

Maine Quality of Place Council

Minutes of the Second Meeting, September 17, 2008
Taxation Committee Hearing Room, Augusta

Note: Next Meeting of the Council: Wednesday, October 15, 2008, 1:00pm to 5:00pm, Taxation Committee Hearing Room, Room 127, State House, Augusta. Additional meeting tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 20, 2008, 9:00am to 12:00pm

Present: Council Members: Richard Barringer (chair), Edward Barrett, Kat Fuller for David Cole, Martha Freeman, Eleanor Kinney, Alan Stearns for Patrick McGowan, Donna McNeil, Matthew Polstein, Jennifer DeChant for John Richardson, Robert Thompson, Robin Zinchuck. Council Staff: Kate Reilly, Linda LaPlante, Sue Inches and Tim Glidden. Others Attending: Bruce Kidman, Amanda Rector, Ruta Dzenis, Brett Richardson, Andy Despres, William King, Jr., Jayne Palmer, Jeff Romano, Kristen Cady, Steve Walker, Sarah Demers, Andrea Perry

Introductions & Greetings: Richard Barringer, Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00am with the introduction of council members, staff, SPO summer interns, and guests. He reviewed the agenda and expectations for the meeting.

Regional Landscape Conservation in Maine, Status Report & Interim Summary: Tim Glidden, Land for Maine's Future Director, and Brett Richardson, summer intern at SPO, spoke on this report written by Brett. Brett explained the definition, the findings, best practices, and recommendations for regional landscape conservation. The report is in draft form, waiting for feed-back from other departments.

The preliminary recommendations include:

1. The State of Maine should allocate additional funding targeted for regional landscape conservation and investment initiatives;
2. The State of Maine offer technical assistance and meeting facilitation for regional conservation partnerships;
3. The State of Maine and Quality of Place Councils should make concerted planning efforts and target strategic investments to establish corridors and enhance connectivity within landscape-scale networks of conservation lands; and
4. The State of Maine should sustain the Beginning with Habitat program to disseminate natural resource data to town governments and conservation organizations in a user-friendly format; and in collaboration with federal, non-governmental and local partners, should seek to expand the scope of available data to include prime agricultural soils, productive timber lands, and outdoor recreational, scenic and land-based cultural assets.

Council discussion: Was there something that we should focus on?

A: State has been quite successful in land conservation, but not successful in directing the location of new development toward designated growth areas. There needs to more effort to influence the location and integrity of Maine's built environment.

Align State’s Basic Land Use Statutes with Quality of Place: Sue Inches reported that in order to fulfill this recommendation, SPO, DEP and DOT would have to work together. The site law has not been updated in a long time and we hope to update it soon; there is nothing about location in the law. The Growth Management Act and rules should state where projects should be located. One possible idea/recommendation is to make commercial projects subject to the same site location laws as state agencies.

- Most state land-use laws have been recently updated
- Transportation and planning rules are coordinated, traffic permitting fees now being reviewed
- Site Law may offer an opportunity to support Quality of Place principles

SPO is developing a survey/questionnaire to help state agencies review their missions and identify how they may strengthen and support efforts to build upon Maine’s Quality of Place assets.

Identify gaps in State Downtown Redevelopment Programs: Ali Worster, summer intern for SPO, did eight case studies of towns including four Main Street Maine communities and four that were not. Key findings include:

1. Only two state programs focus on downtown revitalization
2. Strong local leadership and public-private collaboration are the key ingredients for successful downtown revitalization efforts
3. In order to revitalize Maine downtowns, both technical assistance and public infrastructure funding is needed
4. If more towns are to be served or new services added to the Maine Street program, new funding will be needed
5. There is an unmet need for technical assistance to help smaller towns
6. An architect and a grant writer would make an enormous difference to towns seeking to revitalize their downtowns
7. The Quality of Place Council should make sure funding for downtowns is included if they make a funding proposal
8. A strong advocacy effort to support downtown is needed

Successful towns had strong local leadership, collaboration across groups, and supportive municipal government. State technical assistance helps towns pull together a downtown effort that works. Need to make the towns attractive, and to provide sidewalks, walking trails, and pocket parks. Main Street Maine is part of a national program with a proven record of success but it is currently available to just nine towns; they need more funding.

