

# **METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

**Annual Retreat**

**July 28-30, 2006**

**Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay  
Cambridge, Maryland**

## **Summary Report**

### Background

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) held its eighth annual retreat on July 28-30, 2006 at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay in Cambridge, Maryland.

The COG Board of Directors initiated an annual, summer retreat process beginning in 1999. At the first retreat, there was an intensive facilitated process that resulted in the landmark COG Strategic Plan “New Directions, Shaping Opportunities” formally adopted by the Board in November 1999. The 1999 Strategic Plan has provided an excellent framework guiding the work of the Board and Staff. Following the 2004 retreat, the COG Board adopted its first major revision and refinement to the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is now more fully integrated into the COG fiscal year work program and budget and implemented a multi-year policy focus on growth and development.

Since 1999 COG has used the summer retreat as an opportunity to review the Strategic Plan implementation process, address specific regional policy and agency operational issues, and further develop COG’s strategic direction. The retreats have also served as an important networking opportunity among COG board members and executive staff.

### Retreat Planning

COG Board Chair Jay Fisette appointed a planning committee earlier this year to provide direction to COG staff in developing retreat goals and the draft program; he also served as the Committee’s Chair. Other members included: Sharon Anderson, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor, District of Columbia; Alfreda Davis, Chief of Staff to the Mayor, District of Columbia; Camille Exum, Councilmember, Prince George’s County; Michael Knapp, Councilmember, Montgomery County; Phil Mendelson, Councilmember, District of Columbia; and Lori Waters, Supervisor, Loudoun County. The Committee recommended a retreat program similar to the one held last year beginning on Friday and ending Saturday evening. The Committee also recommended continued focus on growth and development issues, speakers chosen to facilitate discussion, and greater opportunities for discussion and networking by policy officials.

### Participants

Retreat invitees included the COG Board of Directors, COG corporate officers, mayors and chairs of local boards, chairs and vice chairs of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, and all COG policy committees. Elected and appointed officials who attended some or all of the retreat are listed in *Attachment A*, along with COG staff in attendance. *Attachment B* is the final retreat program, including a list of speakers and panelists.

### Policy Focus on Growth and Development

Beginning with 2004, Chair Mendelson, along with Vice-Chairs Davis and Fisette instituted a multi-year policy focus on growth and development in the National Capital Region. The three-year focus was chosen as a means to achieve greater policy consensus and to potentially decide on an overall direction for the region providing an extensive focus through three successive terms. Chair Fisette has maintained and strengthened the policy focus on growth and development in 2006. Retreat speakers and panelists, as well as participants examined several aspects of the multi-year focus as part of the retreat discussion.

The retreat program afforded policy officials with several opportunities to develop innovative approaches to complicated regional issues and to improve upon communication in order to further COG's mission. As part of the Friday afternoon discussion, attendees received a presentation revisiting COG's past and current regional visions and accomplishments and discussed ways to build upon that work to better plan for the future; a major implementation strategy being the linkage of transportation and land use decisions. Saturday's program focused again on regional visioning providing sessions on ways to better strengthen COG's effectiveness in support of its vision, mission and goals, an opportunity to collaborate with Envision Greater Washington, and a Best Practice Roundtable.

### COG's Policy and Program Priorities for 2007

Generally, policy officials stressed the importance of COG focusing on long-term issues that address growth and development while offering options for addressing these issues in the short-term. There was particular interest on addressing cross-cutting issues, fostering stronger partnerships, and promoting more effective advocacy and outreach strategies.

### Retreat Evaluations

Eleven retreat attendees completed evaluation forms. Submitted evaluations, as well as anecdotal comments by other participants were generally positive. A summary of the completed evaluation forms is provided in *Attachment C*.

### Next Steps

The summary report will be presented to the COG Board on September 13, 2006. In addition, the summary report will be shared with the Budget and Finance Committee as part of its review of the proposed FY 2008 COG Work Program and Budget. The Executive Director and senior staff will also brief policy boards and committees to ensure that committee work programs reflect feedback from the retreat. A summary of proposed next steps is provided in *Attachment D*.

