



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 820
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0820

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

LT. GOVERNOR TAHESHA L. WAY
SECRETARY OF STATE

THOMAS K. WRIGHT
CHAIRMAN

WALTER C. LANE
Acting Executive Director/Acting Secretary

**New Jersey State Planning Commission
Minutes of the Meeting Held on August 6, 2025
Zoom Video Conference**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the August 6, 2025, video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) to order at 10:33 a.m.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

It was announced that notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting had been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL

Members Present

Danielle Esser, Director of Governance, NJ Economic Development Authority (joined at 10:37 a.m.)
Joe Grillo, Designee for President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, Board of Public Utilities (joined at 10:49 a.m.)
Susan Weber, Designee for Francis K. O'Connor, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member
Nick Angarone, Designee for Shawn LaTourette, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection
Keith Henderson, Designee for Jacquelyn Suarez, Commissioner, Department of Community Affairs
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member
Melanie Willoughby, Designee for Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Secretary of State, Department of State
Stephen Santola, Public Member
Julia Somers, Public Member
Jeffrey Oakman, Public Member
Thomas Wright, Chairman

Others Present through Video conference

See Attachment A

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Wright asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the minutes of July 2, 2025, with no changes. Julia Somers made the motion, and Stephen Santola seconded it. With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote: Ayes: (10) Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0) Abstains: (0) The July 2, 2025, minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Wright indicated that his comments would be brief due to the packed agenda. He thanked the Commissioners who participated in the Negotiation Sessions (NS) conducted by the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) staff and the counties. Chairman Wright made note of the collaborative efforts made during the meetings to work through issues and was proud to be a part of the process. He looked forward to reading the Impact Assessment (IA) in more depth.

Commissioner Somers shared that she participated in several NS and complimented staff on the collaborative nature of the Sessions. She also noted that the Sessions were efficiently run, with OPA setting a tone of professional respect.

With that, Chairman Wright ended his comments and ceded the floor to Acting Executive Director (AED) Walter Lane for his report.

ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Since the July 2 SPC meeting:

AED Lane provided a brief overview of the Office's work since the July State Planning Commission (SPC), with the exception of State Plan updates, which would be covered later in the meeting.

Plan Endorsement

- Staff is working with numerous towns to achieve Plan Endorsement (PE) status and is asking the Commission to consider approving PE for the Borough of Seaside Heights and the Town of Dover.
- Staff hopes to bring the PE petitions for several additional towns' petitions to the upcoming Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) and SPC meetings.

AED Lane noted that although OPA is focused on updating the State Plan, a great deal of work continues regarding PE.

Staff also attended a large number of meetings, such as but not limited to:

The Interagency Council on Extreme Heat, NJCPA Statewide Planning/Smart Growth Committee, numerous meetings with DEP partners on mapping for PE applications, New Jersey Coastal Coalition Meeting, SJTPO TAC Meeting, the New Jersey Bayshore Council Meeting, and the Practitioner Panel on the 3rd New Jersey Sea Level Rise and Coastal Storms Report.

Lastly, AED Lane reported that OPA's GIS Specialist, Naomi Barnes, retired as of July 31, 2025 and will be sorely missed. OPA is actively working to fill her position.

With no questions or comments from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked Senior Planner, Lisa Avichal to present the PE petition for the Borough of Seaside Heights.

NEW BUSINESS

Plan Endorsement of the Borough of Seaside Heights

Before Ms. Avichal began her presentation, Chairman Wright asked if any members of the municipality wished to comment. Chris Vaz, Borough Administrator, and Jennifer Gorini thanked OPA staff for working together with them on this project.

Ms. Avichal proceeded to present the Borough of Seaside Heights Plan Endorsement petition. The presentation can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/seaside-heights-spc-presentation-8-7-2025.pdf>

Ms. Bennett made note that Commissioners Esser and Grillo joined the meeting since the last vote.

Resolution 2025-06 Adopting the Plan Endorsement Petition for the Borough of Seaside Heights, Ocean County, and Designating One Town Center

The Resolution can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/resolutions/seaside-heights-resolution-2025-06-certified.pdf>

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2025-06. The motion was made by Melanie Willoughby and seconded by Jeffrey Oakman. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (12) Danielle Esser, Joe Grillo, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) Resolution 2025-06 was approved.

With no questions or comments from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked Senior Planner Steven Simone to present the PE petition for the Town of Dover.

Plan Endorsement of the Town of Dover

Before Mr. Simone began his presentation, Chairman Wright asked if any members of the municipality wished to comment.

AED Lane reported that the municipal staff had been great partners and had attended the PIC meeting, but may not be available to join the SPC.

Mr. Simone proceeded to present the Town of Dover Plan Endorsement petition. The presentation can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/dover-spc-presentation-8-6-2025.pdf>

Resolution 2025-07 Adopting the Plan Endorsement Petition for the Town of Dover, Morris County, and Designating One Regional Center

The Resolution can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/resolutions/dover-resolution-2025-07-certified.pdf>

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2025-07. The motion was made by Julia Somers and seconded by Bruce Harris. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (12) Danielle Esser, Joe Grillo, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) Resolution 2025-07 was approved.

