank asked about the final Council report and what it would include. Richard responded that, to the extent possible, the final report might include the findings and recommendations on items that were identified in the preliminary report as needing further work.

Barbara asked about the lodging tax and the permanent state Quality of Place Council, and whether the latter might be established by executive or legislative order. Richard responded that the Governor has been firm in saying that he will support an increase in

the lodging tax only with the support of the industry. As for the establishment of the state Council, our recommendations are to the Governor, who will make that decision.

Discussion continued about the work ahead for the Council with a particular focus on meeting with affected parties and finding champions for the recommendations. Sen. Dennis Damon and the Legislature's Prosperity Committee that he chairs, Karen Mills and the Governor's Council on Competitiveness and the Economy, and Legislative leadership including House Speaker Glenn Cummings and Senate President Beth Edmonds – all were mentioned as key individuals who might support the Council's Q of P recommendations.

### **Short-term Actions for Council and Staff:**

- Advocate for Council recommendations, including LD 262 (historic tax credit) and Resolve 46 (uniform building codes). Action steps: *Eleanor remarked that LD 262 is a key priority for the environmental coalition. The Resolve 46 group is reaching out to major stakeholder groups, Sue Inches is engaged.*
- Work on market incentives and new tools to encourage private landowners to continue providing public access to their lands. First step: *A meeting has been scheduled for Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM at John Marsh's home in West Gardiner to discuss how to provide incentives to landowners for allowing public access to and use of private lands. Other Council members are welcome to join the meeting.*
- Coordinate Q of P objectives and strategies with the newly-formed Governor's Council on Competitiveness and the Economy. First step: *Martha Freeman and Richard Barringer will meet with Karen Mills, who chairs the Council, to establish a date and agenda for this meeting.*
- Flesh out details and develop standards and performance outcomes for regional asset-based development strategies (see Recs. 10-14). Action steps: *There could be a Resolve or Executive Order on this, depending on further thought and discussion. Ken Young suggested and the Council agreed that Recommendations 10-14 in the Report all fit under this heading. Interested Council members and staff will be organized to work on this item.*
- Begin a conversation with higher education officials and others about (1) aligning workforce education programs with present and future Q of P job opportunities, and (2) creating capacity within the University System to teach, research, and extend principles and best practices of landscape and community design. Action steps: *Richard Barringer will contact Chancellor Pattenau and President Fitzsimmons to invite them to the Council's January meeting. SPO staff will take responsibility for developing the agenda for this meeting, with interested Council members and others. Commissioner Sue Gendron will be invited to this meeting, as well, to discuss workforce education.*

- Continue to gather stakeholder feedback on Q of P issues and develop final report to the Governor (due April 15, 2008), to be based on council learnings and deliberations between now and then.

Richard Barringer presented a proposal for sharing the Council's report with newspapers and organizations across the State. He suggested that he, along with staff and Board members, meet with various newspaper and other publications' (e.g. Maine Biz) editorial boards, GrowSmart Maine, MaineWatch, and AreaCode207 television show and other organizations, as well as the Legislature, to make sure that they have the Council's report and understand the approach and recommendations.

Eleanor Kinney pointed out that it would be a loss for organizations to not support the Quality of Place recommendations because they don't fit exactly that organization's preferred approach. With regard to GrowSmart, she believes that we have consensus at the big picture level and don't need to fight over details at this point. Ed Barrett pointed out that the asset-based development approach is exactly what the Brookings Report is asking for, that he would be disappointed if GrowSmart did not support the Council's recommendations. Ken Young remarked that Maine is at a critical juncture and suggested that the Council approach GrowSmart and that the two work together to press forward the Council's goals. Richard Barringer suggested that it is imperative that we work with GrowSmart as strategic partners in this effort.

Barbara Trafton asked what concerns might be out there to oppose the Council's recommendations. Richard Barringer indicated that some concerns have been expressed about raising the lodging tax; that the recommendation to study the CDBG Program has generated some concern; and that creating a state Council of Quality of Place may be seen as "creating a new level of bureaucracy" in Augusta.

Beyond these, there is widespread belief in the business community that the *only* way for Maine to compete successfully is as the low-cost producer of goods and service; the Q of P concept and recommendations go well beyond this belief, so we have a "selling" job to do. At the same time, Barringer remarked, the Governor sees the Council's recommendations as the just kind of policy change he wishes to see, to streamline government and make needed investment at this time in our future.

Barbara Trafton noted that there may be a number of bills submitted to the upcoming legislative session related to Quality of Place issues. Richard asked that staff identify and monitor related bills and inform Council members as appropriate.

Martha Freeman asked Ken Young if a meeting should be held with Regional Council representatives. Ken said that the next meeting of Directors will be on December 18<sup>th</sup>. Mary Kate Reny pointed out that "the most important conversations are the ones we haven't begun yet" with other parties with interest in the Council's findings and recommendations. Ed Barrett agreed, saying that the Council and staff needed to work with affected parties.

Richard Barringer suggested that staff might assemble a Power Point presentation that highlights the Council's findings and recommendations, to be made available to Council members and staff who may address various groups.

Richard Barringer invited Patrick Strauch (MFPC) to share any thoughts or comments he had on the Council's report. Patrick expressed concerns with the report's LURC-related recommendations, which he said appeared to advocate taking value from private landowners and was not balanced because the forest products industry had not been invited to present their views to the Council. Ed Barrett defended the Council's report and said that it was important that the Council recognize and acknowledge the threat to the unorganized territories posed by the dramatic changes in ownership of these lands.

Richard Barringer reminded the group that the Council does invite opposing views and values dialogue over confrontation when presenting alternative views. Patrick offered to submit information to the Council that shows no change in landowner policy and that the working forest is open and available to all Maine citizens.

Richard queried Council members as to the best time to meet next. The next meeting date was set for Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 to 5 PM, PUC Board Room, 242 State Street, in Augusta. Richard adjourned the meeting at 2:20 PM.

**Longer-term Actions by State Agencies** (for the Legislature, January, 2009) were affirmed by the Council, including:

- Identify continuing funding stream for LMF and new land protection tools (SPO)
- Design/develop a "Community Preservation" bond proposal (SPO)
- Review state land use laws for conformity with each other and with Q of P objectives (SPO with DEP, DOT, and LURC)
- Develop policy statement on community/downtown revitalization (SPO)
- Evaluate program and service delivery for downtown revitalization and develop program and funding options (SPO)
- Study current regional conservation initiatives and develop and publish guidelines based on best practices (SPO and DOC)
- Follow up on LURC recommendations (SPO and LURC) and trail recommendation (SPO, DOT, and DOC) recommendations

<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.