



SEN. CRAIG V. HICKMAN, SENATE CHAIR
REP. ANNE-MARIE MASTRACCIO, HOUSE CHAIR

MEMBERS:

SEN. JILL C. DUSON
SEN. BRADLEE T. FARRIN
SEN. STACEY GUERIN
SEN. JEFF TIMBERLAKE
SEN. MIKE TIPPING
REP. JOHN M. EDER
REP. ADAM LEE
REP. MICHAEL H. LEMELIN
REP. CHAD PERKINS
REP. HOLLY B. STOVER

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY
June 17, 2026

Call to Order

The Chair, Senator Hickman, called the Government Oversight Committee to order at approximately 9:35 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Senators:	Senator Hickman, Senator Farrin, Senator Timberlake Attended via Zoom: Senator Guerin Absent: Senator Duson, Senator Tipping
Representatives:	Representative Mastraccio, Representative Eder, Representative Lee, Representative Lemelin, Representative Perkins Absent: Representative Stover
Legislative Staff:	Peter Schleck, Director of OPEGA Jennifer Greiner, OPEGA Administrative Secretary/GOC Clerk
Others:	Randall Liberty, Commissioner of Maine Department of Corrections Ben Beal, Warden, Maine Correctional Center Jill O'Brien, Director of Government Affairs, Maine Department of Corrections

Introduction of Committee Members

The members of the Committee introduced themselves.

New Business

To watch this meeting - the recorded Live Stream can be viewed here: [June 17, 2026 GOC Meeting](#)

Department of Corrections Perspectives on Request by Representative Alicia Collins and 22 other Legislators for OPEGA Review of Protection from Abuse in Maine Correctional Facilities

Invited: Commissioner Randall Liberty and Warden Ben Beal

Sen. Hickman invited Representatives from the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide any perspectives they can about the matters in the Letter from Representative Collins and 22 other Legislators requesting an OPEGA review of protection from abuse in Maine Correctional Facilities. Sen. Hickman noted that DOC was provided with questions from the Committee in advance of today's meeting, and those questions may be found here: [Letter from GOC to DOC_6-11-2026](#)

DOC also provided information to the Committee in advance of today's meeting which may be found here:

- [DOC Response to Rep. Collins Letter](#)
- [2025 PREA Annual Report](#)
- [List of Grants for DOC](#)

Commissioner Liberty of the Department of Corrections introduced himself and Warden Beal.

Commissioner Liberty stated that the matter outlined in Rep. Collins' letter is currently in litigation and due to that litigation, he will be limited in his discussion with the Committee. Commissioner Liberty provided additional documents to the Committee which may be found here: [Information provided by DOC](#)

Commissioner Liberty stated he has been in his current position for eight years, a law enforcement professional for 44 years, and a retired Command Sergeant Major in the U.S. Army. Commissioner Liberty added that he is a retired sheriff from Kennebec County and previously a Warden of the Maine State Prison.

Commissioner Liberty stated he takes the responsibilities of Commissioner very seriously, noting this includes the people in his care, which is currently 2,100 incarcerated residents in the facilities across the state.

Commissioner Liberty stated the Maine DOC is known nationally and internationally for its work with enhanced nutrition, scratch cooking, organic gardening, and education. Commissioner Liberty added that Maine DOC is a national leader for treatment for substance use disorder.

Commissioner Liberty stated he is on the Board of Trustees for the Maine Criminal Justice Academy which has a national leading curriculum.

Commissioner Liberty also stated the International Association of Corrections and Prisons invited him to speak in Istanbul, Turkey at their conference last year, in which 60 nations attended, about the Maine Model of Corrections, and he has been invited to the conference again this year.

Commissioner Liberty stated that Corrections are measured by Return to Custody rates, generally by how many individuals who have graduated from the prison system then return to custody within a three-year period, adding that in 2025, Maine had a return to custody rate of 21% and that some states have 50% or higher rates. Commissioner Liberty also stated that those who obtain an associate's degree at Maine DOC have a return rate of 0.5%.

Commissioner Liberty stated that some who are incarcerated can be hired for remote work, which allows them to earn a fair wage and prepare for reentry.

Sen. Timberlake stated his concern is the safety of residents in the women's facilities and asked if it was true that trans men cannot be housed in the men's facilities.

Commissioner Liberty stated that it is inaccurate that trans men cannot be housed in the men's facilities, and that they have the right to request to be housed in the men's facilities if they wish.

