



Development Ready Advisory Committee (DRAC)

5/27/26

Meeting 1: Virtual Meeting Policy

Vote to approve a virtual meeting policy, allowing future Development Ready Advisory Committee (DRAC) members to have an online option. Note, all meetings will still have an in-person location for participants and members of the public to join. Meeting locations and times will be posted on the [MOCA DRAC web page](#).

Quorum Reached (11 members present in person)

- There was a proposal to pass a policy that allows for both in person and virtual meetings.
 - o Motion to approve, seconded
 - o No concerns
- Vote
 - o All in favor, unanimous of those present (11)
 - o Virtual meeting policy passed

5/27/26

Meeting 2: Welcome, Agenda Overview

Volunteer Leadership Opportunities

- DRAC is seeking a co-chair and Secretary to support Committee efforts
- Co-chair will help to support Chair, set agendas, guide meetings and activities, and collaborate on decision-making
- Secretary will work with DRAC clerk to record meeting notes and key decisions, maintain communication records, and help support working group activities
 - o Members are instructed to reach out to Marina if interested
- Kevin is interested in serving as co-chair. Will vote on appointments at next meeting.

Terms of Reference

- Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) staff drafted and ready for Committee review.
- Includes components on statutory history, membership, duties, responsibilities, public participation, etc.
- All Committee members asked to review and provide feedback.
- Committee discussed shared group norms
- Question: Is there an opportunity for positive / negative opinions on final decisions?
 - o The committee will strive for consensus

- Likely would not commit to a vote that people are not happy with

Overview of proposed working groups

- DRAC Structure will include multiple working groups. The full Committee is responsible for strategic direction, overall leadership, and serves as primary decision-making body.
- Only DRAC members are able to vote on Committee matters.
- Working groups are tasked with more topic-specific priorities and will engage subject matter experts to advance specific DRAC initiatives.
- Working Groups will report to DRAC on progress, priorities, outcomes.

CRET

- Will function as an external working group of DRAC, led by Maine Development Foundation (MDF, Rosie Vanadestine as lead point of contact)
- Focused on providing subject matter expertise on the design and implementation of the Thriving Communities Model.
- Initial focus on 4 rural communities where leadership/capacity is a challenge. Will expand to other communities once model is tested/refined.
- Council on Rural Economic Transformation (CRET) committee will focus on design of community selection process, engage with data consultant, and provide insights as project develops.

Working Group Collaborative Session Overview

- Working groups were put together based on early input (survey, meeting 1 conversations, scoping discussions with relevant partners).
- Proposed Groups:
 - Development Readiness Toolkit
 - Incentives Alignment and Finance
 - Policy and Regulatory Problem-Solving
 - CRET (External)
- Want to adjust as needed, but be realistic on what can be accomplished in year 1

DRAC Discussion of working groups

- Workforce shows up in the working groups, but we haven't explicitly said so. Important to come back to and think about how this can be embedded in all WGs as a priority.
- Dept. Of Labor is not on DRAC, can they be on a working group?
- Construction – note that some projects don't have some contractors because the application (CDBG example) seems too complicated to apply for, track labor, etc.
- How do these working groups overlap with other groups and initiatives?
 - Maine Climate Council and NOAA Resilience grant – Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) is present on DRAC and helping to ensure cross-pollination and avoid duplication.

- CRET – MDF will ensure not duplicating efforts (Marina sitting in to think about DRAC connectivity).
 - Point of working groups is to bring people into specific efforts that might be working on similar topics, ensure not duplicating efforts (even entities that don't have a seat on the Committee) .
- DOT interested in readiness toolkit and incentives alignment. Dept of Transportation wants to be transparent on funding approach. Can take feedback.
- DOT is putting together draft readiness guidance to help with planning phase, design phase, construction phase, etc.

Group 3: Policy & regulatory problem solving (ad-hoc)

- Address some “small scale” issues that people are eager to have addressed, for example definition of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADUs) across statutes is not consistent and causes confusion.
- This working group will have some quick wins, meaningful but small items that need attention to alignment of language, initiatives, etc.
- Ad hoc in the title is confusing. The issues are ad-hoc but the working group will be continual.
- Note regulations/laws are 50+ years old, administering funding
- Ad-hoc committee = can serve as bike rack or parking lot committee
- Could help with efficiency of other committees
- Groups 1, 2, 4: that is DRAC's mission. Most items will fit into these three items.
- Concern ad-hoc list of items is too large.
 - Gabe: electric heating in buildings that have received maine housing subsidy.
 - Initial scope of the working group is to refine a process for addressing these regulatory problem-solving issues. Will not be able to take on all issues.
 - MOCA staff has compiled initial list of ideas based on community input.

