

# WASHINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Helping Washington County  
Communities Plan for Tomorrow

Judy East  
Executive Director

## **MINUTES: Executive Committee Meeting Helen's Restaurant, Machias**

**Date:** Tuesday November 30, 2011 noon – 2:45PM

**Present:** Lewis Pinkham, Betsy Fitzgerald, Dale and Dorothea Crowley, Roger Holst, Gail Wahl, Judy East

1. Those present ordered lunch as some were unable to make the meeting at the beginning; we discussed the candidates for the Planner position; once all were present we decided to ask for another writing sample and to check the references for a final candidate; if there are no red flags: offer him the job (see motion below); if red flags: announce the job again on the listserves.
2. Minutes from the October 17, 2011 Annual General Meeting were distributed after the last meeting. Judy asked if there were any corrections and it was moved, seconded, and unanimously **APPROVED:** to accept the October 17, 2011 minutes as written.

3. Administration –

▪ **Separation from SCEC**

The majority of the meeting centered on discussion of the separation from SCEC. Judy clarified that this separation is completely amicable and mutual. The decision is based on the recent analysis of the contract between WCCOG and SCEC (that we discovered expired in 2006). SCEC Director (formerly Diane Tilton and now Harold Clossey) structured the agreement with WCCOG Director (Judy East) in a way that functioned perfectly well for our operations and then spent all our time doing our work and virtually no time analyzing the agreement. The agreement provides bookkeeping services to WCCOG by employing WCCOG staff through SCEC. The problem arises because WCCOG has contracts directly with numerous local, regional, state and federal agencies. However, because WCCOG staff are actually SCEC employees, the liability for a breach in any of these contracts would fall to SCEC. This arrangement is not acceptable to the auditors and the lawyers.

The General Assembly authorized Judy, Betsy and Gail to examine the costs and logistics associated with WCCOG separating from SCEC. We analyzed the costs and have also heard from the SCEC accountant who has confirmed that the indirect rate to be charged by SCEC will increase (to 26%; we currently pay 20%). We also met with Accountant Crystal Consalvi. She is able to provide independent accounting services, set up all employment tax numbers/accounts with state and federal agencies, provide initial bookkeeping for the transition from SCEC, train the new part time bookkeeper, and provide accounting support after the initial training period. Our initial estimate is that we will be able to hire a part time bookkeeper and pay for the contract with Crystal for substantially less than we currently pay for the admin allocation to SCEC (and definitely less than we would pay at an indirect rate of 26%).

Judy then reviewed the individual costs/logistics of the shift in obtaining the benefits from SCEC to WCCOG. It will be nearly neutral financially for the following reasons: we currently pay an associates membership to MMA (\$200) and half (\$225) of the full membership that SCEC pays to obtain the health benefits (as well as short term/long term disability & life insurance); we will now pay the full membership \$450 (instead of \$425). To get the flexible spending account from Benefit Strategies (that allows employees to contribute pre-tax funds to cover co-pay, deductible, dental expenses) we are charged an administrative fee per employee. This cost was passed on to WCCOG by SCEC and the cost will stay the same. The retirement benefit is a match of up to 3% of the employees salary. This benefit would stay the same. However we would have to set up a retirement account with a different agency (currently provide by Frank Guidi and AXA Equitable). Judy indicated that she would be happy with a Simple IRA or SEP as recommended by Crystal Consalvi, endorsed by those present, and administered by Machias Savings Bank.

Based on this discussion it was moved, seconded and unanimously

**APPROVED:** that, effective January 1, 2012, WCCOG will do the following:

- Establish the WCCOG as an independent agency from SCEC and obtain all necessary tax accounting numbers to hire the Executive Director, Judy East, the Planner/Community Development Specialist (see other motion below), and a part time bookkeeper.
- Obtain all necessary membership and enrollment requirements to provide the same benefits package to WCCOG staff that is currently provided by SCEC.
- Establish payroll services with Machias Savings Bank (our current bank for the checking account) and research the retirement opportunities provided by MSB for staff.
- Research the opportunity for MMA to provide Directors and Officers insurance; take it if it is offered as a benefit of MMA membership; also obtain quote for the same from FA Peabody; Larry Saunders of FA Peabody (currently provides our office insurance) and is also researching a quote for Workers Compensation for WCCOG.