## Attachment A

### LIST OF ATTENDEES 2006 ANNUAL RETREAT HYATT CHESAPEAKE BAY

#### BOARD MEMBERS/ALTERNATES

Sharon Anderson  
Hilda Barg  
Robert Catlin  
Sean Connaughton  
Gerry Connolly  
Robert Dorsey  
Joan DuBois  
Jay Fisette (Chair)  
Penelope Gross  
Michael Knapp  
John Lovell  
Phil Mendelson  
Redella Pepper  
Carol Schwartz  
Lori Waters  
Bruce Williams

#### JURISDICTION

District of Columbia  
Prince William County  
City of College Park  
Prince William County  
Fairfax County  
City of Rockville  
Fairfax County  
Arlington County  
Fairfax County  
Montgomery County  
Frederick County  
District of Columbia  
City of Alexandria  
District of Columbia  
Loudoun County  
City of Takoma Park

#### OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS/POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRS/VICE CHAIRS

Tom Dernoga  
Catherine Hudgins  
Rob Krupicka  
Kathryn Porter  
Michelle Pourciau  
Scott York

Prince George's County  
Fairfax County  
City of Alexandria  
City of Takoma Park  
District of Columbia  
Loudoun County

#### GUEST SPEAKERS

Doug Bibby  
Peter Shapiro  
Dan Tangherlini  
George Vradenburg

National Multi Housing Council  
Academy of Leadership, UMD  
WMATA  
The Vradenburg Foundation

#### STAFF

Paul DesJardin  
Stuart Freudberg  
Nicole Hange  
Ron Kirby  
Imelda Roberts  
David Robertson

Lee Ruck  
Jeanne Saddler  
Calvin Smith  
Pat Warren  
Chris Willey

## Attachment C EVALUATION SUMMARY

### 1. What were your expectations for the retreat?

- *Networking, meaningful back and forth on important issues*
- *Unsure; get to know others in a more casual atmosphere*
- *Discuss region-wide issues*
- *To have honest and open discussions*
- *Networking and discussion with other leaders*
- *Thoughtful discussion of regional issues*
- *A good interchange of ideas*
- *Social and substantive*
- *Lively dialog and action plans*
- *Good information exchange; opportunities to get to know others better*

### 2. Were your expectations met?

*YES – 9, NO – 2*

### 3. Individual session evaluations

**Rating scale used below:**

**5=Outstanding, 4 = Excellent, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor**

#### a. **Friday Lunch Presentation (Doug Bibby, Presenter)**

*Fair- 2, Good- 3, Excellent- 3, Overall Rating – 3.1*

- Good start to the Retreat.
- Fine message, but not enough detail on how to make it happen or sell it.
- Mr. Bibby could have known the region better

#### b. **Back to the Future (David Robertson, Paul Desjardin, and Ron Kirby, Panelists)**

*Good- 1, Excellent- 7, Overall Rating: 3.9*

- Great info; required good involvement.

#### c. **Implementing the Vision (Michael Knapp, Ron Kirby, Panelists)**

*Good-3, Excellent- 7, Overall Rating: 3.7*

- Modestly discouraged with outcome.
- Good presentation, had seen it before.

- Sessions B and C would have benefited from more discussion time; as well as study time/review beforehand....possibly as homework for Friday night.

**d. COG's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Carol Schwartz, Presenter)**

*Good-6, Excellent-5, Overall Rating: 3.5*

- Looking forward to it.
- Good start with the video.

**e. Envision Greater Washington (George Vradenburg, Peter Shapiro, Panelists)**

*Poor- 1, Good- 3, Excellent-4, Outstanding-3, Overall Rating: 3.7*

- Excellent; controversial but interesting, looking forward to more involvement.
- This Discussion is exactly the kind of thing we should be doing.
- Discouraged with outcome, but will keep plugging.
- Very insightful presentation and very riveting discussion.