Sen. Timberlake asked Commissioner Liberty to provide for the Committee the number of trans men who have ever been housed in men's facilities, where were they housed and how they were housed in men's facilities.

Commissioner Liberty stated that he will provide the information requested if he is authorized to do so.

Sen. Timberlake clarified that he is not asking for names of individuals.

Commissioner Liberty stated that if there's a request from an individual to be housed in the male facility, and it meets the criteria, Maine DOC will grant the request.

Sen. Hickman asked how have the Maine DOC rules in relation to gender identity been working or not working.

Commissioner Liberty stated the Maine DOC believes the rules have been working well, adding that Title 34 of Maine statutes and the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) require them to do this work and they are following the law.

Sen. Hickman read into the record from the handout Commissioner Liberty provided which contains Title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 115, Prison Rape Elimination Act National Standards, Subpart A, Screening for Risk of Victimization and Abusiveness, section 115.42:

- a) The agency shall use information from the risk screening required by § 115.41 to inform housing, bed, work, education, and program assignments with the goal of keeping separate those inmates at high risk of being sexually victimized from those at high risk of being sexually abusive.
- b) The agency shall make individualized determinations about how to ensure the safety of each inmate.
- c) In deciding whether to assign a transgender or intersex inmate to a facility for male or female inmates, and in making other housing and programming assignments, the agency shall

consider on a case-by-case basis whether a placement would ensure the inmate's health and safety, and whether the placement would present management or security problems.

- d) Placement and programming assignments for each transgender or intersex inmate shall be reassessed at least twice each year to review any threats to safety experienced by the inmate.
- e) A transgender or intersex inmate's own views with respect to his or her own safety shall be given serious consideration.
- f) Transgender and intersex inmates shall be given the opportunity to shower separately from other inmates.
- g) The agency shall not place lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex inmates in dedicated facilities, units, or wings solely on the basis of such identification or status, unless such placement is in a dedicated facility, unit, or wing established in connection with a consent decree, legal settlement, or legal judgment for the purpose of protecting such inmates.

Sen. Hickman asked whether or not the staff feels the concerns of the rights and concerns of transgender residents should supersede the rights and concerns of any other resident in Maine DOC.

Commissioner Liberty stated that all residents are treated equally, and the civil rights of everyone are respected equally.

Sen. Hickman stated that there had been some questions regarding communications between Maine DOC and lawmakers regarding this matter, noting that Commissioner Liberty included a response letter to Rep. Collins which answers specific requests, as well as an email to Rep. Soboleski with information requested through FOAA.

Sen. Hickman stated that he wanted it to be clear that there was communication between Maine DOC and lawmakers regarding this matter.

Commissioner Liberty stated the responses to the lawmakers were significant responses, including Warden Beal inviting any legislator or anyone to do a tour of the facility and see firsthand the conditions and talk with residents, adding that Warden Beal has conducted three tours with different representatives.

Commissioner Liberty also added that in relation to PREA, an inspection was recently conducted by a federal PREA auditor who spent three days at the Maine Correctional Center and no concerns were noted.

Rep. Lee stated that a court of law or a policy committee may be a more appropriate place for this discussion, adding that the current lawsuit against Maine DOC asks for an injunction against the state statute Title 34-A §1208-B(3). Rep. Lee stated that a policy committee could, in a future legislature, alter or repeal this statute. Rep. Lee asked Commissioner Liberty how would housing decisions change if this statute was repealed?

Commissioner Liberty stated that if the law was repealed, they would follow the law.

Rep. Lee asked if the federal law would still apply if the state law was repealed.

Commissioner Liberty stated that federal law would still apply.

Sen. Timberlake asked, with regard to 28 CFR 115.42, Executive Order 14168, which directs agencies to house individuals in prisons according to biological sex not identity and directs the Attorney General to amend 28 CFR 115.41 to reflect this. how Commissioner Liberty interprets this Executive Order.

Sen. Hickman stated that Executive Orders do not change federal law and do not have the force of law.

Sen. Timberlake stated he disagrees with Sen. Hickman's statement.

Commissioner Liberty stated that federal law trumps an executive order in his opinion, and he follows federal law and state law.

Rep. Mastraccio stated, in looking at Title 34A § 3131(10), asked if the amendment made on this legislation during the 130th Legislature had any impact on the rules referenced during today's discussion.

