

Dear Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and Members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee -

I am a resident of Lexington Township in the Unorganized Territory of Somerset County. I attend LUPC meetings, County Commissioner meetings and keep my finger on the pulse of what is happening in this area, such as the recent Land for Maine's Future land acquisition to protect and preserve an important mixed-use parcel and local deer yard for the enjoyment of all.

During 2015, I served on the Franklin/Somerset Community Planning Process for Townships and Plantations, which was a response to the directive contained in the Maine 125th Legislature's, "An Act to Reform Land Use Planning in the Unorganized Territory". The purpose of our committee was to initiate prospective zoning in the unorganized areas of the state while simultaneously coordinating prospective zoning with local and regional planning efforts. I was honored to serve my community as the small landowner representative of that committee. Through that community service, I became more familiar with the Unorganized Territory CLUP (Comprehensive Land Use Planning Document) and original Land Use Districts and Standards document.

Because of my involvement in the workings of the Unorganized Territory, I was quite surprised to learn about LD 870 - An Act Regarding the Membership of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission - during my monthly perusal of the Somerset County Commissioner Meeting Agenda. My immediate instinct told me that a solution was being proposed for something that is not broken.

I performed some follow up sleuthing to try to find answers to the following questions:

Why would a Governor need to appoint a total of 5 policymaking LUPC Commissioners to a committee that is having no trouble fulfilling its current duties?

Why would a Governor need to have the power to control LUPC Commissioner staffing by appointing almost 1/3 of the proposed total staffing? (with the possibility of adding greater than 5 appointments, which could add many years of individual appointment, if appointment deadlines are not met for some reason by the county)

Why does this bill omit the the Governor's burden of appointing an LUPC Commissioner candidate based on the customary county commissioner burden language requiring a candidate to live, work, formerly reside, "or have significant professional experience working within the commission's jurisdiction"?

Why are the county commissioners being treated as if they are not doing their jobs?

Why are the deadlines to fill positions so rushed?

My answers all pointed to one conclusion. There are no reasonable answers, because there are no real problems with the current process. The current system for appointing LUPC Commissioners is working as it was intended.

Therefore, I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD870.

Kay Michka

3/20/2025