**f. Best Practices Roundtable (Chair Fisette, Moderator)**

*Fair- 1, Excellent-4, Outstanding- 6, Overall Rating: 4.4*

- Very useful.
- Enjoyable, helpful, good ideas.
- Really helpful and interesting.
- Very informative; provided additional reasons for inter-jurisdictional conversations.

**g. Saturday Lunch Speaker (Dan Tangherlini, Presenter)**

*Good- 2, Excellent- 3, Outstanding- 6, Overall Rating: 4.4*

- Eye opener for all of us; need to work more collaboratively.
- Helpful in better understanding Metro's history and informative in considering its future.

**h. Metro Dedicated Funding (Gerry Connolly, Michael Knapp, Panelists)**

*Excellent-7, Outstanding-3, Overall Rating: 4.3*

- Excellent discussion and participation.
- The best part was to begin mapping a strategy for next steps.

**i. Strengthening COG's Effectiveness in the Region (Chair Fisette, Moderator)**

*Good- 4, Excellent- 4, Outstanding-2, Overall Rating: 3.8*

- Good feedback from participants

**4. Location and facilities**

*Excellent- 2, Outstanding-9, Overall Rating: 4.8*

- Gorgeous, lets do it again.

**5. Overall Retreat Rating**

*Good-1, Excellent-6, Outstanding-4, Overall Rating: 4.3*

**Additional Comments and Recommendations for Future Board Retreat**

- *Move agenda from Friday to Saturday, please.*
- *By far the best COG retreat I have participated in; in fact- one of the best COG events ever. The time allowed for open discussion was very beneficial and productive.*
- *Disappointed with the EGW discussion. Very harsh comments and perhaps a misunderstanding of Phase 2. Dan Tangherlini was terrific.*
- *More diverse representation than last year; need to emphasize the importance of attending.*
- *I appreciate your including some of us who are not on the Board.*
- *This retreat provided more opportunities to discuss matters and exchange ideas. In the future, challenge members to put their efforts into a regional context. For example, explaining how the best practices contribute to the region benefit or the region's vision.*

**Attachment D**  
**COG RETREAT FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**  
**July 28-30, 2006**

Discussion and Recommendation to the COG Board on Envision Greater Washington

- Participants concluded that the COG Board is not prepared, at this time, to support the EGW recommendations and will convene a working group to develop a recommendation for the Board's consideration in October.
- Various officials identified areas of support and concern with a focus on opportunities for collaboration, the risks of competition and duplication, and governance and funding models.
- Areas of specific interest were the focus and mission of the campaign, possible partnership opportunities, and COG's role.

Strengthening COG's Effectiveness in Support of its Vision, Mission and Goals

Participants at the Retreat approved the following initiatives to ensure that COG remains a strong and effective organization.

Governance:

- The COG Board will begin reserving time on its agenda for members to raise new topics or issues for discussion or referral to policy or technical committees.
- COG staff will provide written and/or electronic copies of the minutes from COG's policy or technical committees; specifically the CAO's.
- COG staff will develop and circulate, to all members, a consolidated calendar of meetings and special events and activities; this would replace or supplement the stand alone flyers currently used.
- COG staff will examine new teleconference technology that would allow COG Board and other policy boards and committees to evaluate the policy benefits and drawbacks associated with more widespread use of teleconference participation.
- To improve policy coordination and accountability, policy committee chairs will be granted ex officio membership on the COG Board.

State and Federal Government Relations:

- A Government Relations Liaisons Committee will be created and charged with determining which legislative and regulatory proposals have regional impact, and reviewing COG policy position for potential legislative initiatives.
  - An ad hoc committee will be convened of this committee to refine COG staff's recommendation and will report to the Board with its recommendation in October.
- COG staff will compile past policy positions taken by the Board in an effort to better evaluate future action.

Economic Competitiveness Study Mission:

- Officials showed interest in the proposed study mission, but raised concern with funding and the negative perception of local official participation. Staff will follow-up with the Greater Washington Initiative to refine the plan, especially funding sources.