Commissioner Liberty stated that the amendment made for Title 34A § 3131(10) in combination with PREA resulted in the rules on this matter, adding that for Maine DOC this is a legislative matter.

Sen. Farrin stated that he appreciates the information provided, however there is a real concern that there are residents in the custody of Maine DOC that do not feel safe or that their voices are being heard.

Commissioner Liberty stated that in the eight years he has been in this position, he and his team have managed more than 10,000 state prisoners and asked the Committee how many letters they have received of those 10,000 that have chronic persistent mental illness, severe addiction issues, significant trauma backgrounds, or significant criminal backgrounds. Commissioner Liberty also stated that anytime that there is an allegation or concern raised by any resident, that person is immediately placed in a safe environment and a full investigation is conducted and the matter is taken very seriously.

Rep. Perkins stated that he acknowledges that Maine DOC does a lot of good work, and asked if, since the passage of LD 1044, has there been an increase in the number of complaints from female inmates of sexual harassment or sexual abuse.

Commissioner Liberty stated there are very few assaults that occurred at the Maine Correctional Center, and there has not been an increase over time, and that because of the Maine Model of Corrections, violence in all facilities has dramatically decreased. Commissioner Liberty stated that in 2017 there were over 17 client on client assaults, per month, department-wide and this is now down to less than 10 client on client assaults per month. Commissioner Liberty stated that the Federal PREA has specific reporting requirements which the Department adheres to. Commissioner Liberty added that if there is an increase in reporting, this would indicate that the system is working in that if someone feels unsafe, they report it.

Rep. Perkins asked for a copy of the PREA reports since the passage of LD 1044 for the Committee to review.

Rep. Perkins stated that he understands PREA considers the rights and dignity of all persons, however in his opinion LD 1044 seems to put an emphasis on individuals who identify as transgender, or non-binary rather

than the individuals they are placed with. Rep. Perkins asked if Maine law puts more protection on individuals who are transgender or non-binary than federal law does.

Commissioner Liberty stated that he believes Maine law is consistent with federal law, and he believes the environment at the Maine Correctional Center is a very safe environment for all residents of the facility. Commissioner Liberty stated that the complaint brought to this Committee is an anomaly and the facts of the matter will be determined in court.

Rep. Eder stated that the Committee has heard that women are put in segregation for not using preferred pronouns and asked if Commissioner Liberty could confirm this.

Commissioner Liberty stated that he has no knowledge of that happening.

Sen. Hickman requested PREA Reports from before LD 1044 passed into law forward for the Committee to review.

Commissioner Liberty stated that he will provide the reports requested.

With no further questions from the Committee, Sen. Hickman thanked Commissioner Liberty and Warden Beal for being here today, adding that if there are any follow-up questions from the Committee, they will be sent to them.

Sen. Hickman asked for the will of the Committee on this matter.

Rep. Lee stated that the request letter from Rep. Collins did bring forward meaningful issues, however he questioned whether this Committee is the proper forum for this discussion, stating that the remedies requested are either damages to individuals which can be resolved in the litigation, or changes to the current state legislation which can only be achieved through amendment to the statute which would need to happen in the 133rd Legislature.

Sen. Farrin agrees with Rep. Lee's statement, adding that the Committee will receive follow-up information and additional reports to review. Sen. Farrin stated it is clear there is a difference in perspective from the Warden and Commissioner about the conditions in the facility and anticipates having additional follow-up questions after going through all the information.

With no further discussion, Sen. Hickman stated the Committee will go over the additional information when it is received.

(continued on next page)

OPEGA Director: Proposed Provisional Scope for Committee Consideration, in the Event the Committee Votes to Direct an OPEGA Review of State Contract Administration

Sen. Hickman next invited the OPEGA Director, Peter Schleck, to present a proposed scope of work on Contract Administration, in the event it is the will of the Committee that this matter be assigned to OPEGA for review.

Director Schleck, with the Chair's permission, read into the record a memo to the Committee containing proposed provisional scoping for a potential OPEGA review of Contract Administration across all state agencies as requested by the Committee at the May 20, 2026, meeting. A copy of the memo may be found here: Memo from Director Schleck to GOC: [Proposed Scoping for OPEGA review of Contract Administration](#)

Rep. Mastraccio asked if there would be a report back to the Committee at the completion of Phase 1 of the scope.

