

June 15, 2017

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'  
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting  
held June 15, 2017  
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom  
Machias, Maine**

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**Attending the meeting were:  
Commissioner Christopher Gardner  
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.  
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy  
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administration  
Judy East, WCCOG  
Lora Whelan, Quoddy Tides  
Rich Rolfe, Jail  
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, Sheriff's Office  
Barry A. Curtis, Sheriff  
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy  
Josh Rolfe, RCC  
Mike Hinerman, EMA  
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer  
Susan Hatton, SCEC**

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The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. for a presentation by Washington County Council of Governments Executive Director Judy East. Judy presented a final summary of the Community Guided Planning and Zoning for U.T. Judy noted that this has been a two-year process. The final summary explained the background, public outreach, information and analysis that generated the recommendations for prospective zoning and capital investment in the Washington County Unorganized Territories and Plantations. (The complete Executive Summary is attached.) Judy stated the overall purpose of the CGP&Z is to create a pro-active guide for development in the U.T. Commissioner Gardner added the purpose for the planning and zoning work was due to the legislative action by Land Use Planning Commission recognizing the benefit of being pro-active in directing growth in the U.T. There is a large amount of undeveloped land in the unorganized territories of Washington County that could support resource dependent industries. Commissioner Gardner stated the Commissioners approved the use of TIF funds from the U.T. with the observation and belief that this planning activity would support economic development in parts of Washington County. Judy outlined the steps taken during the two-year process.

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The first step was **collaboration**. Public outreach by means of newsletters, on-line postings, surveys and public meetings were used to inform and include residents, landowners and land managers of the U.T. The information gathered from the citizen input and initiative shaped the work and decisions through-out the process. The second step was **celebration**; acknowledgement of the vast resources that the 800,000 acres of Washington County U.T. has to offer. The resources include many acres of woodland for forestry, blueberry land for agriculture opportunity, and many natural resources to support working lands and recreational prospects. The enormity of data to consider for the many types of resources and information for the use of this 800,000-acre area led to the third step of **contemplation**. Judy explained at this point there was an intense amount of data to consider and the need to figure out how to narrow the planning effort and make informed decisions. There was a need to take time to consider where prospective zoning could be reasonably provided to support future growth and development. Criteria to be considered included trends in population, access to transportation, proximity to services, previous TIF investments and public input. The end goal for the prospective zoning was to direct future growth and development in areas of the community that is suitable for such growth.

The final step in the Community Guided Planning and Zoning project is to use all the data collected, review and analyze the criteria and reach a consensus for a final proposal for prospective zoning. The only two areas in the U.T. interested and ready to seek change and allow future opportunity are the Plantations of Baring and Grand Lake Stream. The rest of the U.T. areas were in conflict between the goal of the planning process and the resistance to change.

The tool proposed to provide opportunity and flexibility for equally important yet conflicting goals is a "floating zone". Judy explained the concept of "floating zones" as opportunity that "floats". Floating zones are not drawn on the map until a zone change is requested, conditions are met and approved. This concept allows future flexibility options. Some of the criticisms of floating zones are that it undermines predictability, blurs distinctiveness of separate communities, induces sprawl and allows development in the UT to the detriment of businesses that need support in nearby service center communities. Clear standards are needed to mitigate the impacts. Judy noted there are several important qualifications proposed on the floating zone idea to ensure that unintended, negative impacts do not occur. Categories and dimensional factors were set

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for rural business development floating zones to retain "good neighbor" standards. Judy listed the six changes that would reconcile the floating zone concerns. The rule changes that would allow implementation of a Rural Business Development floating zone in Washington County is listed on page five of the Executive Summary. Judy stated that for any local or regional land use or economic development plan a capital improvement plan (CIP) strategy is needed.

A CIP establishes the framework for financing needed capital improvements and big ticket items. After analyzing the input from data accumulated, there were four areas where capital investment issues arose. Those four areas are:

- broadband infrastructure,
- transportation infrastructure,
- recreation infrastructure, and
- water levels and fish passage.

Commissioner Gardner agreed with the need to establish a capital improvement plan. Commissioner Gardner listed several infrastructure capital projects within Washington County; the Grand Lake Stream Dam that has historically been maintained by Woodland Pulp; a regional airport and the broadband infrastructure expansion by Axiom. In conclusion, Judy listed the next steps to finalize the CGP&Z project. Judy stated the Commissioners are asked to review the final proposal and make changes. The final recommendation to the LUPC is slated for July or August of 2017. Then public notice will be posted for the hearing process for the proposal.

Commissioner Gardner commended Judy East for the tremendous fashion in which the work for this project has been conducted. Commissioner Gardner recognized the responsibility the Commissioners hold to add balance for input for those that could not get to the public meetings and add input themselves. There is a great amount of good to be accomplished by implementing the Community Guided Planning and Zoning. Commissioner Gardner noted one concern is the zone size. The zone size may not be right. Commissioner Gardner noted there should be an effort to be mindful to not allow the zoning to be limiting. Judy East recommended possibly using some percentage allowance. Commissioner Gardner stated that may be considered.

Another concern is inducing "sprawl". Commissioner Gardner stated

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this may be the only chance for change throughout the U.T. There are many resources to celebrate in the U.T. but the population is dropping. The CGP&Z and floating zones are a good concept and a way to be proactive to grow what we have. Commissioner Gardner concluded that there should be a reasonable review of the CGP&Z to give everyone a fair shot. The Commissioners will continue to stay informed through the County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald as the final changes are made to the CGP&Z and the final recommendation is presented to the LUPC.

The Unorganized Territories portion of the meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

**Approval of the U.T. meeting minutes of May 11, 2017  
(Crowley/Gardner, 2-0-1)**

**AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report**

Unorganized Territories Supervisor Dean Preston's monthly report was submitted and accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

**AGENDA ITEM: TIF Grant Committee Update**

A report was submitted and is attached.

There were eight grant and loan updates for the Commissioners' review.

**AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

5:01 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

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Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.