

## Community guided planning efforts under way

AROOSTOOK COUNTY — The first steps in a community guided planning and zoning project for unorganized territories and townships are under way in Aroostook.

In February, the Maine Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) selected Aroostook County as the initial region to participate in a series of local workshops to help determine overall regional interest and, if interest is confirmed, further develop a framework for the community guided planning and zoning process. The LUPC is currently working with Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) to plan for and schedule the workshops.

“Right now we are working to set up a steering committee made up of 12 people who represent the unorganized areas and neighboring communities, made up of large and small landowners, businesses owners, agricultural interests, environmental organizations, tribal representatives, and others. This steering committee will work with NMDC, the LUPC and a consultant to set up the process of how we should be doing this and what are the issues we should be examining,” said Jay Kamm, NMDC senior planner.

Kamm added the first three meetings of the steering committee, although open to the public, are just to develop the framework for the actual planning sessions, which should begin in June.

“When the steering committee meets for the first time on April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Caribou Inn and Convention Centre, we will be planning the process and developing a work plan,” he said.

Recent efforts to improve the effectiveness of managing land use in the unorganized and deorganized areas of Maine have focused in part on the need for more locally guided and proactive planning for these areas. The 2010 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) identifies this type of planning, referred to as prospective zoning, as a priority for implementation. In addition, a directive to initiate prospective zoning is included in recent legislation. “The Land Use Planning Commission sees this initiative as creating opportunities for locally-driven, well-planned development in rural parts of the state” said Nicholas Livesay, the LUPC’s Executive Director.

“Having local control and obtaining local input into land use planning in the unorganized townships will, in the long run produce a better and regionally accepted product as opposed to one that is developed in a centralized Augusta location,” added Kamm. “It’s coming from bottom up as opposed to top down.”

Kamm said after the initial pre-planning meetings public input will be needed to look at all the issues in the unorganized townships.

Once the entire planning process is done, which may take up to 18 months, recommendations will be made to LUPC.

“There is an opportunity to strengthen the economic development potential and protect the environment in the unorganized territories by looking at the zoning and land use activities there,” Kamm said. “Is what’s on the ground there now make sense with future plans.”

For more information please contact:

**Hugh Coxe**, Senior Planner, Maine Land Use Planning Commission, (207) 287-2662, [hugh.coxe@maine.gov](mailto:hugh.coxe@maine.gov)

**Jay Kamm**, Senior Planner, Northern Maine Development Commission, (207) 498-8736, [JKamm@nmdc.org](mailto:JKamm@nmdc.org)