

Maine Quality of Place Council

Minutes of November 20, 2008
Room 127, Taxation Committee Hearing Room, Augusta

Next Meetings of the Council:

TENTATIVELY: Wednesday, December 17, 2008, 2:30pm to 5:00pm

TENTATIVELY: Wednesday, January 7, 2008, 9:00am to 12:00pm

Location to be determined

Present: Council Members: Richard Barringer (chair), Edward Barrett, Martha Freeman, Eleanor Kinney, Donna McNeil, Matt Polstein, Robert Thompson, Thaxter Trafton for John Richardson, Robin Zinchuk. **Council Staff:** Kate Reilly, Sue Inches, Jody Harris, Amanda Rector, Linda LaPlante. **Others:** Andrea Perry, Environmental Funders Network; Todd Burrowes, SPO; Kirk Mohney, Historic Preservation Commission;; Liz Hertz, SPO; Jayne Palmer, Downtown Coalition; Maggie Drummond, GrowSmart Maine; Greg Paxton, Maine Preservation; Ken Young, KVCOG; Bill King, Maine Downtown Center; Mary Kate Reny, Reny's Department Stores; Jeff Romano, MCHT; Roxanne Elfin, Maine Downtown Center; Bill Bayreuther, Downeast Lakes Land Trust; Catherine Renault, DECD; Marylou Kandeu; Kirk Mohney, MHPC; Carolyn Manson, Maine Tourism Association; Bill Ferdinand; Rep. Tom Watson; Joe King; Amanda Candor

Introductions and Greetings: Richard Barringer opened the meeting at 9:10am with the introduction of council members, staff, and guests. He reviewed the minutes of the Council's 10.15.08 minutes, today's agenda, and expectations for the meeting.

A. Draft Q of P Legislation. (See draft legislation at http://www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/qualityofplace/agenda_minutes.htm). Martha Freeman introduced the draft Quality of Place legislation that Governor Baldacci had asked in the Executive Order creating the Council to be in his office by December 1, 2008. The legislation would create a new chapter in Title 5MRSA, Ch.311-A, entitled *Maine Quality of Place Jobs and Investment Strategy*.

The legislation is in three parts, described in the draft as follows:

1. The first part *establishes the Maine Quality of Place Council to act as a coordinating body for state and regional quality of place investment strategies. The council consists of state and regional public agency representatives and private citizens. Its responsibilities include working with other state agencies to recommend how state agencies may align their laws, programs and funding with a state quality of place investment strategy and assessing how regional quality of place investment strategies align with state efforts. The council will also create performance measures to assess state and regional quality of place investment strategies. It will also award annually Maine Quality of Place Prosperity Awards recognizing preservation, strengthening and marketing Maine's quality of place assets to stimulate job creation and economic prosperity.*

This part also *provides definitions for both state and regional quality of place investment strategies. It establishes a fund for implementing regional quality of place investment strategies. The fund will consist of any bond proceeds and any public and private contributions received for its purpose. This part also requires applications for other state program funds to receive preference points if they are submitted as part of a regional quality of place investment strategy.*

2. The second part *requires regional development districts that have in place a federal Economic Development Administration comprehensive economic development strategy to develop a regional quality of place investment strategy by engaging regional sector leaders and leveraging public and private development activities and funds.*

3. The third part *requires the Maine State Planning Office to provide assistance to the Maine Quality of Place Council, engage in public education regarding asset-based investment strategies and a state quality of place investment strategy and work with regional development districts to aid them in development of regional quality of place investment strategies.*

A rich discussion of the draft legislation ensued (and resumed after the EFN presentation, below). Important points and comments included:

- the need to ensure that the Council's work is effectively integrated with the work of the task force on regional delivery of economic development services, created by E.O.11 FY 08/09, of which Bob Thompson is a member (Thaxter Trafton);
- the possibility of legislators being appointed to the Council if it is established in law (Rep. Tom Watson);
- the need for a brief summary of the legislation in plain language, and for a definition of what a Q of P investment *is* (Bob Thompson);
- the need to clarify that quality of place investment funds would be targeted to priorities in regional asset-based plans (Eleanor Kinney); that requirements for existing state grant funds will be respected (Donna McNeil); and that projects that cross regional boundaries are encouraged (Andrea Perry); and
- the need for the Council to address the various Q of P-related bond proposals now circulating, and which the Council will support (Eleanor Kinney).

A new draft of the Q of P legislation will be prepared by the SPO and circulated to council members for comment before it is submitted to the Governor.

B. Downtown Coalition. Maggie Drummond of GrowSmart Maine made a presentation on behalf of the Maine Downtown Coalition, outlining its plan for a legislative initiative and bond request to establish a community capital investment program housed at DECD focused on three key areas:

- community center improvements: sidewalks, bike lanes, landscaping, public restrooms, visitor centers, parking, pocket parks, lighting, façade improvements, and public- and non-profit-owned building rehabilitation;
- emergency fund to purchase endangered buildings listed in or eligible for the National Register, or locally historically designated, and secure easements for resale; and

- community design assistance for town centers/downtowns as well as town edges/entrances.

(See handout at: http://www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/qualityofplace/agenda_minutes.htm)

C. Environmental Funders Network (EFN). Andrea Perry introduced a funding proposal from the EFN, still in draft form, in support of Q of P education, planning, strategizing, and implementation, with discussion following.

The EFN's goals are to provide funds for Q of P recommended and initiatives; provide leadership for change; mobilize funders; create a process for collaborative funding of Q of P; and engage regional and national funders.

Andrea outlined two initiatives 1) projects that support statewide systemic change to produce broad-based support for quality of place; and 2) projects that support regional collaboration and Q of P planning and implementation. The EFN is fundraising now and hopes to issue a RFP by the first quarter of next year. They have a goal of raising \$750,000/year for three years to fund this effort.

Council members expressed strong praise for Andrea's presentation and for the efforts of the EFN to move the Q of P agenda ahead; and look forward to hearing more at an appropriate time.

D. Dates for next 2 meetings (TENTATIVELY):

Wednesday, December 17, 2008 – 2:30pm to 5:00pm

Proposed agenda items:

- Creative Economy presentation
- Bonds for Council consideration
- Q of P legislation status

Wednesday, January 7, 2009 – 9:00am to 12:00n

Location to be determined