



County Of **CUMBERLAND** C H R O N I C L E

Cumberland County Region Economic Stimulus Package

With the impending Economic Stimulus Package, Cumberland County, as a region, has put together a “wish list” for possible projects from the package. Most communities, PACTS and local Chambers have provided Cumberland County with a listing of plans which would possibly fulfill the requirements of this package. According to State financial planners, Maine is expected to receive somewhere in the neighborhood of 600 Million to 1.1 Billion dollars. As has been stated many times, the exact usage of the funds is still being determined, and although the bill has been passed on the Federal level, the State method of allocation has not been determined.

It was recommended by many “in the know” in government to assemble a region wide listing, in order to assist and potentially help the Cumberland County Region receive funding. It is assumed that the final allocations will go through the State Appropriations Committee, but that has not been determined as yet.

The list of projects for Cumberland County submitted was in excess of \$350,000,000. Most of the funding was for roads, bridges, sidewalks and similar infrastructure repair, but also included such varied items as the new City of Portland “mega birth”, a new or rebuilt Civic Center, expansion of the CCRCC and the bus service from Bridgton to Portland.

More details in the coming months, but the basic underlying aspect of the bill is that the projects need to be “shovel ready”, meaning start of construction before September of this year, so stay tuned. The listing can be found on the County website at CumberlandCounty.org, or call Bill Whitten for more information.



Stimulus Futures

By Chris Hall, Senior Vice President, Portland Regional Chamber

February 2nd 2009

At the state house these days you’re likely to hear folks invoking “the federal economic stimulus package” in just about any conversation concerning money. Since no one has enough money right now the federal stimulus package is taking on an almost mythical aura – it can fix anything.



Table of Contents

Cumberland County Region Economic Stimulus Package - pg 1
Stimulus Futures - pg 1 & 2
From the Chair - pg 3
News from GPCOG - pg 3
Sebago Lake Region Calendar - pg 4
In the Legislature - pg 4
US Skating Championships - pg 5
From the Manager - pg. 6

CHRONICLE

February 2009

2

Volume 1, Issue 3



The reality is different, of course.

First, federal money still needs to be approved by Congress. Second, whatever money is coming to Maine will take some time to arrive. Third, there's a list – submitted by the Governor to President Obama – that defines Maine's priorities. Take a look at this excellent piece by Susan Cover in the KJ to see what's on the Governor's priority list for federal stimulus funding – and what's not.

Beyond the questions of 'how much' and 'for what' and 'when' lurks something much more serious.

Any federal funding Maine receives will be one-time money. That means we'll get a big check – but we won't get the same check every year from now on. Instead, Maine is about to see a huge injection of federal tax dollars – literally hundreds of millions of dollars – but it's money that we have to spend in ways that make sense.

Two things come to mind.

First, use the money to create jobs now. State unemployment has topped 7% for the first time in more than 15 years. More folks are losing their job every day. We need to put people back to work and the federal stimulus money can do that by building roads, bridges, schools and other infrastructure that will support us in the years ahead.

Second, we need to use the time that the federal stimulus buys us as wisely as possible. Here's what I mean.

Say we get \$150 million federal dollars to build and repair local schools. With that money in hand we might not spend state and local dollars that would have normally

gone to school construction. And with the unspent dollars we can avoid budget cuts this year and wait until the economy comes back and saves us from tough decisions about restructuring, consolidating and reinventing our education systems.

Or not.

I'll suggest that the path I just described is the exact wrong thing to do. Instead of keeping our education, transportation, health care and high tech infrastructure systems in their current form and then hoping for better times, why not use the 2 or 3 years that the federal stimulus buys us to fund the transformation of these sectors that are critical to our future economic prosperity?

We know we have to change how we do things. We've been talking about it for some time now. This economic crisis is forcing us to do more with less – and to think about real transformational change in ways that seemed crazy just a couple of years ago.

It would be a terrible shame if the federal stimulus turned out to hold us in place for a couple of years, instead of facilitating the kinds of restructuring that could catapult us forward.

Chris Hall has been representing Maine employers for almost 20 years at the local, state and national levels. At the Portland Regional Chamber he provides state house and local advocacy to the Portland region's employers on a wide variety of issues.



