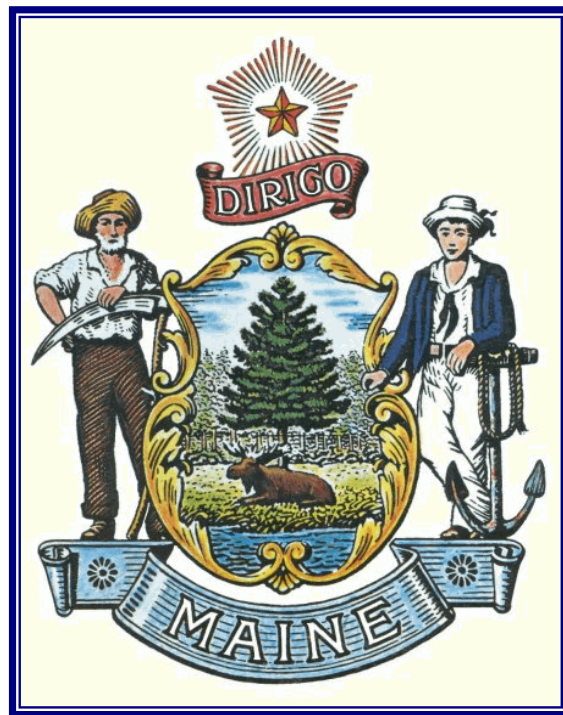


The Maine Intergovernmental Advisory Commission's



BLUEPRINT FOR GOVERNMENT
DECEMBER, 2006

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, during the Second Session of the 121st Legislature, a select committee was formed to discuss issues dealing with intergovernmental cooperation in Maine. Out of the Joint Select Committee on Regionalization and Community Cooperation came a bill that created the Maine Intergovernmental Advisory Commission.

This legislation, enacted in Title 30-A, Part 2, Chapter 114, states that the Commission “shall work on ways to improve communication, cooperation and efficiencies within all three branches of government and provide state assistance to encourage regionalization and cost-effective service delivery.”

Specific duties charged to the Commission in the above mentioned chapter are as follows:

1. Study ways to reduce duplication and improve efficiency among all three branches of State Government as well as within each branch.
2. Promote communication, cooperation and efficient delivery of services, including collecting data on current efforts to regionalize service delivery statewide.
3. Design and implement processes by which the State may offer guidance, technical support and incentives to encourage regionalization and efficiency of service delivery to all three branches of government.
4. Work with local and regional entities to design and implement pilot programs that result in cost savings or improved services through regionalization or other efficiency efforts.

5. Identify best management practices and make this information available to the public, including, but not limited to, best management practices that facilitate property tax rate reduction pursuant to the increasing state share of the total cost of essential programs and services under Title 20-A, chapter 606-B.
6. Prepare legislation for submission to the Legislature to implement any recommendations of the Commission on or before December 1st annually.
7. Report to the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government annually in January on the activities and effectiveness of the commission and recommend changes to the Commission's organizational structure.

In December, 2004, Governor John E. Baldacci and the presiding officers of the 121st Legislature completed the first appointments made to the Commission. The Commission began its work in January, 2005.

From January to August of 2005, the Commission heard from experts and state leaders on tax policy, education and government structure. Citizen input has also been gathered regarding the future of Maine government.

In September, 2005, a two day retreat was organized with the purpose of taking the information we had obtained, reviewing the positives and negatives of current service delivery in Maine, and stating our individual priorities, with the purpose of compiling a "blueprint" for our state.

Following this retreat, we have had many formal and informal interactions with advocacy groups, policy makers, and citizens. After compiling the input and views

we have received, and focusing the Commission's thoughts into a unified plan, we now present to you the compilation of our work; our Blueprint for Government.

It should be noted that unlike numerous study groups and task forces that are created on a temporary basis by state government, the Commission is a permanent entity. With that understanding, this proposal is not conclusive project, but a starting point for the continuous work that we intend to undertake.

In the coming years, the Commission intends to explore a diversity of policy areas, including education, land-use planning, utilities, quasi-government entities, economic development, transportation, and mandates that may be outdated or unfunded. Addendums to this inaugural Blueprint will come forth from the Commission in the future.

By initiating these three initial recommendations, it is our hope that we can move our state forward and fulfill our charge. We hold in highest regard the principle that through the institution of a high quality, productive government, we can improve the lives of our fellow Maine citizens.