Alex Doherty of Dover joined the meeting and expressed excitement at collaborating with OPA to improve the town. He looked forward to working together to facilitate best planning practices, community development, and utilizing existing infrastructure.

With no questions or comments from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked Ms. Avichal to discuss the Impact Assessment and introduce the consultant team. He noted that AED Lane and Mr. Simone would not be participating in the upcoming discussion due to their previous recusals. Chairman Wright then requested that Sara Bennett move AED Lane and Mr. Simone to the Zoom waiting room.

Ms. Bennett reported that AED Lane and Mr. Simone had been moved to the Zoom waiting room.

Resolution 2025-08 Approval of the State Plan Impact Assessment

Ms. Avichal provided a quick recap on the status of the IA. According to the State Planning Act, the IA will describe the impacts of the policies and strategies proposed in the Plan relative to the impacts of what would likely occur without a Plan. OPA is required to distribute the IA to the Governor, legislature, and the governing bodies of each county and municipality, as well as the general public, and it must be made available for public comment for a period extending from 45 days before the first public hearing to 30 days following the last of those hearings. After consideration of the results of the IA, the SPC may choose to either amend or not amend the draft final State Development and Redevelopment Plan as appropriate.

Rowan and Rutgers Universities continue to work on the executive summary of the IA, which will be provided to the Commission to be adopted at a future SPC meeting. She noted the necessity for the Commission to approve the release of the final IA at today's meeting. Any delay would impact OPA's ability to meet the rest of the timeline to adopt the final Plan in December.

Ms. Avichal referred the presentation to the consultant team.

Dr. Kevin Keenan, Dr. John Hasse, Dr. Qian He, and Dr. Mahbubur Meenar of Rowan University, and Leigh Ann Von Hagen and Samuel Rosenthal of Rutgers University proceeded to present on the IA.

The presentation can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/ia-presentation-8-6-2025.pdf>

The State Plan Impact Assessment can be found at:
https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/update-to-state-plan/final_sdrp_impact_assessment_20250806.pdf

Chairman Wright thanked the consultant team for their presentation and opened the floor for Commissioner comment.

Commissioner Somers observed that the change in how the state developed was almost concurrent with the passage of the Highlands Act, which has been successful in helping move toward redevelopment. The ensuing discussion with Commissioners and consultants noted that an overarching theme of the report was the increase in density, units per acre, in almost every county since 2001.

Commissioner Harris thanked the consultants for their presentation and asked who the intended audience for the document was, bearing in mind the length and complexity of the content. He emphasized the importance that the citizens, legislators, and local and county officials are presented with a document that they will both read and understand. He also shared that he submitted five pages of comments to AED Lane, who forwarded the same to the consultant team.

The ensuing discussion among the Commissioners and consultants concluded that there are multiple audiences, including the OPA, the SPC, local and state officials, and most importantly, the people of the State of New Jersey. Chairman Wright added that the IA is written as a technical, dense document to meet statutory requirements and to support the ongoing Cross Acceptance Process. The consultant team continues work on the executive summary, which will be a shortened and more digestible document, providing key points from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Commissioner Angarone emphasized that the language in the State Plan does not, in itself, result in change; rather, it is the advocacy for the policies therein that leads to improvements. The purpose of the IA and the State Plan is to serve as the vision for how development should occur in the state. The presentation on the IA showed that if the policies of the proposed draft State Plan are implemented through state agencies and at the local level, the result will be more equity, more sustainable and resilient development, additional economic growth, and protection of our natural resources. Commissioner Henderson concurred and opined that the State Plan also brought an important level of education to the minds of decision-makers throughout the state, and as such, the tone and context of the language in the document are important.

The group discussed the guidelines regarding changes to the IA after the SPC voted to release the document at the current meeting, and Chairman Wright requested that AED Lane rejoin the meeting to talk about the timeline. Ms. Bennett returned AED Lane to the meeting from the Zoom waiting room. AED Lane stated that the Commission could empower OPA staff to make requested changes after the release, to which the Commission members agreed. Before the vote, Ms. Bennett moved AED Lane back to the Zoom waiting room.

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2025-08. The motion was made by Melanie Willoughby and seconded by Danielle Esser. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (12) Danielle Esser, Joe Grillo, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) Resolution 2025-08 was approved.

Before moving to the next agenda item, Resolution 2025-09 Approval to Release the Draft Statement of Agreements and Disagreements (SAD), Chairman Wright made note that as Commissioners Somers and Robinson had recused themselves from any Sourlands matters, they would not participate in the upcoming discussion. Additionally, AED Lane and Mr. Simone would not participate due to their previous recusals.

Chairman Wright requested that Ms. Bennett move all parties to the Zoom waiting room. Ms. Bennett reported that Commissioner Robinson was not in attendance at the meeting, but that Commissioner Somers would be moved to the Zoom waiting room to join AED Lane and Mr. Simone. That being done, Chairman Wright asked Assistant Planner Felix Zamora to provide a brief update on the Draft Statement of Agreements and Disagreements.

