

***Commission on Government Efficiency (COGE)***  
***Final Recommendation to Governor Kelly A. Ayotte***

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***Sunsetting the Pease Development Authority and Transitioning Remaining Functions***

The Pease Development Authority (PDA) was created with a time-limited mission: guide the conversion of the former Pease Air Force Base into a thriving center of civilian activity. When the structure was originally established, policymakers expected the transition to take roughly twenty years. More than thirty-five years later, it is pastime to restructure the PDA in light of current needs.

With approximately 80 percent of the PDA-controlled property now held under long-term leases, the central purpose of the PDA has effectively concluded. What remains is not a redevelopment challenge but a modern land-use and economic planning question: how best to manage the final undeveloped parcels and whether some long-term leases should be evaluated for potential sale to realize value for taxpayers. These responsibilities appear to align more naturally with the Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), whose core mission includes statewide economic strategy, business development, and property-related market expertise. As such, we believe it is appropriate to begin planning for a responsible sunset of the PDA and the orderly transition of its development-related functions to BEA.

In doing so, the State should examine how remaining land at Pease can be put to its highest and best use, such as the potential for new housing that addresses regional needs while complementing the existing commercial landscape.

This shift also creates an opportunity to strengthen coordination around infrastructure and transportation associated with Pease.

Sunsetting the PDA and folding ongoing management into appropriate State agencies honors its extraordinary success while ensuring that the long-term stewardship of Pease is aligned with the State

competencies best suited to guide its next chapter.

If the State considers a thoughtful wind-down of the Pease Development Authority and the transfer of its remaining development responsibilities, it is also appropriate to evaluate the related transportation and maritime functions. This moment creates a natural transition point to examine where those responsibilities are best housed within state government, ensuring long-term efficiency, stronger coordination, and clearer lines of accountability. The following section addresses this opportunity directly.

### ***Optimizing Port and Harbor Management***

We found that New Hampshire's ports and harbors, including the State Port Authority in Portsmouth, represent significant but underutilized assets. The Portsmouth facility alone spans approximately ten acres in a highly desirable location, featuring deep water access and a large dock capable of supporting a range of commercial and maritime operations. Despite this, the Port is not currently operating at its full potential, limiting both economic opportunity and State revenue. We believe that management of the State's ports and harbors should be transferred to the Department of Transportation. Such a transfer would streamline oversight, align maritime infrastructure with the state's broader transportation strategy, and significantly expand access to federal grants that are currently unavailable under the existing structure. The Department of Transportation already has the technical expertise, administrative framework, and federal grant relationships needed to effectively manage large scale transportation assets.

In conjunction with this transition, the State should also establish a dedicated Airport Director position within the Department of Transportation to assume responsibility for airport oversight currently managed through the Pease Development Authority. Under our recommendation to sunset the PDA, creating this position ensures continuity, centralizes aviation management under the same agency responsible for statewide transportation infrastructure, and strengthens long-term coordination across highway, maritime, rail, and aviation operations.

With improved management and strategic investment, whether by

public entities, private partners, or public-private collaboration, the Port could generate substantial new economic activity for the Seacoast region. Modernization of facilities, enhanced logistics capabilities, and better integration with freight and highway systems would all contribute to stronger regional commerce and better long-term returns for the State.

We recommend that the State conduct a comprehensive review of all maritime assets, beginning with the Portsmouth Port, to determine the most effective structure for management, capital investment, and partnership development. By aligning these assets under the Department of Transportation, New Hampshire can position itself to compete for federal infrastructure funds, attract private investment, and maximize the long-term value of one of its most strategic properties.

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With appreciation for the opportunity to serve, and gratitude to all who contributed their time and expertise, we respectfully submit this report to Governor Ayotte and to the people of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,  
The Honorable Craig Benson  
Andy Crews  
Co-Chairs, Commission on Government Efficiency

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Full report available at:  
<https://www.governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt971/files/inline-documents/coge-chairmens-report.pdf>