Director Schleck stated there would be a report back to the Committee after the completion of Phase 1.

Rep. Mastraccio asked if after the report on Phase 1, the Committee could decide that Phase 2 is no longer necessary, or redirect Phase 2, or report out legislation on Phase 1.

Director Schleck stated that yes, the Committee could make any of those decisions at that time.

Rep. Mastraccio asked how long the Phase 1 review would take OPEGA to complete.

Director Schleck stated that he could not say specifically when the review could be completed, however having two phases for the review does allow OPEGA to get to some issues in DHHS and report back to the Committee sooner. Director Schleck stated that OPEGA is committed to working on all the matters the Committee has assigned in the order they are received, noting that the Committee may always vote, with the appropriate majority, to change the order of priorities in OPEGA's work plan.

Rep. Mastraccio stated that her concern is that a new administration will be coming in next year and this issue could be important and inform some legislation during the 133rd Legislature.

Director Schleck stated that, as the Committee is aware, there was legislation for a study on this matter which did not receive funding during the last session, which may be presented again during the 133rd Legislature. Director Schleck stated if this does happen, he will ask the Committee whether OPEGA should pause this review to allow the Study to do its work.

Motion and Vote

Sen. Hickman asked for the will of the Committee on this matter.

Sen. Farrin made the motion to approve the Proposed Scope of Work and for the matter to be added to OPEGA's work plan.

The motion was seconded by Rep. Perkins.

With no further discussion the vote was taken.

The motion was unanimously approved by all members who voted. (Eight members were present for the vote, one member voted later by absentee as allowed by Committee Rules.)

OPEGA Director's Report

With no objection from the Committee, Sen. Hickman turned to the fifth agenda item, out of order, the OPEGA Director's Report.

Sen. Hickman next invited Director Schleck to present his Director's Report.

Director Schleck presented a letter from the Department of Administrative & Financial Services (DAFS) to the Committee containing information on the use of shared email accounts across Maine state government, as well as a list of all shared mailboxes as requested by the Committee. A copy of the letter may be found here:

- [DAFS Response Letter to GOC: re Shared Email Accounts](#)
- [List of State Government Shared Email Accounts](#)

Rep. Perkins asked if any of the shared email accounts are aliases for actual monitored accounts or are any of the shared email accounts orphan accounts that are unmonitored.

Director Schleck stated he will look into Rep. Perkins' question and follow up.

Director Schleck next acknowledged a letter to the Committee from Rep. Milliken asking the Committee to consider Rep. White's previous request letter regarding concerns regarding DHHS. A copy of the letter may be found here: [Letter to GOC from Rep. Milliken](#)

Sen. Hickman stated that the Committee had received Rep. White's letter dated August 28, 2025, adding that Rep. White did not wish to present it formally during a Committee meeting himself, it was presented to the Committee by Director Schleck on September 17, 2025. A copy of Rep. White's letter may be found here: [Letter to GOC from Rep. White](#)

Sen. Hickman stated that he reached out to Rep. Milliken regarding her request letter before today's meeting, adding that Rep. Milliken informed him that she does not need to come to the Committee to present her letter.

Director Schleck next acknowledged a request letter from Rep. Eder regarding the Maine Community Foundation. Director Schleck also acknowledged and addressed those attending who experienced the profound tragedy of the Lewiston mass shooting which occurred on October 25, 2023. Director Schleck

stated though it is often his duty to talk procedurally about such matters, and he wanted those attending and listening to know that any statements made about OPEGA's process, the rules of the Committee, or the scope of relevant jurisdiction is not intended to minimize or diminish the profound loss or experiences anyone has had.

Director Schleck stated his understanding of the OPEGA statute is that while the OPEGA process can review a nonprofit, the OPEGA statute specifically defines such "other entity" in Title 3 Chapter 37 § 992(4), which reads:

"Other entity" means any public or private entity in this State that may be subject to program evaluation under this chapter as the result of its receipt or expenditure of public funds. "Other entity" may include local and county governments, quasi-municipal governments, special districts, utility districts, regional development agencies or any municipal or nonprofit corporation." (emphasis added).

Director Schleck stated he wanted the Committee to understand that he does not have any information that monies collected by the Maine Community Foundation were state monies provided by the state or appropriated by the state. Director Schleck added that OPEGA may not be the forum for this matter. Director Schleck stated that any legislator may request a legal opinion from the Attorney General on this matter.

