

**Thomas Coleman**  
**15 Wallingford Rd**  
**West Forks, Me 04985**

20 years of forestry experience  
Registered Maine Guide  
Scenic Tour Pilot  
Timber Asset Advisor

**Testimony regarding:**

**LD 870 An Act Regarding the Membership of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission**

Good morning-

For those who may not have worked with the previous iteration of the LUPC, or who may have forgotten why the Land Use Regulation Commission was restructured to the current Land Use Planning Commission, our current planning board functions much better than LURC and much more cooperatively with the people directly affected by their decisions. This is a direct result of the restructuring that focused the scope of the organization on balancing development and protection, and which placed people with real and direct experience and interest in the unorganized and deorganized territories (the UT) in the policy positions.

**Though I have moved around the state and have lived in organized areas for short times, I was born and raised in a plantation governed by LURC, have worked my entire career in forestry and guiding in the UT and currently live in another plantation zoned and permitted under the LUPC. There are improvements to policy that could be made at the LUPC, primarily around actually encouraging logical subdivisions to alleviate our substantial housing shortage. That being noted, these policy decisions should be made by those who reside in, continually work in and deeply understand the issues at hand in the UT**

**HISTORIC BACKGROUND:**

Membership

Amending the membership of the UT commission to make nearly 40% of the board appointees of the governor, whose qualifications are technical in nature with no

requirement that those people be residents, past or present of the unorganized or deorganized areas makes little sense. I am educated, trained and have scientific and technical experience in all of the areas listed, including land planning and finance and running small businesses. That experience in no way makes me qualified to understand the needs of Portland or Augusta to a degree that I should be on their planning board, nor do I think I should be allowed to be involved there, as the decisions made there have no real bearing on my life. I live in the UT and my experience and knowledge is best used there.

To be qualified to be a planning board member for a given region, one should be a resident or at least have a vested interest in the success of that region long term, both economically and ecologically. That requires at least past residency or long term work in the jurisdiction. Maine prides itself in strong local decision making to achieve the best benefit for the local community. Let's not stray from that ideal just because there are fewer of us in the UTs.

Moreover, with the polarization in politics we currently experience, increasing the commission board by such a large degree to members appointed by a single political official has real potential to destabilize the process and integrity of the board's efforts due to a single political whim. That alone is exemplary of poor planning for a board tasked with looking out for the long-term vitality of a region.

Bluntly, the current LUPC is functioning relatively well. In my day to day work, I hear all the time from people who have been through ringer on development permits over the years that "at least the LUPC has people you can work with now." There are always going to be policy items some of us want to see changed, but having locally appointed people, with direct life experience in their area of influence and direct life effects of their decisions keeps the process healthy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas Coleman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom right of the page.