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By Aroostook Republic and News, Caribou, ME

NMDC hosts first Mobilize Maine goal-setting meeting

CARIBOU – Members of the Aroostook Goal Setting Action Team for Mobilize Maine, a statewide initiative to build regional capacity for economic development, gathered for their first meeting July 1 at the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC). The Action Team is tasked with first analyzing regional and state data, demographics and trends as they relate to regional and state economies; and then using what it has learned to set measurable goals that will drive the Northern Maine economy.

The Mobilize Maine project calls for interpreting data in seven core areas. Action Team members have tackled the first three: Population, Labor Participation Rate and Average Wage. The group will meet again July 22 to analyze Per Capita Income, GDP Growth, Internet Subscriptions, and Bachelor Degrees.

“After setting measurable goals in these seven areas, this Action Team will then request and review additional region-specific data and indicators for any other measurable goals they might want to explore for the region,” said Michael Eisensmith, NMDC’s Economic Development Director who helped facilitate the meeting. “These goals, and how they can be suitably measured, will then be presented to Mobilize Maine’s Aroostook Leadership Team for review, with a Discovery Meeting for the larger community to follow in September.”

Members of the Aroostook Goal Setting Action Team include Chris Anderson, F.A. Peabody, who also sits on the Aroostook Leadership Team; Steve Buck, Caribou City Manager; Jane Towle, RE/MAX Central; Kris Doody, Cary Medical Center, who also sits on the Aroostook Leadership Team; John Goding, Huber Engineered Woods; Doug Hazlett, Houlton Town Manager; and Cathy Beaulieu, owner, Wilder’s Jewelry Store. Action Team members

unable to attend the first meeting were Lara Cannon, Wintergreen Arts Center; Dave Rossignol, NorState FCU; and leaders from Northern Maine Community College and Momentum Aroostook.

In addition to Eisensmith, others facilitating the strategic planning process were Mobilize Maine planning consultant Jim Haguewood of ViTAL Economy Alliance, via telephone; Water J. Elish, President and CEO of Aroostook Partnership for Progress and administrator for Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development; and Tessie Dubois, NMDC Research & Development Specialist.

Mobilize Maine is a statewide economic development initiative involving all six of the state's Economic Development Districts (EDD), including the Northern Maine EDD which is administered by NMDC. The initiative to build regional capacity is funded in part by FairPoint Communications through its planning consultant ViTAL Economy Alliance, the latter which specializes in Asset-Based Community Economic Development. A Rural Business Opportunity Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to NMDC will fund a portion of the project taking place in the County.