At the request of Senator Hickman, Director Schleck also read into the record a letter from the Office of the Attorney General to the Maine Community Foundation dated December 30, 2024, relevant to this matter. That letter may be found here: [Maine Attorney General Letter to Maine Community Foundation](#)

Sen. Hickman stated the mass shooting in Lewiston was a profound tragedy. Sen. Hickman stated that he had a conversation with Sen. Timberlake, the Senate Lead on the Committee, regarding this matter about a year ago as there were concerns raised to the about whether it was fair that there were nonprofit organizations in the Lewiston community that received more funds than the individual amounts the victims and their families received and whether there was anything to be done.

Sen. Hickman stated he has read the relevant statute as well as the Mission Statement of the Government Oversight Committee which reads in part, "The Committee seeks to ensure that public funds are expended for intended purposes, and that programs and activities are effectively, efficiently and economically managed. The Committee accomplishes this mission by conducting public inquiries and directing the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability to conduct independent, objective reviews of State agencies and programs and other entities receiving public funds or expending private monies for public purposes.",

Sen. Hickman then read from additional documents provided by the Office of Attorney General regarding this matter, and those documents may be found here:

- [Lewiston Mass Violence Incident Victim Services and Resources Summary](#)
- [Maine Victims' Compensation Program: Lewiston Response](#)

Sen. Hickman also referenced additional documents with detailed information which are posted publicly on the Maine Community Foundation's website and which may also be found here: [Maine Community Foundation Information](#)

Sen. Hickman stated that he understands there may be disagreements about the Maine Community Foundation, however the Office of Attorney General reviewed all the facts and determined there was no further role for the Attorney General.

(see next section for relevant Motion and Committee vote).

Process and Procedure for GOC Consideration of Legislator Requests for OPEGA Program Evaluations

Sen. Hickman stated that given the discussion, now was the proper time to discuss the Agenda Item on Process and Procedure for GOC Consideration of Legislator Requests for OPEGA Program Evaluations. Sen. Hickman made the following statement:

“The iteration of this Committee that this chair has served on now for the second term is that a letter comes to us, if it comes in between meetings, it goes into the Director’s Report. It may simmer there for a bit while the chairs use their prerogative to determine the best time to bring that letter forward for the agenda, at which point we ask the person who presented the letter or any number of people who have signed the letter to come and sit before us and present the case about why we should do something.

That is where this particular issue is at this point in time.

I will also say, respectfully and gently to all Committee members, the spirit of this Committee is bipartisan, it always has been, the joint rules have made it so. Six members, six members, three in each chamber, six in each chamber from both parties.

The chairs set the agenda. The joint rules don’t mention the word agenda, but the prerogative of the chairs is to set the agenda and if we can’t agree on an agenda then the Committee can decide. It is an unwritten rule, not written down, that anything that isn’t written in the rules is at the prerogative of the chairs.

It is also an unwritten rule that members of this Committee cannot get ahead of the Committee. And so, I want to gently explain to all my colleagues, especially those on this Committee, that we are free to say whatever we want, wherever we want, however we want, but because we represent the Government Oversight Committee, I encourage all Committee members to be accurate in their statements, both verbally and in the public, and in writing to the Committee. I’m not going to chastise anyone, but we receive letters from lawmakers that have factually incorrect items written in them because they have not been properly vetted before they have been sent to us.

So, I’m just going to ask Committee members going forward, no matter if you write your own letters or if you have your legislative staff write your letters, make sure that all the information in the letters is factually intact. Opinions are fine, but the facts cannot be argued.

And we received letters, and I've received more than one letter this Committee has, that have had factual inconsistencies in them. And I just want us to be aware that we are the Government Oversight Committee. Transparency, accountability, we have to also live up to that.

So, if we go out and talk to the press, or talk on a radio show, or talk on a television show, we must be clear and impeccable with our word. We can only state facts. We do not want to confuse the public about what we do here.

The processes and procedures we can agree to disagree on or we can amend. In the past staff has informed us that legislative requests were taken up only quarterly. They came in and they were debated, deliberated by this Committee once every three months. We are much more, I will say, responsive than that. So we'll get the letter, it goes into the Director's Report, the public and the Committee and members of the Legislature know that this is something that is on our docket, either for the next Committee meeting or for future consideration, or not at all based upon the information that we have been given.

