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CAPITOL PLANNING COMMISSION
C/O BUREAU OF GENERAL SERVICES
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EARLE G. SHETTLEWORTH JR.
CHAIR

January 15, 2020

Senator Ned Claxton, Co-Chair
Representative Roland D. Martin, Co-Chair
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0100

RE: Review of the Capitol Planning Commission under the
Government Evaluation Act

Dear Senator Claxton and Representative Martin:

In response to your letter of April 29, 2019 to Commissioner Kirsten Figueroa, Department of Administrative and Financial Services, I am submitting the Capitol Planning Commission's Government Evaluation Act Report.

Should you or your staff need further information from the Commission, please do not hesitate to let me know. Likewise, as your review of the Commission proceeds, I would be pleased to meet with your committee and/or its staff to assist in this process.

Sincerely,

Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., Chair
Capitol Planning Commission

cc: Kirsten Figueroa, Dept. of Administrative and Financial Services

Capitol Planning Commission Government Evaluation Act Report

The Capitol Planning Commission ("CPC") was created by statute in 1967. It originally had jurisdiction over property in the vicinity of the State House, on the West side of the Kennebec River, but in 1991, the State's East Campus was added to the CPC's jurisdiction. The Commission is charged with establishing and maintaining a master plan for the orderly development of state buildings and grounds in the Capitol Area. The statute creating the CPC declares that "it is the policy of the State of Maine that the development of the Capitol Area shall proceed with economy, careful planning, aesthetic consideration and with due regard to the public interests involved." The Commission consists of nine members, with the Director of the Bureau of General Services serving as the Secretariat. (5 MRSA c. 14-A § 297-308).

From 1999 through 2000, the Commission joined the Department of Administrative and Financial Services and many other stakeholders in the development of a Master Plan for Augusta area facilities. A professional planning firm was hired to assess all the State's holdings in Augusta, Hallowell, Gardiner, and Vassalboro.

The Plan addressed crucial facility issues including which buildings to retain, renovate, or demolish; which to designate as "excess property" and offer to the private sector for reuse; which locations are available for new construction; and which locations are to be preserved as green space. The Plan has proved invaluable to the State's facility decisions. It is a blueprint for development and for preservation. For example, when it was proposed that the East Campus green space be bisected by a roadway to serve as a bridge approach, the Master Plan put the issue conclusively to rest, and in 2016, the State sold a portion of the Hallowell campus to RSU #2 and the remainder to Mastway Development Corp. for adaptive reuse.

The State Facilities Master Plan has been approved by the Legislature as a "Resolve." It is a credit to the CPC that the Legislature entrusted the Commission with responsibility for administering the Plan: all amendments must be considered and approved by the CPC, and since the Master Plan is now two decades old with many of its recommendations accomplished, the Commission will be reviewing and revising the Plan as appropriate, with a new focus on sustainability and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A professional planning firm will be retained in early 2020 for critical updates to the plan and its findings will be reported to the Governor, the Legislature and the DAFS Commissioner.

The Commission's Rules and Regulations essentially create zoning districts. Proposed projects within the zones must apply to and receive the Commission's approval before construction is undertaken. The Commission must approve all projects in the Capitol Area before construction, development, or change of use is allowed.

The rules and zoning districts have been revised to recognize the Kennebec Arsenal National Historic Landmark; the Capitol Complex Historic District; the historic State House; the East Campus Historic District; the Riverview Psychiatric Center; the Capitol Park area; the green spaces on both sides of the River; and the need for "gateway" approaches to the State's facilities. Generally, the revised rules will lead to the preservation of historic properties while recognizing that some will undergo adaptive reuse. In 2017, a portion of the CPC-protected property was removed from the boundaries of the CPC. The sites so removed are now occupied by the Maine Public Employees Retirement System (Maine PERS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) headquarters at 109 Capitol Street. CPC maps are being revised to reflect the changes. Design standards guiding the types of development and the quality of materials were drafted to accompany the zoning map changes.

Projects overseen by the CPC have incorporated high performance standards and high quality, durable materials. Even small projects such as street lighting and curbing installations have a major impact on the overall aesthetics of the streetscapes and landscapes of the East and West campuses. The Commission has endeavored to control the visual impact of such unspectacular installations as electrical transformers, utility poles, street lighting and pump stations. These infrastructure components are the backbone of the State's campuses yet can destroy views and the aesthetics of their environments if not properly designed and sited.

The Capitol Planning Commission reviewed and approved several significant projects between 2011 and 2019. On the East Campus, two former Augusta Mental Health Institute Buildings, Deering and Marquardt, were renovated for use as state offices. Deering was fully renovated, and Marquardt was partially renovated. Mechanical upgrades and other improvements to the second floor of Marquardt will take place in 2020. The Greenlaw Building will be renovated in 2020-2022 to provide the DHHS Health and Environmental Testing Lab with upgraded facilities.

The East Campus Mechanical Building was also renovated for use by the Bureau of General Services, and the Campbell Barn was restored for a state agency storage facility. In response to the increased number of state employees on the East Campus, a parking study was undertaken that resulted in expanded, paved parking lots as well as road, sidewalk, and lighting improvements. The East Campus was also improved by the demolition of the following obsolete and deteriorated former AMHI buildings: the paint shop, icehouse, potting shed, carpentry building, doctors' houses, and farmhouse.

On the West Campus, significant repairs and improvements were made to the Blaine House and its grounds, including the recent installation of solar panels and a solar tracker. Adjacent to the Blaine House, the former Bangor Savings Bank building was acquired and demolished for parking. Renovations began at 19 Union Street to provide office space for several state agencies.

In 2017, the Maine Department of Transportation relocated its maintenance facility from 109 Capitol Street to an industrial park. The administration purchased the 9-acre property and sold it to a private real estate development company. The company built a 100,000-square foot building on the site and it is now leased to the State for the Department of Health and Human Services' headquarters. The boundaries of the Capitol Planning District were amended by the Maine Legislature to remove the 9-acre parcel. The old Maine PERS building (corner of Sewall and Capitol Streets) was demolished to provide landscaping and parking for the DHHS building, and Maine PERS relocated to a new facility on upper Capitol Street.

The CPC was notified of work anticipated to take place in 2020 on the Cultural Building, the Burton Cross Building exterior envelope, the Ray Building and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

The historic and aesthetic qualities of the State's facilities have incrementally improved over time. Starting in 2020, a renewed focus on energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions will inform the CPC's work. It is the CPC's hope to continue to create pleasing, healthy, and sustainable environments for State employees, visitors, and all citizens of the State of Maine.