



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

DONNA A. RENDEIRO
Executive Director/Secretary

**New Jersey State Planning Commission
Minutes of the Meeting Held on October 1, 2024
Zoom Video Conference**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the October 1, 2024 video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) to order at 10:04 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

Giuseppe (Joe) Grillo, Designee for President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, Board of Public Utilities
Susan Weber, Designee for Francis K. O'Connor, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member
Nick Angarone, Designee for Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, Department of Environmental Protection
Keith Henderson, Designee for Jacquelyn Suarez, Commissioner, Department of Community Affairs
Shanel Robinson, County Commissioner Director, County Member
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member
Melanie Willoughby, Designee for Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Secretary of State, Department of State
Julia Somers, 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 September 4, 2024, with non-substantive changes. Melanie Willoughby made the motion, and Shanel Robinson seconded it. With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote: Ayes: (9) Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Shanel Robinson, Keith Henderson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Julia Somers, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0). Abstains: (1) Joe Grillo. The September 4, 2024 minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Wright had no comments and yielded to the Executive Director's report.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Since the September 4 SPC meeting:

- Staff is working with Seaside Heights, Little Egg Harbor, Ocean Township, Woodstown, Ocean City, Barnegat, Sparta, Dennis, Berkeley, Manchester, and Red Bank on mapping and other requirements toward Plan Endorsement.
- The Office is spending a lot of time with Little Egg Harbor. They have a number of environmental concerns. There are a number of threatened and endangered species on some sites that they would like included either as a Planning Area 2 or as a center. One of those sites is a significant economic boom for them and others are affordable housing sites. OPA is trying to come up with some creative solutions on how to get those approved. We are working with DEP on a number of these issues.
- It is likely that Woodstown can be presented to the Plan Implementation Committee in November. OPA has received the resolution accepting the Plan Implementation Agreement and will receive the resolution approving the map shortly. The Borough also amended their Advisory Committee to include the new Mayor.
- Staff continues to work on the build-out analysis, trends analysis, and the Opportunities and Constraints Report for Ocean City and has begun the build-out analysis for Red Bank.
- Staff is working on mapping for Barnegat, Seaside Heights, Ocean Township, Berkeley, Manchester, and Red Bank.
- OPA sent Newton's map to the municipality for their review and comment; we also await their comments on the Plan Implementation Agreement. They sent some questions and staff is working on finalizing that with the town.
- Staff sent Red Bank's MSA to the State agencies for their review and to begin the Opportunity and Constraints Assessment. As part of the Plan Endorsement process, they have requested assistance with their application for Transit Village Status.
- OPA received Salem City's final MSA but it has not been approved by the Governing body yet. We can begin reviewing it informally prior to receiving the resolution, time permitting.
- The Office received an inquiry regarding Plan Endorsement from Scotch Plains. We will begin to discuss with them to determine if they are interested in moving forward.

The Smart Growth Explorer page is now on OPA's website. Across the top there are some pull-down menus under mapping and GIS, which is where it can be found. The final Beta of the NJ Smart Growth Explorer was presented to the Commission at its September meeting. That presentation was posted along with the Beta site as a training tool for those who need it.

The press release that announced the NJ Smart Growth Explorer was approved and published. The press release appeared in the New Jersey Business Magazine, Spot On New Jersey, Patch.com, Insider NJ, and ROI-NJ between September 20 – 26.

Initial user results of the Smart Growth Explorer indicate that there were 385 hits by 233 individual users in the first week of launch. The average time spent on the site is 2 minutes, and 16 seconds, indicating that it is being utilized as intended. The project team will be presenting the Explorer at the regular meeting of the Conservation Blueprint team. A fact sheet has been created. It can be found at <https://nj-map.com/sdrp/model>, on the Public Input site, and on OPA's website under "mapping and GIS".

The team will present the Explorer at the Fall meeting of the Conservation Blueprint group and there will be session on it on Thursday morning at the League of Municipalities.