Recommendation #1

Begin speaking the “same language” statewide through data and technology standardization

Purpose

As the Commission has conducted its work over the last two years, a wealth of data and information has been gathered for our decision making process. While a major part of our statutory charge has been “to encourage regionalization and cost-effective service delivery” statewide, it has been difficult to make statistically based policy decisions because of the lack of standardized data.

Very often, in comparing two municipal budgets side by side, the information was confusing or incomplete. Town “A” may have a line-item in their budget titled “human resources” for employee health benefits, whereas town “B” may title their line-item “employee benefits” with similar purpose. It is challenging to find fiscal efficiencies through this data based on this “apples to oranges” comparison approach.

Concerning technology, we continue to deal with the consolidation of public service answering points (PSAPs) and the reorganization of our public safety communication methods. As this progression occurs, we must be aware of the need for standardized apparatus and communication methods to insure the safety and security of law enforcement, fire and rescue personnel, and our citizens in need.

This issue exists at all levels of government and we believe must be dealt with in a focused, deliberate manner in the immediate future.

Our Plan for Action

- The Commission acted by proposing LD 1713, “Resolve, To Direct the Department of Audit To Establish a Working Group To Develop a Model Chart of Accounts for All Levels of Government” to the Second Regular Session of the 122nd Legislature. This bill was enacted into law and instructed the Maine Department of Audit to work with state, local and regional entities to develop standardized data reporting systems. The Working Group has created a standard chart of accounts, and will provide legislation in January, 2007 to the 123rd Legislature.
- The Commission supports continued efforts to consolidate PSAPs throughout the state, as directed through legislative mandate over the last several years. The consolidation of dispatch centers should also be considered by municipalities, but should be a decision made in finality by local government and its citizens.
- Discussions should continue concerning compatibility of communications and other systems of technology used by government units. Consistency, efficiency, compatibility and improved quality of service delivery should all be principles considered as changes are made at the state, county and local levels of government.

Recommendation #2

Maintain financial incentives and modernize Maine's tax base to support a stronger, efficient government structure

Purpose

One of the biggest policy issues on the minds of Maine citizens for several years has been the need for tax relief and reform. The Commission is extremely aware of this need. We have felt that in order to make Maine government stronger and more competitive, our approach at this issue must be in three parts. Looking beyond the distinct task of changing our tax codes, we see those three parts as follows:

- We must reform our tax code, creating tax relief for citizens in need, while making our system of revenue more modern and fair for all Mainers.
- We must restructure our government at the state, county and local levels to make it more fiscally efficient while continuing to provide a high quality of services that Mainers need and deserve.
- We must provide increased financial resources to local and county government so that they can carry out the responsibilities, such as public education and jails, which the state has mandated they provide and maintain.

Recommendation #2 fulfills the tax reform and financial incentive portions of these three parts. Our Plan for Action with this recommendation is arguably the core component of our Blueprint for Government.

Our Plan for Action

- The Commission has long supported, and continues to support grant funding through the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services. This fund was established as part of the School Finance Act of 2003, the citizens' initiative known as Question 1A, and Public Law 2005, c. 2, commonly referred to as LD 1. The purpose of this fund is to provide grants to municipalities and other regional government entities to help implement cooperative services as well as to conduct feasibility studies to develop collaborative solutions. These financial incentives are important for encouraging partnerships amongst government units, providing necessary funding for these positive endeavors.

- The sales tax should be broadened, eliminating ten exemptions currently in statute. The exemptions, as recommended for elimination by Speaker Michael V. Saxl's Advisory Committee on Tax Reform to the First Regular Session of the 121st Legislature, would create approximately \$90 million in new revenue per biennium. The exemptions are as follows:
 - Publications sold on short intervals,
 - Sales to institutions conducting medical research or scientific study in biology,
 - Camp rentals,
 - Sales through coin operated vending machines,
 - Meals and lodging provided to employees,
 - Certain aircraft parts,
 - Personal services,

- Amusements and recreational services,
 - Consumer purchases of transportation services, except publicly owned transportation services,
 - Consumer interstate calls.
-
- New revenue through the broadening of the sales tax shall be used for county jail funding, local school financing, and for the creation of the Regional Capital Improvement Fund.
 - Approximately \$45 million (50% of new revenue) will be dedicated towards county jail funding. County jail operations statewide cost an estimated \$64 million annually. 90% of this allocation shall be used towards reducing property tax burden.
 - An estimated \$36 million (40% of new revenue) will be used for K-12 local education. This amount should be utilized to assist the Legislature in its charge to finance 55% of education, as mandated by the School Finance Act of 2003. 90% of this allocation shall be used towards reducing property tax burden.
 - \$9 million (10% of new revenue) will be used to create and maintain the Regional Capital Improvement Fund. This fund shall be allocated to partnering local governments and regional governments and entities through a competitive grant process. It shall be administered in similar fashion and under the same governance as the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services. The money may only be used for capital construction, renovation and planning for such projects.