This is a bipartisan Committee. Again, Lawmakers are free to write their letters and get as many signatures as they like. But I will tell you that when a letter comes in and it's signed by members of one party, you are signifying to this Committee that this is a partisan issue. The Chair doesn't appreciate that because that is not what we're here to do.

As Rep. Lee said earlier, our policy committees are more partisan because of the majority and minority and all that. This Committee is not that way.

And so, while people can do whatever they want, if you submit a letter to this Committee that is only signed by members of one party, you are signaling to the world that this is a partisan issue when it may not be.

And so I just want to gently remind my colleagues on this Committee and in the Legislature, think about that when you submit a letter to the Committee, because we want to do bipartisan work, we want to lead by example, we don't want to get into the weeds of the democrats do this, the republicans care about this and the democrats don't care about that. That is not the case of this Committee. Everything that we receive, no matter who signs it, is going to be received and deliberated fairly and in the same manner.

And so, in this case, we have this letter, it has been presented in the Directors Report. My co-chair and I will decide whether or not at a future meeting it is appropriate for this letter to be presented and come before us.

The other unwritten rule of this Committee is simply that we take off our partisan hat when we walk through the door. We take off most of our political hats when we walk through the door. This is an election year. Two years ago, pretty much had the same conversation with the iteration of that Committee then when things started bubbling up that were about politics, and seeing if we could get people elected or not elected.

And I would just caution this Committee and the rest of this hot summer not to do that. Elections are elections. Partisanship is partisanship. But in this room we do oversight. We want to keep our focus on oversight of systemic problems that we see, not necessarily one-offs, not that the Lewiston shooting is a one-off, it's a mass casualty event, so I am not including that in this conversation.

But we've seen other issues that come before us that are about individual constituent complaints where they don't like an answer that they got from a department or an agency. No is an answer that is sometimes hard to accept. But it is an answer that has to be accepted and all members, all citizens of Maine, all residents of Maine have a state representative, they have a state senator. The first place to go for dissatisfaction with state government is to your state representative and to your state senator and to find out through their offices if the issue that you have can be resolved. I think that members of the public will be surprised at how many issues can be resolved before they ever reach a crisis point where someone wants to draft a letter and ask the Government Oversight Committee to direct OPEGA to do an evaluation.

And so, I strongly encourage the people of Maine to understand that the Government Oversight Committee is not a policy committee. We're not judges, but I like to think that we act like judges when we do our work. We look at the facts, we look at our budget, we look at our resources, and we make decisions based on all of those things, and we just at our last meeting, had a very long conversation about do we have enough resources even to direct OPEGA to do all the work that we agree ought to be done. And so that is a question for the next Committee and the next Director, this Director in the next iteration of the Committee and the budget to make look at staffing to see if the budget needs to be increased so that we can do more work because transparency and accountability in state government are where the rubber meets the road.

I'll pause there because I have one more thing to say about process and procedure of those in the room, especially as it regards recording devices and broadcasts. But I'll pause and see if the Committee has any response to anything the chair has put in front of it."

Rep. Eder stated he had intended to bring the matter of the Maine Community Foundation before the Committee, adding that one of his friends was a victim of the mass shooting. Rep. Eder stated he brought this issue before the Committee now as he is not sure he will be able to return to the Legislature next session.

Rep. Eder stated, in regard to the jurisdiction of the Committee on this matter, that public monies were involved as the city of Lewiston had given public funds to the Maine Community Foundation's fund and he understands that this Committee has jurisdiction over all units of government.

Sen. Hickman asked Director Schleck to comment on Rep. Eder's statement.

Director Schleck stated that the Attorney General, by statute, may be consulted formally by any legislator for an opinion on such matter. Director Schleck stated he is a lawyer licensed in Maine but his role as OPEGA Director is not to provide the Committee legal counsel, adding he is not the authoritative voice on whether there was money that would give the Committee the jurisdiction to direct OPEGA to look into this matter. Director Schleck stated that he does not have information that tells him there is a

clear nexus to state government, state money to comfortably state this matter falls within the jurisdiction of the Committee and OPEGA.

Sen. Hickman stated that the way the law is crafted, it is state agencies and programs that the Committee has jurisdiction over, as well as entities who are funded by the state. Sen. Hickman stated the city of Lewiston is a political subdivision of the state, and so the Committee needs an opinion of whether or not any mismanagement of those public funds (if they were public) is also under the jurisdiction of the Committee. Sen. Hickman stated his opinion that the Committee does not have jurisdiction over the mismanagement of public funds at the local government level, noting this is an opinion the Committee can see to clarify.