Overall Working Group Feedback:

- Consider including additional staff in working groups to better represent diverse organizations and perspectives.
- Note DRAC concern about understanding funding rules and approaches (e.g., village programs, pedestrian-friendly initiatives), with current DOT funding pathways limiting future action.
- Suggest developing draft “readiness guidance” for municipalities covering design, planning, and construction.
- Clarify that the “ad hoc” nature refers to issues being addressed, not necessarily the group structure itself.
- Highlight challenges of small-scale governance complexity leading to ambiguity in group scope and definitions (e.g., ADUs emerging from Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) discussions).
- Raise question of whether certain efforts are intended as “quick wins,” with clarification that issue types—not the group—are ad hoc.

- Reference past policy confusion (e.g., ADU/Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code language issues not fully resolved in legislation, creating implementation challenges).
- Note concern about overlapping expertise across committees and avoiding duplication of effort.
- Suggest ad hoc groups support rather than replicate work of other committees.
- Identify overlapping themes: funding navigation, training needs, and implementation complexity across working groups.
- Point out inconsistency in addressing nuisance-related issues across contexts.
- Recommend synthesizing a list of Maine best practices and developing a method to prioritize them (diagnose and delegate approach). There are lots of groups that have done similar work, and each working group can learn from best practices, but need to have a Maine-specific context.
- Emphasize building capacity for implementation, including alignment with Community Development Block Grants and development readiness efforts.
- Highlight need to define the “implementation altitude” (level of detail and action) for initiatives in the working groups.
- Flag broader systems gap between housing plans and infrastructure capacity, noting workforce limitations for housing production

Suggestions on specific Working Group Improvements

- In group 1; workforce availability should be considered.
- Define clearly committee structure, working groups include committee members but also meet more frequently with specific goals, share back to committee + supportive of priorities.
- Bring in Dept. Of Labor to dev ready discussions to think about capacity and workforce concerns that are emerging.
 - o Ex: Pipeline of people into relevant programs, people ready for trades needed to expand and improve development.
- Towns overlapping with regulation for the state — support volunteers on committees to understand their role under legislature framework.

Any key advice points to frame the documents?

- Change “incentives” to include “investments” as well
- Note that some municipalities face capacity constraints that limit their ability to engage fully (e.g., lack of staff, limited or no website, inactive boards).
- Recognize that in some small communities, basic communication infrastructure is limited, including barriers to virtual participation.
- Suggest implementation approaches that expand access, such as enabling or supporting virtual town meetings.

- Recommend toolkits that clearly outline communication channels and ways for developers and residents to participate.
- Include clear listings of existing programs and support resources available to municipalities.
- Raise the challenge of ensuring low-capacity municipalities are aware of and can engage with available resources.
- Emphasize the need for basic capacity-building support as part of implementation
- Suggest focusing efforts on communities that are interested in development and have capacity or intent to pursue it.
- Frame resources as optional and tiered, allowing communities to engage at different levels based on need and ability.
- Stress the importance of identifying and building on existing work to avoid duplication across Maine and other jurisdictions.

Public Comment

Comment #1

- Member of the public stressed the importance of a collaborative, team-based approach between state and towns in DRACs efforts.
- Emphasized ensuring all participants have a voice in the process.
- Noted DEP covers large regions with limited staff; towns rely on local staff with limited capacity.
- Suggested framing state involvement as optional assistance (“How can we help you?”)
- Raised concern that towns lack capacity to track rules and regulations, which can feel opaque.
- Highlighted the importance of home rule in Maine and concerns about what is coming out of Augusta.
- DRAC member question: What was most concerning in the language from this meeting?
 - o Generally, comments about what works for the state. The Committee needs to be aware that different aspects and approaches work across different towns
 - o Language and word choices were concerning
 - o Wording sounds like here is what “we as the state are doing” vs the greater “we” as teamwork or collaborative effort.
- Expressed appreciation for DEP requiring basic shoreland zoning training for boards.

Wrap Up

- Next quarterly meeting will be in September (poll to come)
- The Committee is interested in a December meeting (poll to come)

- Ideally would schedule working groups for the summer to start activities and report out to DRAC in Sept.
- Next steps: MOCA team to refine working group notes and send a draft proposal for committee review and input.

DRAC Member next steps: Review/comment on: Meeting notes, Terms of Reference, proposal working group ideas, and respond to scheduling poll for Sept. and Dec.

Meeting adjourned.

In-Person Attendees:

Samantha Horn

Deborah Johnson

Joyce Taylor

Bethany Atkins

Melanie Loyzim

Kevin Sutherland

Kristina Egan

Gabe Gauvin

Erik Jorgensen

Mike Johnson

Mathew Eddy

Marina Tomer

Hannah Silverfine

Virtual Attendees:

Vicky Stoneman

James Fisher

Joel Greenwood

Heather Raisanen

Olivia Painchaud

Maggie Kelly-Boyd

Luke Dyer

Rosie Vanadestine

Joan Walton

Sylvie Piquet

Sabrina Jandreau

Judith East

Tagwongo Obomsawin

Jeremy Gabrielson

Antonella Salmeron

Laura Mitchell

Robyn Wardell

Andrea Steward

Sienna Zuco

Holly Werner