

# Governors Council on Maine's Quality of Place

Minutes of the Eighth Meeting, November 8th, 2007<sup>1</sup>

Room 126, State House, Augusta

**Next Meeting of the Council: Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Public Utilities Commission hearing room, 242 State Street, Augusta.**

NOTE: These minutes do not contain revisions made to the Council's draft recommendations. These proposed revisions are contained in separate recommendation documents.

**Present:** Council members: John Rohman, David Whitney, Ed Barrett, John Marsh, Tracy Michaud Stutzman, Barbara Trafton, Bruce Hazard, Richard Barringer (chair), Jeff Romano (for Jay Espy), Chuck Lawton, Eleanor Kinney, Ken Young, Hilary Basset, Mary Kate Reny and Martha Freeman. Staff: Jody Harris, Sue Inches, Kate Reilly, And John Del Vecchio **Absent:** Hank Schmelzer, Evan Richert, And Kevin Mattson. **Others:** Jeff Austin, Maggie Drummond, Carolyn Manson, John Webber, Laurie Lachance, Frank O'Hara.

**Introductions & Greetings:** Richard Barringer opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. with the introduction of Council members, staff, and guests. He reviewed the agenda and expectations for the meeting, namely, to review the Council's first draft recommendations and decide which to keep, modify or delete, which merit immediate attention, and which may wait until the new year.

**Context:** Martha Freeman reported on her meeting yesterday with Governor Baldacci and key policy advisors... Martha shared with the Governor the general direction of the Council's recommendations respecting an asset-based development strategy, regionalizing planning and implementation, improving state agency efficiency and support for regional efforts, and strengthening downtowns and regional landscape protection.

Martha reported her sense that the Council's work fits with the Governor's broader messages: (1) that Maine enjoys economic benefits from our quality of place and that we need to promote Maine's advantage in this regard more; and (2) that we must make investments in the Maine tradition of using resources frugally and wisely.

Martha emphasized that with regard to quality of place promotion and protection, as with all responsibilities of the state, the Governor will want to see services delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible., especially with regard to the delivery of related programs and services, Martha noted that the voting results on the recent bond proposals indicate that voters are cautious about spending in general, and highlight the strong support for the Land for Maine's Future Program. She encouraged the Council to look

for ways to frame proposals in conjunction with voter sentiment and the Governor's overall message.

Martha indicated that the Governor is now looking to the Council's interim report for general policy guidance respecting quality of place matters. She emphasized the Governor's view that for any lodging tax increase proposal to succeed it must have the support of the tourism industry.

Martha noted other major initiatives underway, among them: county jail/corrections unification, school administrative district consolidation, and natural resource agency streamlining discussions, as well as any Joint Select Committee on Prosperity or Grow Smart proposals. With focus in the coming legislative session on matters related to quality of place, Martha encouraged the Council to voice their perspective in a way that would help these discussions.

David Whitney asked if the Governor was looking to the Council for recommendations that are more general than specific. Martha said yes and explained that there's need for more public education on the economic value of Maine's quality of place, and that the Council could help to do this.

Richard Barringer shared with Council members a recent conversation with Charlie Colgan, who is completing a study of the state's cluster development strategy. Charlie indicated to Dick that the bottom line for a successful cluster development strategy is quality of place: since there are not enough highly skilled workers in Maine, we must attract them, and that's where quality of place plays a crucial role. Chuck Lawton added that quality of place "is our competitive advantage" and key to our success – whether it's in economic development, tourism, or government restructuring.

Council members discussed what they should focus on producing right now. Ken Young felt that it was very important that some specific recommendations be advanced presently, such as regional capacity. He suggested that recommendations for some block granting sources could be proposed now, with other funding sources identified later after further analysis and discussion. Ed Barrett agreed, suggesting that some recommendations can be presented now, such as historic tax credits, whereas the Council may be broader or longer term with others, such as realigning state government. Chuck Lawton suggested that the Council can do a lot to "formulate the problem, link the problem to specific topic areas, and then provide a context to form solutions."

Barbara Trafton said that she would like to see the Council provide support for work on the building codes. She also felt that the connection between transportation and quality of place, though discussed by the Council numerous times, really doesn't get due attention in the draft report. Mary Kate Reny cited the need to be sure that everything is ready to move when it is recommended. She also suggested that Gateway One get mentioned in the report as a successful project.

## **Discussions of Recommendations (Jody Harris and Sue Inches, facilitators)**

The Council reviewed, discussed and amended three sets of recommendations: the Downtown Recommendations, the Regional Landscape Recommendations and Asset Based Strategies Recommendations. The results of these discussions are reflected in the revised recommendations (attached).

In addition, it should be noted that the Council voted 9-0-3 to support asset based planning through the Regional Councils of Governments. Those abstaining were invited to submit a minority report, if they choose to do so.

A discussion of how to fund the recommendations and how to prioritize and integrate the three sets of recommendations was deferred to the next Council meeting.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m, in the Public Utilities Commission hearing room; lunch will be served.

Richard Barringer closed the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

<sup>1</sup> Note: The minutes have been prepared by staff of the State Planning Office from notes taken throughout the day; they are intended to summarize a rich set of presentations and conversations, and do not necessarily represent accurately the thoughts and opinions of those cited here.