Rep. Eder formally requested that the Committee look into whether or not the Committee has jurisdiction over public funds at units of government below the state level.

Rep. Eder also asked the Chairs whether his request letter is still under consideration.

Sen. Guerin stated she believes it is important for the Committee to remain a bipartisan group and not use this Committee and the issues taken up as political fodder. Sen. Guerin also stated she would like to seek an opinion on what the jurisdiction of the Committee is in fundraising efforts.

Rep. Perkins stated he would also like to seek an opinion from the Attorney General's office.

Rep. Lee asked whether the allegation of public funds in this matter are just Lewiston municipal funds or is there an allegation that there were state appropriated funds involved.

Director Schleck stated he has had informal consultations with the Attorney General's office, and his understanding is that there were not state appropriated funds that were placed in the Maine Community Foundation Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds.

Director Schleck stated that state funds were appropriated to the Maine Resiliency Center, which is separate from the Maine Community Foundation Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds, adding that some private funds from the Maine Community Foundation also went to the Maine Resiliency Center.

Rep. Lee stated he would also like to ask the Attorney General's Office if, in the event any of the money falls under "Public Funds", what are the limitations to the Committee's jurisdiction as to the expenditure of all the funds including the private funds, and would the Committee be limited to just the expenditure of the public funds.

Sen. Farrin stated he appreciates Sen. Hickman's comments regarding the bipartisan nature of the Committee and keeping politics out of the Committee's work. Sen. Farrin would also like to seek an opinion on the jurisdiction of the Committee on this matter.

Rep. Mastraccio stated she believes the Committee has jurisdiction over municipalities' public funds, and the question is whether there were any public funds, any Lewiston public taxpayer dollars, funneled into any of the resources listed.

Motion and Vote

Rep. Perkins made the motion to request, through the Chairs, an Attorney General Opinion on OPEGA's authority to review levels of Government below the State and around the Maine Community Foundation's Fund.

The motion was seconded by Sen. Farrin

With no further discussion the vote was taken.

The motion was unanimously approved by all members who voted. (Nine members were present for the vote, one member voted later by absentee as allowed by Committee Rules.)

Sen. Hickman stated one other note he wanted to make on procedure of the Committee and decorum in the Committee room regarded the use of recording devices. Sen. Hickman stated that at a previous meeting an individual attending the meeting put their phone up to record the meeting in front of the horseshoe and it was distracting, and he asked the individual to stop recording. Sen. Hickman stated he has received several emails requesting the proper procedure for such recordings.

Sen. Hickman noted that there is a sign on the door that says no electronic devices, which has been on the doors of committee rooms for many years, noting he is aware of only one legislator who has enforced this.

Sen. Hickman stated that the Chairs have reviewed the law and consulted with the Office of the Attorney General, and then read Title 1 §404 into the record:

“In order to facilitate the public policy so declared by the Legislature of opening the public's business to public scrutiny, all persons shall be entitled to attend public proceedings and to make written, taped or filmed records of the proceedings, or to live broadcast the same, provided the writing, taping, filming or broadcasting does not interfere with the orderly conduct of proceedings. The body or agency holding the public proceedings may make reasonable rules and regulations governing these activities, so long as these rules or regulations do not defeat the purpose of this subchapter.”

Sen. Hickman stated that any member of the public who wishes to broadcast live or film the Committee meeting is welcome to do so, adding that he requests, unless the Committee objects, that individuals who wish to do so sit in the wings of the room where the press often sits as it is less distracting for the work of the Committee.

There were no questions from the Committee regarding electronic devices, and no objections to Sen. Hickman's statement.

OPEGA Director's Report Continued

Director Schleck provided the Committee with an updated OPEGA Work Plan, which may be found here: [Updated OPEGA Work Plan](#) (which will be updated further to reflect the addition of the Contract Administration matter).

Director Schleck stated that, subject to the Chairs' later decision, the next meeting date is tentatively scheduled for July 15, 2026.

Sen. Hickman noted for the Committee and the public that before the agenda for a meeting is public, it is shared with the Committee Leads for review.

Adjourn

With no further discussion, Sen. Hickman adjourned the Government Oversight Committee, without objection, at approximately 11:06am.