

# M.C.C.A.

Richard Dutremble, President  
York County

Norm Fournier, Vice President  
Aroostook County

George Jabar, Secretary-Treasurer  
Kennebec County

Stephen Gorden, Past President  
Cumberland County

William Blodgett, Emeritus  
Lincoln County



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Lauren Haven  
Administrator

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## MAINE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION

### Board of Directors Meeting Minutes February 8th, 2023, 10:00 am via Zoom

#### 1. Call to Order

MCCA President Richard Dutremble called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 am.

#### DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Androscoggin – Comm. Garrett Mason  
Aroostook – Comm. Norman Fournier  
Cumberland – Comm. Steve Gorden  
Franklin – Comm. Bob Carlton  
Kennebec – Comm. George Jabar  
Knox – Comm. Sharyn Pohlman  
Lincoln – Comm. William Blodgett  
Oxford – Admin. Donald Durrah proxy for Comm. Steven Merrill  
Penobscot – Admin. Scott Adkins proxy for Comm. Peter Baldacci  
Piscataquis – Comm. Paul Davis  
Sagadahoc – Comm. Carol Grose  
Somerset – Comm. Robert Sezak  
Waldo – Comm. Betty Johnson  
York – Comm. Richard Dutremble

#### DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Hancock – John Wombacher  
Oxford – Comm. Steven Merrill  
Washington – Comm. Chris Gardner

#### OTHERS PRESENT:

Aroostook – Admin. Ryan Pelletier  
Franklin – HR Director Tiffany Baker  
Lincoln – Admin. Carrie Kipfer  
MCCA Risk Pool - Manager Malcolm Ulmer  
MCCA - Admin. Lauren Haven  
Piscataquis – Manager Mike Williams  
Sagadahoc – Admin. Amber Jones  
Somerset – Admin. Dawn DiBlasi  
Verrill Dana – Lobbyists Clara McConnell, Jim Cohen, and Brody Haverly-Johndro  
Guests: Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross and Senate President Troy Jackson

## 2. Guests: Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross, Senate President Troy Jackson

Senate President Troy Jackson led the conversation. Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross joined the discussion in progress. Mr. Jackson spoke about his background and projects for this legislative session. He mentioned that he understood the jail funding issue and was open to concerns. Comm. Gorden thanked Mr. Jackson and stated that jail funding and rural patrol were at the top of our list of issues. Troy said the mindset was that LD 1654 addressed the jail funding concerns. However, that didn't seem to be the case. Steve said many counties don't have the money to pay competitive salary increases to keep staff in the long term. Jim Cohen said \$20 million was flat funding from the state. We're working together to share data about how we need to continue to balance the revenue share for annual increases in jail expenses.

Mr. Jackson said he was not familiar with the rural patrol issue. Several attendees explained the situation regarding Maine State Police and their withdrawal of rural patrol services over recent years. The group talked about the costs involved in hiring officers to cover these patrol services. We will need to work together and it's not currently working as well as it should.

Clara McConnell stated that the concept draft we submitted should help us engage stakeholders in a discussion on how to move forward. Mr. Jackson said he signed Ann Graham's bill yesterday. We will need to supply data that proves the need for funding. Jim reminded the group that the Maine State Police (MSP) requested more positions through the Legislature, but they were not funded for those additional positions.

Admin. Don Durrah said the needs of UT's are changing. Mental health, opioid issues, etc. are concerns that weren't problems in the past. The related expenses are increasing exponentially as health insurance prices skyrocket. Furthermore, even though counties are required to provide services, they don't have adequate staffing to cover two calls at opposite ends of the county. Many of these calls are multi-unit calls which means if another call is received while officers are responding to a situation, it would be difficult, if not impossible to respond to another situation in a timely manner. It's critical that we collaborate to put solutions in place as soon as possible.

Comm. Gorden said that beyond funding, the jails needed to form a clearer definition of the services they were required or able to provide. Jails have become the public service of last resort. Jails are not suitable to serve as medical and mental health centers. President Dutremble said that York County put in place a rehabilitation center with no help from the state, but not all counties are in a position to do that. Ms. Ross said she was on board with working to find better solutions and collaborating with counties to make the most of their combined efforts.

## 3. Consent Agenda:

- 3.1. Approval of the Agenda
- 3.2. Approval of the Minutes
- 3.3. Finance Reports – Lauren Haven

*Comm. Gorden **moved** to approve the consent agenda **seconded** by Comm. Fournier, and the motion **passed** with no opposition.*

## 4. Officer Reports:

- 4.1. Secretary/Treasurer, George Jabar

Comm. Jabar said he had nothing to report. Admin. Lauren Haven mentioned that MCCA and NACo membership dues had been invoiced. Also, vendors were placing advertisements in the 2023 Directory of Maine Counties which will give MCCA approximately \$5,000 in additional revenue when all the payments have been received.