Resolution 2025-09 Approval to Release the Draft Statement of Agreements and Disagreements (SAD)

Mr. Zamora proceeded to present a detailed review of the negotiation process and outcomes. Negotiation Sessions (NS) were held for all 21 counties and the Highlands after which OPA produced two interim reports. Upon completion of the NS, the SPC's negotiation committee determined that the negotiations produced the highest degree of agreement feasible, and the negotiation phase of Cross Acceptance was complete.

Of the 555 items in Appendix A discussed during the NS, the agreement rate was approximately 97%. Appendix B detailed actions to be taken by OPA in the course of producing the draft final SDRP. The Negotiating Entities were informed that draft language to address their issues and comments on both Appendices would be provided in the revised draft scheduled to be approved for release in September.

The Draft Sad can be found here:

https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/update-to-state-plan/draft_sad_2025_reformatted.pdf

Chairman Wright expressed appreciation for the clear and easy-to-understand presentation of the SAD, including both the specific comments and the broader context. He confirmed with Ms. Avichal that the purpose of Resolution 2025-09 is to release the draft SAD, which the Commission cannot act on for 14 days. During those 14 days, the Commission may review the document. After such time, the final can be approved, and changes can be made to the Plan.

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the release of the Draft Statement of Agreements and Disagreements (SAD). The motion was made by Melanie Willoughby and seconded by Bruce Harris. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (10) Danielle Esser, Joe Grillo, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) The Special State Planning Commission Meeting for July 30, 2025, was approved. Elizabeth Terenik had left the meeting and did not vote. Julia Somers was recused on this matter and did not vote.

Before requesting that AED Lane present the next agenda item, Chairman Wright requested that Ms. Bennett move AED Lane, Mr. Simone, and Commissioner Somers from the Zoom waiting room back to the meeting. Ms. Bennett reported that all parties had rejoined the meeting.

Approval of Changing the September State Planning Commission Meeting Date to September 10, 2025

AED Lane stated that, as discussed in June, the group agreed to move the September 3, 2025, SPC meeting to September 10, 2025, to provide additional time for OPA to prepare the revised Draft for review by the Commission. He noted that the PDC meeting would be held as scheduled on September 3, 2025.

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve changing the September State Planning Commission Meeting date to September 10, 2025. The motion was made by Jeffrey Oakman and seconded by Melanie Willoughby. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (11) Danielle Esser, Joe Grillo, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) Changing the September State Planning Commission Meeting date to September 10, 2025 was approved. Elizabeth Terenik had left the meeting and did not vote.

With no additional comment from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked AED Lane to provide the State Plan Update.

STATE PLAN UPDATE

Cross Acceptance Update

AED Lane reported that OPA awarded a second contract to Heyer, Gruel & Associates to assist with the development of the revised Plan. They will also assist with editing and reformatting both the revised and final draft of the final Plan. OPA will be sending the draft Infrastructure Needs Assessment (INA) and the revised draft of the SDRP in the coming weeks.

As previously mentioned, the PDC will most likely be held both on September 3, 2025 and September 10, 2025 to discuss the revised draft Plan. Lastly, AED Lane reported that OPA is working to finalize the new public hearing meeting dates, as the previous schedule was pushed back due to the delayed release of the IA.

Chairman Wright asked the Commissioners if they had any further questions or comments regarding anything previously discussed. As no member commented, he opened the floor to the public.

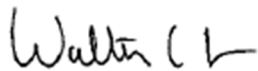
PUBLIC COMMENTS

No member of the public wished to comment.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments from the Commission or the public, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Julia Somers and seconded by Stephen Santola. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter C. Lane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Walter C. Lane
Secretary and Acting Executive Director
Date: September 10, 2025

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: AUGUST 6, 2025 TIME: 10:34 AM

Albert Dib
Alex Dougherty, Town of Dover
Anthony Soriano, Morris County
Barbara Woolley-Dillon, DEP
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Charles Shadle
C. Helms
Cheryl Chrusz
Chris Vaz, Seaside Heights
David Schley
Dillon McNamara
Donna Rendeiro
Erika Phillips, Somerset County
Fullerton Armours
Grant Lucking
John Hasse, Rowan University
H. Dumont
Jacob Thompson
James Humphries, NJ Highlands
Jason Kasler, NJPO
Jennifer Gorini, Seaside Heights
John Crane
Kamal Saleh, Union County
Kevin Keenan, Rowan University
Lauren Purdom, Cape May County
Leigh Ann Von Hagen, Rutgers
Marlene Smith
Matt Baumgardner
Meenar, Md Mahbubur Rabb, Rutgers
Michael Davis, HGA
Mirah Becker, Middlesex County
Peter Kortright, Bergen County
Qian He, Rowan
Ron Simone, Cape May County
Ruth Foster, NJDEP
Samantha De Andrea, Somerset County
Samuel Rosenthal, Rutgers
Sara Sundell, NJSEA
Tim Evans, NJ Future
William Hanson