



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

May 7, 2010

State law assigns four core duties to the State Planning Office that include: 1) conducting continuing economic analysis, including economic forecasting, 2) coordinating the development of the State's economy and energy resources with the conservation of its natural resources; 3) providing technical assistance to towns and regions; and 4) providing technical assistance to the Governor and Legislature by undertaking special studies and plans and preparing policy alternatives.

POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Quality of Place Council to pilot regional investment strategies. At its meeting on Wednesday, the Maine Quality of Place Council discussed ideas for piloting regional quality of place investment strategies. The Council will identify two to three pilot projects to serve test-pilots for the regional, asset-based approach to quality of place laid out in PL 2009, chapter 483. SPO and DECD staff would help pilot areas with planning, bringing economic development resources into the QOP model, connecting with multiple partners, showcasing local efforts, and possibly accessing grant funds. Pilot areas would help the council learn what works and help inform the development of standards and guidelines for implementing regional quality of place investment strategies statewide. **CONTACT:** Sue Inches at 287-2989 or sue.inches@maine.gov

ECONOMICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Economics and Demographics Newsletter Released. In this issue (<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs024/1102072836875/archive/1103341901353.html>) : LeVert and Lawton talk Tourism, SPO releases population projections to 2028, February taxable retail sales report, and an update on the 2010 Census. Visit our homepage at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/index.htm> to read the current issue and sign up to automatically receive our newsletter by email. **CONTACT:** Joel Johnson at 287-1461 or joel.d.johnson@maine.gov.

February Taxable Retail Sales. Total taxable retail sales in February 2010 were up 0.2% from February 2009, signaling the first year over year increase in total taxable sales since July 2008. Food store sales were 1% lower in February 2010 than in February of 2009, and auto/transportation sales were down 9.5%. All other store categories indicated an increase in year over year sales raising personal consumption expenditures 0.3%. Sales for the last three months, December through February, remained 1.5% lower than the same time period a year ago. Detailed reports on Maine retail sales are available here :

<http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/economic/retailsales.htm> .

	% Change Feb 2009 to Feb 2010	% change last 3 months / 3 months year ago
Building Supply	4.6%	-4.0%
Food Store	-1.0%	-1.7%
General Merchandise	4.8%	1.3%
Other Retail	6.7%	-2.1%
Restaurant	2.6%	2.4%
Lodging	0.1%	-4.4%
Auto Transportation	-9.5%	-1.7%
Total	0.2%	-1.5%
Business Operating	-0.8%	-5.3%
Personal Consumption	0.3%	-0.9%

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COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Educational Reuse Centers meet. The gathering took place at the Auburn SHARECenter on Wednesday. In attendance were: Diane Doe of the SHARECenter; Mary Ryan of Everybody's Reuse Depot at UMF; Ruth Libby from Ruth's Reusable Resources in Portland; and Suzanne Duplissis and Bruce White from the State Planning Office, Waste Management & Recycling Program. Topics discussed ranged from 'die cut' machines and various projects to expanding services to satellite locations throughout the State. There is an ample supply of materials and products available for establishing other sites; however identifying possible locations has been difficult. In Maine educational reuse centers have been a proven source of materials, a resource for educators, and are widely appreciated. **CONTACT:** Bruce White at (207) 287-8053 or bruce.white@maine.gov .

Planning and Land Use Program

Collaboration Nets Consistency Findings and Cost Savings for Downeast Towns. The creative partnership of two Washington County neighbors was rewarded on May 5th when the Land Use Team found proposed comprehensive plans from Perry and Pembroke to be consistent with the Growth Management Act. The two communities have a history of cooperation in various aspects of local government, but planning was a new challenge. In order to develop plans together, the comprehensive plan committee from each town met with its counterpart in joint session throughout the process. Together, through a single contract, they directed the work of their planning consultant, the Washington County Council of Governments. Through this arrangement, WCCOG planners were able to produce maps and entire chapters of text that are common to both plans. Based on this example, the Land Use Team estimates that, by working with another community instead of working alone, a town may reduce the cost of professional fees for its comprehensive plan by as much as 30%. **CONTACT: Phil Carey at phil.carey@maine.gov. or 287-3860.**

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

Heating Oil Prices on the Rise. The Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security (OEIS) conducted its seasonal oil survey and found that the current statewide average cash price for No. 2 heating oil to be at \$2.76 per gallon, up two cents from last week. Within the OEIS sample, the lowest actual heating oil price of \$2.47 per gallon was found in the Western region. The highest price of \$3.25 per gallon was found in the Eastern region. The statewide kerosene price average is \$3.11 per gallon at this time. The statewide average for propane based on a use of 600 gallons a year is \$2.66 per gallon. At the time of this release the price of WTI crude oil, major driver of refined product prices, including heating oil was \$85.98. **CONTACT: Jeffrey Marks at 287-8927 or Jeffrey.marks@maine.gov**