- 4.2. Vice President, Norm Fournier

- 4.2.1. Consideration of the Annual Convention

Comm. Fournier said last year MCCA held a one-day conference at the Senator Inn in September. This year we could choose from three options: a regular September meeting in person, a one-day conference with meetings and trainings, or a full 2-day convention as we have traditionally held in prior years. We would need to consider expected revenue from vendors and sponsorships, venue cost increases, and a county to volunteer to host.

Comm. Pohlman said Knox County would consider hosting. Lauren said she would get pricing and availability from the Samoset Resort. Norm said if cost too high, we could schedule a full day of training day in Augusta with

educational sessions. If we decide to hold a two-day conference, we will need a commitment from Commissioners that they will participate in the event.

The group discussed these options. Comm. Pohlman said there would be a significant cost savings in a one-day event which would still allow for educational sessions. It would be a great opportunity to talk and collaborate with other commissioners without as many expenses.

Comm. Gorden said the original conference was for a couple of days with mostly educational sessions. Transportation and distance are factors. He would like to see another speaker like the futurist that spoke at Point Lookout. Regardless of the format of the meeting participants could stay overnight if the venue was out of the way. Comm. Grose said she'd prefer a one-day event. Comm. Sezak said he'd like to see the cost. If we choose a central location, travel wouldn't be as difficult. President Dutremble said the York County Commissioners voted last year to have the full convention and he thought the result would be the same if another vote was taken this year.

#### 4.3. President Report, Richard Dutremble

President Dutremble thanked the group for their support and requested that members of every county attend the Legislative Policy Committee meetings so we will have the perspective of both large and small counties when we take positions on legislation.

### 5. Standing Committee Reports:

#### 5.1. NACo Update: Peter Baldacci & Sharyn Pohlman

Comm. Pohlman reported she and Comm. Baldacci were preparing to attend the Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. They planned to meet with members of Maine's Congressional Delegation during the event. They proposed to talk about health coverage for inmates, fishery rules, the Maine housing crisis and more.

#### 5.2. Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) – Norm Fournier, Vice Chair

Comm. Norm Fournier reminded the group that each county has one vote on positions of bills on the LPC. He said commissioners needed to let the LPC know if they had bills as individual counties so we're aware and we could be prepared to take a position. Comm. Gorden said commissioners needed to be more active by participating in LPC meetings, attending public hearings and seeking the support of legislators for bills MCCA was putting forth.

##### 5.2.1. James Cohen, Verrill Dana

###### 5.2.1.1. Legislative Update

###### 5.2.1.2. Jail Funding Legislation

Mr. Cohen reported that the Biennial budget reflected the State's commitment to county jails. LD 1654 was a step in the right direction, and it was not a surprise that jails were flat funded. It's incumbent on counties to demonstrate the need if more funding is necessary. We could try to set up a meeting with the Governor but would need data from counties to support a supplemental funding request. Ms. McConnell said the Appropriations Committee had scheduled a public hearing for next week. It may not be realistic, but we should look at what could be presented and what we will bring to them. She recommended we take the opportunity to be heard. Data will be critical to back up our claim. They need to have enough information to act on it.

Jim said we can't assume people in the Legislature know what happened last session or in its history. Admin. Ryan Pelletier asked if MMA was on board. Jim said MMA wouldn't be in favor if it meant raising property taxes. Ryan said in talking to towns, no one understands why the state isn't providing more funding. Jim said it would make sense to look for some kind of annual increase to compensate for the rate of inflation.

Comm. Polhman introduced the topic of juvenile policing. Rockland is experiencing an issue with a group of teens, almost a gang, which had been interfering with businesses and wreaking havoc in the community. There was no place to take these kids, so they were not being held. Ultimately, officers were not able to discourage the behavior. The group had been stealing cars and attacking residents. The county desperately needed to develop a process for dealing with juvenile offenders. Comm. Sezak said Somerset is having issues as well. Officers have little power to handle juveniles. He thought there were a couple of bills proposed to address this issue. The State was trying to close Long Creek Youth

Development Center, but there weren't better options. Jim said the opinion was split on the closure and he will look for bills that propose a solution.

Jim moved on to the discussion about rural patrol. We said we needed testimony showing the history of how rural patrol became a problem a problem for counties; demonstrating that the state actually created the issue. Most legislators won't know the background. Our perception is that promises were made and not kept. He said they will work on testimony and will need someone to deliver it. We will need everyone's help. Ann Graham is collecting signatures. Steve said he had a good meeting with Comm. Sauschuck and was hoping to be able to work together with him. Steve Gorden, Norm Fournier, and Brian Hobart met previously with Comm. Sauschuck. Sheriffs mentioned a county option tax to fund officers to cover rural patrol. Jim said there would be tremendous opposition to another tax being introduced.

6. Association Reports - MACCAM, MARP, MRODA, MSA, others.  
No other reports were given.

7. Adjournment

Comm. Richard Dutremble asked if there were other comments. Hearing none, President Dutremble invited a **motion to adjourn at approximately 12:20 p.m.** Comm. Fournier made the **motion, seconded by Comm. Gorden, and the motion to adjourn was **approved.****

Respectfully submitted,



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MCCA Administrator, Lauren Haven

Attested:

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MCCA Secretary-Treasurer, George Jabar