

**New Jersey Highlands Council
Chair Report for Interagency Committee
Meeting of September 22, 2005**

On September 22, 2005, the Interagency Committee held a meeting at the New Jersey Highlands Council office in Chester, New Jersey. Notice of the meeting was provided to the public on the Highlands Council's web site. Council members present at the meeting were: Lois Cuccinello Glenn Vetrano and Janice Kovach. Council staff members present were: Adam Zellner and Chris Danis. This was the fourth meeting of the Committee. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Committee Chair Lois Cuccinello.

Update on the status of the Draft Joint Letter from Highlands Council, COAH and SPC

To date, the joint letter comments from COAH and SPC have not been received. The staff has been in discussions with both COAH and SPC regarding the status of the letter and will continue to work on a resolution. Keith Henderson has been identified as the COAH-Highlands contact person. A future brainstorming session between COAH and the Council has been discussed however and a date is to be determined. COAH has also agreed to attend the upcoming Partnership meetings in October for a Q and A session.

Update of Memorandum of Understanding with State Planning Commission

The MOU with SPC will need to address how the Highlands Council and the SPC address Designated Centers, Redevelopment Areas, Plan Endorsement petitions submitted both prior to and post the Regional Master Plan. Relating to COAH and Plan Endorsement, Highlands municipalities may require reexamination after the adoption of the Regional Master Plan. The objective will be to act quickly and the Highlands Council can provide assistance through the planning grant programs. The objective is to continue the development of an MOU.

Update of Memorandum of Understanding with the Council on Affordable Housing

The MOU with COAH will need to address how outstanding Round One and Two obligations can be addressed utilizing a variety of COAH municipal options. The Highlands Council, COAH and other affordable housing resources will need to collaborate in order to assist municipalities in identifying innovative approaches to meet affordable housing needs. The COAH Third Round and Substantive Certification Grant program established by the Highlands Council is one mechanism to assist municipalities that need to submit their Third Round documents by December 2005. These municipalities will most likely be required to update their December submissions once the Regional Master Plan is completed. Therefore, the grants assist in offsetting the costs required now to identify affordable housing projections based on local knowledge without the Regional Master Plan being in place. Planning assistance grants will also be available to these communities post June 2006.

Memorandum of Understanding with Department of Transportation

The Council staff now includes a transportation planner, Gail Yazersky. The staff has attended DOT meetings where ongoing transportation projects are in the design phase. The staff has also been in conversation with DOT about a MOU that will address how the

Council and DOT will coordinate project reviews and schedules on capital projects, design and land use. The DOT also includes NJ Transit and the staff has had conversations with NJTPA. Both DOT and NJTPA have offered their assistance and access to existing data sources in support of the Regional Master Plan. The Highlands Council will be part of the DOT review process for both the Planning and Preservation Area. The DOT will be drafting the first version of the MOU for the Council to review. Lois Cuccinello asked staff to confirm that all Council members received a copy of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for their records and use during discussions.

Memorandum of Understanding with Department of Environmental Protection

The staff has been working with DEP on many levels to advance data development needs and comments to DEP rulemaking. A MOU between the Highlands Council and DEP will be forthcoming the details are still being defined.

Public Comments

One commenter stated that the DEP website data is rather inaccurate and that the features of farm property were incorrect or details and land features were missing. The commenter asked how will this be addressed in the Regional Master Plan and asked whether digital data will be required moving forward so that map information can be readily updated. Councilmembers and staff stated that they are working with DEP to utilize the 2002 Land use/Land Cover data and the updated stream hydrography data. This data will be used to perform the analysis needed for the Land Use Capability map. Currently, digital map submittals are required by DEP and will continue to be required by the Council and DEP.

Another commenter asked if better flood management data be evaluated as part of the Regional Master Plan. The staff stated that the Highlands Council has established funding for LIDAR Digital Elevation model 2' contour data to be developed for the entire Highlands region. The Council will be working with the seven counties and USGS to coordinate this analysis. The Council is committed to improving the quality and quantity of this data for the region.

The last commenter stated that the Council should be sensitive to rail line extensions and freight line upgrades or re-establishments throughout the Highlands region in order to balance these needs with rural area quality of life and resource protection.

Meeting adjourned 10:55 am.