

Growth Management Act Rulemaking Stakeholder Group

February 6, 2026 - 1:30 - 3:30 PM (Virtual)

Meeting #3

Introduction:

Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) convened the third meeting of the Growth Management Act Rulemaking Stakeholder Group on February 6, 2026. The mandate of the Stakeholder Group is to develop recommendations to update the rules that implement Maine's revised Growth Management Act. The recommendations will be a core input as MOCA leads a formal rule-making process later in 2026.

The Stakeholder Group met on Zoom. There were 13 members in attendance, along with MOCA staff, meeting facilitators from the Consensus Building Institute, and observing members of the public. Attendance is listed in Appendix A.

This meeting summary is written by the Consensus Building Institute and captures the key discussion points, stakeholder group feedback, and actions identified during the meeting. Opinions are not attributed to specific members unless there is a clear reason to do so.

The objectives of this meeting were to discuss potential rule revisions for future land use plans and public participation.

Welcome

Samantha Horn, MOCA, welcomed the group to the meeting, thanking them for their ongoing commitment to this conversation.

David Plumb, CBI facilitator, provided an overview of the meeting agenda and objectives. He provided a summary of the themes that emerged from pre-meeting work sessions held with a subset of the stakeholder group. The Stakeholder Group discussed and built on the pre-work for the rest of the session. Below is a summary of the discussion, with ideas grouped into the following sections:

- Future land use plans
- Public participation

The group was generally aligned in its suggestions. Differences are noted where they emerged.

Updates from Staff

Following the last Stakeholder Group meeting, several action items were identified, including distinguishing between rules and guidance, and developing criteria for evaluating consistency of comprehensive plans with state goals. State staff are taking a first pass at these actions, and brought the following updates to the group:

- **Rules and Guidance Determinations:** State staff are working through the current rule to make a preliminary determination about which pieces should be retained or updated in rule, and which should be moved into guidance. Once a draft has been finished, it will be brought to the Stakeholder Group for review and discussion.
- **Consistency Determinations:** State staff is creating a set of scenarios as a starting point for thinking about criteria for determining consistency with state goals. These scenarios will be brought to the Stakeholder Group in the next meeting for review and discussion.

Future Land Use Plans

During the conversation, there was broad preliminary support for the following approaches and ideas to revised rules.

- **Be very clear about the minimum requirements for growth areas** including intended purposes, and how these purposes align with state goals.
 - At the same time, **create compelling guidance** that encourages municipalities to go beyond what is required to include greater specificity in their FLUPs.
 - The current rule calls for a unit analysis of “how many new residential units and how much commercial, institutional, and/or industrial development” can be built in an area. Some stakeholders named this requirement as onerous, suggesting that a unit analysis should be optional.
 - Designated growth areas should reflect the needs and goals identified by the community.
- **Placetypes offer vocabulary to describe desired growth with more specificity.**
 - Some stakeholders noted that the current designations (growth/rural/transitional) have not been effective at leading to zoning changes and growth.
 - At the same time, growth/rural/transitional offer clear and standardized categories. This clarity is helpful for consistency and ongoing monitoring of growth.
 - Placetypes offer a helpful tool to add nuance within the current designations. Stakeholders suggested that placetypes should not be made mandatory.
- **FLUP, as a map output, is a helpful tool to visualize development.** This mapping should be encouraged.
 - Mapping a future land use plan helps communities to bring specificity to their growth/transitional/rural areas. FLUP maps serve a similar purpose as placetypes.
 - Adding nuance to growth areas through mapping and/or placetypes helps to clarify the intentions/goals of growth areas and makes zoning easier.

- **Growth area designations should take into account future contingencies**, including capacity for increasing municipal services and infrastructure to support growth areas, and the resiliency of growth areas to climate impacts.
 - The rule could require municipalities to address human capacity (staffing, etc.) to implement the plan.
 - The rule could include an assessment of climate resilience in determining growth areas.
 - Asset management (or a capital investment plan) is key to assessing infrastructure needs and feasibility.
 - It is important to have financial and infrastructure conversations early in the process.

- **Regional coordination should be encouraged.**
 - Regional coordination should be incorporated throughout the comprehensive planning process, in addition to it being its own section. Avoid it being an afterthought.
 - The rule currently does not allow communities to substitute data and analysis requirements with regional plans and analysis, with the exception of transportation. This should be changed.
 - Stakeholders noted that regional boundaries can be defined in many different ways.
 - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) offer one starting point for communities to locate themselves within a regional context.
 - Each municipality may define their region differently.
 - Clear guidance could help communities understand how regional issues translate into municipal context, with support for municipalities in understanding their role in addressing specific regional issues.
 - There could be a role for regional organizations to meet with communities ahead of the comprehensive planning process to put regional issues front and center.
 - Regional coordination fits with previous discussions in the stakeholder group about requiring municipalities to “show their work.”
 - The rule could require municipalities to demonstrate that they have evaluated their location and role in the region, and have taken into account how their plan impacts and contributes to regional needs (e.g. transportation, housing).

Public Participation

During the conversation, there was broad preliminary support for the following approaches and ideas to revised rules.

- **Stakeholders suggested that the current rule is sufficient.** It includes flexibility and calls for a robust participation process.

- **There is a need for clear guidance and resources for public participation.**
 - There is an opportunity for the state to provide guidance and resources for public participation, and/or to partner with organizations that already have developed guidance in this area.
 - For example, Hancock County Planning Commission has developed helpful [guidance](#) on public participation.
 - In addition to giving guidance on engagement strategies, it would be helpful to develop guidance on communicating with community members on how their participation will be integrated and implemented.
- **Public participation rules should expect that communities are engaging with priority populations on their terms, and in ways that work for them.**
 - Data packet will help to identify key population groups
 - Stakeholders discussed how to demonstrate engagement with different demographics. While collecting specific demographic data can be challenging, communities could show their work to engage different populations, and include a description of any demographics that they struggled to reach.
- **Stakeholders discussed how to address situations where municipal staff/volunteer capacity is limited.**
 - Templates for public meetings and engagement strategies are very helpful to support volunteer engagement efforts.
 - Municipalities can look for ways to coordinate public engagement with other, related projects.
 - This may be a place to acknowledge the need for external support, from a regional planning commission or external consultant.

Closing and Next Steps

David Plumb, CBI facilitator, thanked the group for their time and participation, and outlined next steps:

- CBI will write and distribute a meeting summary
- CBI will convene the stakeholders who volunteered to assist with pre-work in advance of the next meeting.
- State staff will continue to work on the rule/guidance draft and consistency scenarios.

Attendance

Member	Affiliation
Dan Black	LB Development Partners
Tanya Emery	Maine Municipal Association
Jennie Franceschi	City of Westbrook Planning Department
Representative Traci Gere	Legislative Representative for Kennebunkport and parts of Kennebunk and Biddeford
Jay Kamm	Northern Maine Development Commission
Jen Ladd	Toole Design
Matt Markot	Loon Echo Land Trust
Michael Martone	Town Planner for Damariscotta and Newcastle
Steve McDermott	Individual experienced with comp planning and housing
Ben Smith	North Star Planning
Averi Varney	Hancock County Planning Commission
Sophie Wilson	Freeport Town Manager
Kara Wilbur	Dooryard LLC
Supporting Staff	
John Brochu	MOCA
Hilary Gove	MOCA
Samantha Horn	MOCA
David Plumb	Consensus Building Institute
Anika Reynar	Consensus Building Institute
Joan Walton	MOCA