Recommendation #3

Modernize Maine's primary form of regional government, by improving democratic practices and professional standards

Purpose

County government has existed in Maine since 1636, with the establishment of York County. Even with county roots existing before our statehood in 1820, county government in our state and in New England has been historically underused and ignored as a primary branch for delivering government services. Most predominant services, ranging from public safety and public works to recreation and general assistance, are currently provided by municipal government.

It has been the Commission's opinion throughout its existence that efficiency and improved fiscal responsibility could be achieved by utilizing county government more through new partnerships and a modernized structure. Our conversations and questions regarding structure have centered on what are and what should the role and responsibilities of county commissioners and officers be, and whether or not the current structure of county commissioner boards in Maine's sixteen counties are adequate and appropriate to represent the needs of their respective constituents.

In keeping with our core principle mentioned in Recommendation #2 of restructuring our government to make it more fiscally efficient while continuing to

provide a high quality of services, we have recommended major changes to Maine's primary form of regional government.

Our Plan for Action

- Each county shall have five to seven county commissioners. A referendum question shall be posed on the November, 2007 election ballot in each of Maine's sixteen counties, asking the questions "Do you favor increasing the number of county commissioners to seven?" If the question passes, seven commissioners shall be established following the November, 2008 election. All counties failing to pass this measure shall increase or maintain five commissioners along the same timeline. This change will improve democratic representation and increase communication between county government and its citizens.
- Budget committees in counties that have final budget authority at present time shall become advisory, effective October 2007. This will strengthen the role of county commissioners and their responsibility to administer the county, while taking into account increased democratic representation on the board.
- A working group shall be established to examine the role and responsibilities of county officers. Training, professional standards and the respective processes for selection of each office shall be examined by the group. Recommendations for changes shall be submitted for legislative consideration in the Second Regular Session of the 123rd Legislature.

IAC members:

Christine Savage, Co-Chair;
State Senator
504 Barrett Hill Road
Union, ME 04862

Christopher R. Barstow, Co-Chair,
State Representative
9 Lawn Ave
Gorham, ME 04038

Anne Beebe-Center
Commissioner, Knox County
62 Union Street
Rockland, ME 04841

Donnell Carroll
496 Ocean Street
So. Portland, ME 04106

Jonathan Duke
Selectman, Town of Rockport
P.O. Box 10
Rockport, ME 04856

Jody Harris
State Planning Office
38 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Jim McMahon
County Manager, Lincoln County
32 High Street, P.O. Box 249
Wiscasset, ME 04578

Barry Tibbetts
Town Manager, Town of Kennebunk
1 Summer Street
Kennebunk, ME 04043

Neal Allen
Executive Director, GPCOG
68 Marginal Way, 4th floor
Portland, ME 04101

Todd Brackett
Sheriff, Lincoln County
32 High Street, PO Box 249
Wiscasset, ME 04578

Jonathan Daniels
Executive Director, EMDC
One Cumberland Place, Suite 300
Bangor, ME 04401

Paul Frinsko
Attorney, Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer & Nelson
100 Middle Street, PO Box 9729
Portland, ME 04104

Robert Hasson
Superintendent, SAD #51
PO Box 6A
Cumberland Ct, ME 04021

Lucy Richard
Chairwoman, SAD #1
79 Blake Street, Suite #1 PO Box 1118
Presque Isle, ME 04769

Dan Tremble
Councilor, City of Bangor
73 Harlow Street
Bangor, ME 044401

Michael Cantara
Commissioner, Dept. of Public Safety
104 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Robert Devlin
County Manager, Kennebec County
125 State Street
Augusta, ME 04330

Gerry Gay
Vice Pres., Professional Firefighters of ME
58 Chick Road
Sanford, ME 04073

Denise Lord
Department of Corrections
111 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333