From the Chair - Malory O. Shaughnessy

The new legislature is well underway at this point and has begun its work on the new Biennium Budget. There will be many challenges facing it with the flagging economy surrounding us. Specifically, the state will be looking at trying to fill a projected \$800 million hole in the budget. However, the house and senate in our nation's capital just arrived at a compromise to assure that an economic stimulus will be coming down to the states soon. This will move several needed projects forward and employ many Mainers.

We are working with our federal and state representatives to assure that the needs of our county and our municipalities are brought forward in a timely way to receive the attention they deserve. We are also working in Augusta on several initiatives to bring services to the residents of Cumberland County with increasing efficiencies.

Recently, through organizing efforts between the county and legislative leaders Senator Bill Diamond and Representative Meredith Strang-Burgess, the majority of the Cumberland County legislative delegation came together for the first time to discuss common concerns. We will be meeting regularly in the weeks and months to come to grow the voice of our county and our communities in Augusta.

Cumberland County produces nearly forty percent of the gross domestic product in Maine. We hold nearly a quarter of the population, and therefore a quarter of the representatives in Augusta. We have some of the largest cities and towns in the state and yet retain a rural nature and lifestyle throughout the county. Our needs and concerns are varied. It is time to tell our story loudly and address our needs.

I would appreciate hearing your thoughts and ideas on these and other matters. Please contact me anytime at mshaughnessy@cumberlandcounty.org.



News from GPCOG/PACTS

PACTS has just completed a Regional Collector Road Assessment Study of the 200 miles of collector roads in our fifteen municipalities. It outlines a 10-year \$225 million need and contrasts that with our \$50 million available.

PACTS hosted a forum for legislators and local elected officials last month. Fifty (50) people attended, and had an excellent dialogue with Senator Dennis Damon, MaineDOT and PACTS staff.

PACTS hosted a meeting in December with our Congressional Delegation staff and MaineDOT regarding the upcoming federal economic stimulus package.

PACTS is developing their next two-year regional transportation planning work program. Your input is welcome on transportation policy, planning and project development priorities.

PACTS has funded a Transit Oriented Development (TOD)/Transit educational campaign in collaboration with South Portland with the goals of (1) educating the general public, city and state officials about the benefits of Transit and TOD; and (2) to educate city and state officials and legislators about how Tax Increment Financing (TIF) works and how it could be applied to TOD in the State of Maine.

Sebago Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce Events

The Sebago Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce is currently promoting community events in the Region. Please join us and bring your family and friends to experience a wonderful weekend of fun, food, fishing, snowmobiling and observing the many winter activities that are so popular in our area.

The Maine Chevrolet Derby & Derbyfest

The Maine Chevrolet Derby & Derbyfest - Maine's richest ice fishing derby -- is held the third weekend in February on Sebago Lake and the first weekend in March statewide. The Sebago Lake Derby features winter activities for the whole family and several big prizes for fishermen. For info & registration, go to www.icefishingderby.com or call 1-888-ICE-FLAG.

COLD, COLD CASH RAFFLE

The Chamber conducts a 50/50 "Cold, Cold Cash" raffle each winter, leading up to the drawing during the Sebago Lake Ice Fishing Derby. Tickets are \$5.00 each or 5/\$20. One lucky winner gets half of all money raised. Business sponsors get the raffle off to a great start so the tally begins at several hundred dollars.

Tickets are available at local banks, credit unions and retail outlets as well as at the Chamber Office, 747 Roosevelt Trail, Windham (Mon-Thurs, 9-4:30.) Tickets are on sale throughout the Ice Fishing Derby. The 2009 drawing will be held during the Derby award ceremony at Camp Sunshine on Sunday, February 22nd. You do not need to be present to win! Participants must be 18 or older. FMI call the Chamber at 892-8265.



In the Legislature ***By Bill Whitten***

As Commissioner Shaughnessy mentioned previously in this newsletter, the Legislature dispatched in rapid fashion, the deficit for the next six months in the State budget, and are now working on the 2010, 2011 State budget of about \$6.1 Billion dollars. Meetings are being held daily in the committees to review planned budgets, reviewing the Governor's proposed budget and holding hearings and workshops on the myriad of bills presented.

Although there were 25% fewer proposed bills submitted, the number is over 1500. They are currently in the process of being revised, combined and put into actual LD's for review by the committees. We as a County, submitted one on rewarding consolidation efforts, plus we are looking at making the entire County of Cumberland a Pine Tree Zone, which would help business development for all.