Suggestions from Council:

- Downtown coalition
- Can cooperative extension help?
- Local architects, designers, engineers volunteer – pro-bono

- Grants are available – communities could share successful grants

A Statewide System of Multi-use Trails: Andy Despres, an intern at SPO, presented a draft report on developing a statewide system of multi-use trails. His preliminary findings include:

1. Work is well underway towards a statewide system of trails
2. In order to develop and plan a statewide trail system, a comprehensive inventory and a map of trails is needed
3. State funding for trail building and amenities comes from the Department of Conservation for recreational trails, and the Department of Transportation for local market trails
4. Funding for trail building and amenities does not meet the current demand
5. Amenities are an important factor in attracting trail users, and more could be done to improve amenities on or adjacent to Maine trails
6. Mixing motorized and non-motorized uses on the same trails is problematic
7. Non-motorized trails could benefit from more coordination among trail organizers and user groups

There are two categories of trails, local and longer. In order to organize these trails, the State will need to do an inventory and mapping of existing trails. Some funding sources are the Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Lands, for longer trails, the Department of Transportation for local trails and other public sources. But, this funding is not enough. Amenities are important, water, porta-potties, access at different locations, signage, law enforcement, and maintenance of trails should be part of the trail plan.

Suggestions from Council:

- Alan Stearns, Deputy Director of Parks and Lands, feels that work on item 6 above is well under way but not done because we don't have the resources.
- Economic promise – generate activity to promote economic activity
- Create opportunities to exploit amenities in a good way/help identify amenities
- Reword first finding to “recently begun”
- #2 doesn't go far enough, need handbook
- Funding from DOT has to have transportation benefits
- Create a marketing piece to add museum trails, cultural trails, historical places trails, etc.
- Need more focus on back country trails
- Include water trails
- Include current management practices
- Foster good relationships with landowners
- Look for volunteers to maintain trails

Implementing a Quality of Place Investment Strategy in Maine – A Guide for Regional Quality of Place Councils and COG/EDDs: Kate Reilly, State Economist, presented a draft guide for the six regional councils of government designated as federal Economic Development Districts. The goal is to further explain what roles, responsibilities, and authority the COG/EDDs

and regional Quality of Place Councils would have in the implementation of a statewide Quality of Place investment strategy.

COG/EDD Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Convene a Regional Quality of Place Council
2. Staff Regional Quality of Place Councils
3. Administer state grants to plan and implement Regional Quality of Place Investment Strategies
4. Seek additional funding from non-state sources
5. Provide technical assistance to regional groups
6. Collaborate with neighboring COG/EDDs on projects that cross regional boundaries

Regional Quality of Place Council Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Develop a Regional Investment Strategy
 - a. Map Regional Assets
 - b. Identify Market Opportunities
 - c. Evaluate Assets and Opportunities
 - d. Connect Assets to Opportunities
 - e. Establish Priorities
 - f. Develop Performance Measures
2. Recommend Projects for State Funding

Comments from Council:

- Examine how existing systems work and try to integrate current processes
- Appointments to the regional councils will be critical, as will how funds are administered
- Will the state council issue guidance/help with decision making, resources, and priorities?
- When making infrastructure investments, don't forget the mega-region outside of Maine and the US
- Regulatory arena should be considered – some regulations determine how the State can allocate money from certain sources.
- Would the regional Quality of Place investment strategies become a blueprint for other state grants?
- Align existing streams of funding with new funding
- This level of integration would need to be done through successive administrations
- This council's first contribution will be the legislation we have been asked to prepare and funding recommendations
- Sub-regional priorities need to be integrated/considered
- Guidelines must be followed for uniformity

Because of time constraints, the Chair called for a change in the agenda. For the next time, Dick encouraged council members to read the handouts on Draft QPIS Grant Criteria and Process, Draft Governor's Quality of Place Prosperity Awards, Inventory of Entrepreneurial Training Programs, Inventory of QOP related State Grants Programs and Inventory of State

Councils/Commission with QOP related mission. Amanda Rector will present her report on entrepreneurial training and education at next Council meeting

Process for drafting our Quality of Place Legislation: Martha Freeman, Director of SPO. Maine is not perfectly organized to provide services and funding for a prosperous future. Our natural, cultural, and historical assets are resources not just commodities. This is a process we are still thinking about, related to other efforts. Quality of Place legislation must not contradict efforts of other task forces currently focusing on natural resources and economic development. This council's legislation can complement that of the economic development task force through the notion of Quality of Place as an economic development strategy. We need to develop investment strategies at regional and state levels, coordinate with regional organizations; and align with state laws. Martha will draft an outline of the legislation and work through it with interested Council members.

Martha expressed need for Council guidance about a DAFS request to submit bond proposals by October 1. The Council advised Martha to request a \$50 million Quality of Place Jobs and Investment Bond as a starting point for discussion.

October meeting is moved from Tuesday, October 14, to **Wednesday, October 15, 1:00pm to 5:00pm** in Augusta. The November meeting is scheduled to take place Thursday, November 20th in Augusta

Meeting adjourned at 12:30pm