As part of the contract that WCCOG has with the Department of Economic and Community Development, the staff at SCEC help WCCOG to provide technical assistance to towns and businesses for the CDBG program. We will need a sub-contract with SCEC to continue to pay them to help in providing those services. Based on this professional collaboration of continuing mutual benefit to WCCOG and SCEC as well as to the communities of Washington County, it was moved, seconded and unanimously

**APPROVED:** to prepare and sign a contract between WCCOG and SCEC to obtain their continuing staff support with providing CDBG technical assistance to Washington County communities and businesses.

Judy, Jen and Betsy comprised the hiring committee for the Planner/Community Development Specialist and were all involved in the interview process. The highest choice among the remaining 3 candidates interviewed (after the first 2 candidates turned down the offer of the job) was an individual living in Machias. While the other two had education in planning they had very limited job experience. The final candidate, on the other hand, is a geologist and does not have any education or experience in planning. However, he does live in Machias and is invested in the community. All three of us liked him and found his interest, ability and willingness to learn (and to take less pay given this lack of training) as compelling. Judy suggested that she review his references, including the Selectmen in Machiasport and Machias with whom he has interacted, and ask for another writing sample. As noted above, if there are no red flags: offer him the job, but if there are red flags: announce the job again on the listserves. Assuming that everything checks out it was moved, seconded, and unanimously

**APPROVED:** to offer the Planner/Community Development position to the candidate recommended by the hiring committee at an annual salary of \$36,000 with a 6 month probation; to provide training for the first year (including some independent unpaid legal reading by the candidate); to increase the salary to \$37,000 after one year; and to offer enrollment in the health and retirement benefits packages after 30 days.

Judy circulated the job announcement for the part time bookkeeper that ran in the Calais Advertiser before Thanksgiving. Deadline for submission of applications is December 17. Discussion centered on the training that Crystal Consalvi would provide to get the bookkeeper up to speed with Quickbooks. Lewis Pinkham asked if Trio might be a program that could provide the needs that Quickbooks has not, specifically to keep track of how much is left in a grant. Given that we have already started the fiscal year we could investigate changing to Trio in FY13. Betsy asked if contracting with the county would be a way to provide these services. Judy noted that if the bookkeeper were located in Calais that person could also be an office manager. Gail and Roger agreed to help with the interview process. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously

**APPROVED:** to hire a part time bookkeeper/office manager with a starting date of Jan 1, 2012.

▪ **Financial Reports**

Balance sheet and Profit and loss statement for October were circulated. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously

**APPROVED:** to accept the financial reports as presented.

4. Project and Activity Update

Judy reviewed the project and Activity Update (posted on the web site) and noted a few highlights: the Brownfields application was submitted last week; a recent article in the Quoddy Tides was circulated describing the recent redevelopment successes; a new USDA Solid Waste Management grant will be submitted in December; Dale noted that the Addison CDBG grant is completed; and one typo was found. A Corrected version will be posted to the web site.

Jennifer circulated the Washington County Leadership Institute brochure for 2012 and asked for a full day sponsorship (\$850) noting that no other sponsors pay for only half a day which has been the practice of WCCOG in the past few years. Betsy suggested that we continue with only half a day given all of the changes that we are putting into motion right now. Judy noted that we will probably save considerable funds with the change in how we will operate. The group decided to wait on the decision until the next meeting which we agreed would be early in January given that we are making so many changes.

We assembled our donation to the Machias Food Pantry and gathered \$130 –thanks everyone!

**Next meeting was scheduled for January 10, 2012 to be in Calais at a lunch time venue to be determined and announced by Judy ahead of time.**

Respectfully submitted (Activity Update posted separately)  
Judy East