Another positive aspect is the meeting of the County delegation, held every Thursday at the Cross Café, in Augusta, to discuss issues of concern to Cumberland County as a Region. Anyone is welcome to attend. Check with our office for location, as it may change, but will still be in Augusta. We hope this will help promote the value of OUR County.



Portland, Maine, Selected to Host 2009 U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships

The U.S. Figure Skating has announced the selection of Portland, Maine, as the site of the 2009 U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships. The event will take place March 3-7, 2009 at the Cumberland County Civic Center and will be hosted by the North Atlantic Figure Skating Club.

Competitors, coaches, visitors and spectators are expected to pump at least \$2 million into the local economy over the five-day event, booking an estimated 5,000 room nights at area hotels, according to Barbara Whitten, President & CEO at the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Portland.

“The North Atlantic Figure Skating Club is honored to have been chosen by U.S. Figure Skating to host this prestigious event,” said Alan Wolf, President of the North Atlantic Figure Skating Club. “In bidding for it, we felt that it would be a wonderful opportunity for the Club, the local skaters, skating fans and the area as a whole.

We are certain the Greater Portland community will pitch in and help us run a first class competition.”

In addition to being the primary selection event for the World Synchronized Skating Championships, the annual event crowns the U.S. champions in eight levels: juvenile, intermediate, novice, junior, senior, collegiate, adult and masters.

“Youth sports are becoming an important segment of large group events for the State of Maine - they’re very important to the city, restaurants, hotels and store owners,” said Whitten. “Usually, the youth sports bring mom and dad, and maybe brother and sister. It’s a steady week of business and it’s something we should look forward to. Most of them will be here for five days.”

Synchronized skating — similar to its swimming counterpart — involves a team of skaters who perform choreographed routines to show off their precision, creativity and skills. The sport is a popular and growing discipline within U.S. Figure Skating with approximately 525 synchronized teams registered with U.S. Figure Skating nationwide.

Portland won the bid over Providence, Rhode Island, who re-bid this year, having been the 2007 host.

“This is a big win and we’re thrilled Maine will be the host State for the 2009 event,” said Whitten.

For more information on this and other events go to www.visitportland.com.



CHRONICLE

February 2009

6

Volume 1, Issue 3

From the Manager - Peter Crichton

What does unity of purpose and the work that Cumberland County is doing at the State House have to do with the future of our communities and region? Quite a lot if we can succeed in having our municipalities, the County, our various chamber associations, the schools, the nonprofits, and other groups work together effectively with our legislative delegation.

For many years the County has tried to foster unity, including meetings at the State House with our legislative delegation some of which involved other organizations like GPCOG and our County Partners. Frequently we have had good attendance from legislators, but usually the purpose of these meetings was to discuss a specific piece of legislation and not for the long term purpose of working together to achieve a set of common goals.

A positive change has been occurring the past several years with Cumberland County as we have developed and implemented strategic plans that involved our communities. Our trust and confidence as a facilitator, convener and service provider has been growing as we have been able to work successfully with our municipalities on new and expanded regional services like our Community Development Program and County Communications Center. With the support and encouragement of groups like GPCOG, our Strategic Plan Advisory Committee, the Portland Regional Chamber and the County Partners – involving organizations like the Cooperative Extension Service – together we have created the building blocks for a new unified approach with

our legislative delegation that could enable us to better withstand the difficult economic times we are in and position ourselves to be more prosperous when the economy turns around.

The decision this year to have the Assistant County Manager Bill Whitten become Cumberland County's voice at the State House and by extension the region's, is shaping up to be a very important piece to the puzzle for achieving the unity that many of us have been seeking. My hope is that by having Bill at the State House talking with legislators and others on a regular basis, we are strengthening our unity of purpose and will be able to accomplish many important goals, some of which we may not even realize at this point.

There were three themes which came out of our Legislative Breakfast last December that we should be able to build upon. First, there was a widespread feeling that economic development should be a high priority. Second, many people felt that the issue of tax reform should be addressed so that Cumberland County and our municipal governments are not so dependent on the property tax for the delivery of public services to our citizens. Third, there was strong support for establishing more incentives to help promote regional solutions that will reduce the property taxpayer burden and provide quality services.

As we move forward, I am confident that we are on the right path to achieving greater success for our communities and region.

If you have any thoughts contact me at crichton@cumberlandcounty.org or at 207-871-8380.

