

Maine Climate Council Land Use Intersecting Issues Conversation #1

Meeting Summary

Thursday April 11, 2024

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Conversation Overview: Land use topics cut across multiple working groups of the Maine Climate Council. On April 11th, 2024, the Council convened the first of two meetings to explore possible recommendations. Co-chairs and working group members from each Maine Climate Council Working Group participated to discuss proactively managing growth while meeting the state's climate goals.

The state's climate goals intersect with land use in multiple ways as discussed at the first meeting, including: future priority development to meet housing needs and economic opportunities that manage for reduced future transportation emissions, and the siting of new energy infrastructure to meet state mandates and targets. Meeting these development goals while balancing other important climate goals including local food production, protecting the state's natural and working lands, carbon sequestration, and managing for climate resilience will require focus and effort.

Meeting Purpose: Develop draft recommendations/actions related to encouraging compact new development to avoid future potential transportation emissions, prevent conversion of natural and working lands, and reduce climate risks, in the context of Maine's housing crisis and opportunities for growth.

In attendance:

Co-chairs and Working Group Members: Director Hannah Pingree, Commissioner Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner Amanda Beal, Joyce Taylor, Jeff Crawford, Judy East, Kathleen Meil, Director Dan Burgess, Carl Wilson, Curt Brown, Nick Battista, Tim Doak, David Ludwig, Jes Waller, Andy Cutko, Stephanie Welch, Brian Ambrette, Jo D Saffair, Greg Payne, Jean Sideris, Craig Lapine, Jack Shapiro, Anne Fuchs, Sharon Klein, Eliza Donoghue, Jack Shapiro, Nathan Robbins, Josh Caldwell, Curtis Bohlen.

Staff: David Plumb, Sarah Curran, Maggie Kelly-Boyd, Molly Seigel, Ashley Krulik.

Introduction:

- Commissioner Melanie Loyzim provides an overview of intersecting issues related to land use.
- Hannah Pingree, Director of GOPIF, provides an overview of strategies in *Maine Won't Wait* that relate to land use and notes that this is an overview of areas where there is conflict, and communities need more tools to meet climate goals.

Working Group Co-Chair Panel:

- Natural and Working Lands Working Group: Co-chair Commissioner Amanda Beal discusses natural and working lands focus areas that overlap with land use, including increasing local food production, maintaining the state's forest base to sequester carbon, and conserving 30% of the state's natural and working lands.
- Energy Working Group: Co-chair Dan Burgess notes that Maine has a regional electrical grid and is heavily reliant on fossil fuel for electricity. To meet renewable energy targets, the state needs to proactively build generation in places where we want it.
- Community Resilience Working Group: Co-chair Judy East notes multiple land use topic connections with the community resilience working group discussions, including getting out of harm's way, how the housing crisis impacts people's ability to relocate, disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income communities who cannot afford to move out of

hazard areas or armor their communities, and the location of cooling/warming/clean-air community centers.

- Transportation Working Group: Co-chair Joyce Taylor notes key areas the transportation working group's discussion overlap with land use, including reducing vehicle miles traveled and barriers to using active transportation.
- Coastal and Marine Working Group: Co-chair Carl Wilson notes key land use related themes the coastal and marine working group is discussing, including resilience of public and private infrastructure, conserving waterfront access, and monitoring efforts that support adaptive management of resources.
- Buildings, Infrastructure and Housing Working Group: Co-chair Kathleen Meil noted that the buildings working group is focused primarily on materials and emissions of buildings and building codes. Given that municipalities are responsible for enforcing building codes, there is an opportunity to include land use education with building code education.

Presentation on Population Growth and Housing Demand in Maine:

- Greg Payne, Senior Advisor on Housing Policy at GOPIF, gave a presentation on housing demand in Maine. The recent State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, which measured both historic underproduction of housing and future housing need, indicated that Maine needs approximately 76,400 – 84,300 homes to meet historic underproduction and future housing need by 2030. The report specifies this total includes approximately 38,500 homes to remedy historic underproduction, and an additional 37,900 to 45,800 homes to meet expected population growth and household change by 2030. Maine can meet this goal both through the production of new homes and reinvestment in existing homes that are vacant or unavailable due to disrepair or foreclosure.
- The presentation slides are available as a resource on the MCC Calendar page.
- The Housing Production Needs Study is available on GOPIF's website:
<https://www.maine.gov/future/housing>

Small Group Breakout Discussions, Plenary Discussion:

- Hannah Pingree provided an outline of growth seen in Maine in recent years and notes that the questions we are discussing include: "In the context of our housing crisis and population growth, how could we incentivize new dense develop in areas that are out of harm's way and near people's work and services? How could we facilitate the siting of needed energy infrastructure and achieve our climate goals, including our goals around farms and forests?"
- The group reconvened to share key discussion points from breakout groups:
 - The balance of incentives and requirements is important in the context of impacting land use through policy. There is a need to align land use policy priorities with state programs.
 - Communication on land use policy is important, such as proactive messaging about the benefits of housing. Communication and data needs to meet renewable energy goals is also important.
 - Technical assistance to municipalities and communities could streamline implementation of land use policies that incentivize development where it is needed/wanted. An important step to providing this technical assistance to communities will be planning for agency coordination to maximize state resources and promote smart growth and development in high-use corridors (for example, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors near higher-density downtowns, village centers or crossroads through infilling

and redevelopment of underutilized lands). GOPIF will be convening a working group to further this effort, as outlined in LD 1673.¹

- Tax policy impacts land use; for example it can incentivize growth outside of service centers and increase sprawl, instead of encouraging compact development close to services where active transportation is an option.
- Better tools may be needed to enforce existing land use policy such as the growth management law.
- Municipal level planning and permitting play an important role and can be a hinderance or benefit in land use policy. For example, parking requirements and setback standards. Infill development/using empty space/redeveloping existing buildings can also promote dense development.

Next Meeting:

- June 10th, 2024, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM. View meeting details here: <https://www.maine.gov/future/meetings/maine-climate-council-land-use-intersecting-issues-conversation-2>

¹ [LD 1673, HP 1071, Text and Status, 131st Legislature, Second Regular Session \(mainelegislature.org\)](#)