The next draft of the Affordable Housing Guidance has been released internally and it will be reviewed this week. Suggestions from the Commission were incorporated into this draft.

Work continues on the rework of the newsletter. A platform has been identified and staff are working on the content. Publication may be delayed as the IT department has indicated that the platform is no longer available.

The Executive Director presented the State Plan update to ANJEC's Environmental Summit on September 24 and attended a ribbon cutting ceremony for a redevelopment project in Dover on September 26. This project was a large single-family Victorian home which had been utilized as a rooming house in the 60's and 70's before it burned down. Rather than taking it down, they restored the Victorian presence but upgraded it to six modern apartments. It's an amazing redevelopment project which shows that the old historic feel can be maintained even while creating modernized apartments. The Executive Director has been asked to be a guest lecturer to a planning class at Rowan University on October 1.

The Office continues to work and participate in the NJ Interagency Council on Climate Resilience particularly in the public information campaign regarding their efforts, and in particular, the extreme heat effort. We are participating as representatives of the Commission and the Department. They have reached out to our Communications staff as well. Additionally, we will be participating as a member of the panel at their session at the League of Municipalities conference in November.

Staff has completed a "one-pager" that has been requested by the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience that provides information on how we are addressing climate concerns at the Department of State.

The Office is working with DEP and updating their LiDAR information. They wanted to upgrade their LiDAR to get better data. Approximately 2/3 of the State has been flown over. They are having some quality control concerns which are being worked on.

The Office participated in meetings related to

- NJTPA, DVRPC, SJTPO
- County Planners Association
- Coastal Coalition
- NJIAC
- NJIAC Extreme Heat Communications workgroup
- GIS Coordinators meeting

Staff attended the Governor's Conference on Housing and Economic Development and the Jersey Shore Chamber Meet the Mayors event.

Commissioner Somers asked if the LiDAR interval is two feet.

Director Rendeiro responded that she didn't have that information at the moment but would look into it and provide the information shortly.

OLD BUSINESS

State Plan Update

Director Rendeiro indicated that while waiting for the Preliminary Plan, work continues with counties and municipalities regarding Survey 1,2,3. Some counties are more active than others in anticipation of the Preliminary Plan being released. The Office is having several kick-off meetings so the municipalities and counties can become familiar with the tool.

A kick-off meeting has been scheduled for Mercer County for October 4. The Atlantic County kick-off meeting is tentatively scheduled for late October. Passaic, Cape May, and Sussex are considering kick-off meetings later in the year. These are in addition to the kick-off meetings held for Bergen, Gloucester, and Morris Counties.

OPA has received resolutions from 11 counties accepting the role of Negotiating Entity. Bergen County has waived, so OPA is performing that function through Heyer, Gruel & Associates as the consultant. Four kick-off meetings were held for Bergen County as they are comprised of 70 municipalities.

The Office held an informational meeting with Sussex County to assist in their determination of whether they can be the Negotiating Entity.

With the help of Mike from Heyer, Gruel & Associates a municipal tracking sheet has been developed that tracks Cross-Acceptance progress for all 564 municipalities.

Later today, the next iteration of the employment projection methodologies will be discussed. This was discussed at last month's meeting and some suggestions and questions arose. We believe we addressed those questions. Last week a summarized version was sent to the Commission. We will present that and some historical data that supports our position that we should go with jobs per resident.

Staff continues to monitor the comment log and have received over 300 comments at this time.

OPA continues to hold regular meetings with the County Planners Association along with Rutgers and Rowan on the Infrastructure Needs Assessment and the Impact Assessment.

Commissioner Somers asked when the Plan would be coming out.

Director Rendeiro responded that much discussion around the Plan currently is regarding how to balance the recognition of the climate threat, the affordable housing obligation, and the need for economic growth, which has been a challenge. All of the State agencies must get on board now for smooth sailing in the future. The Director believes that if a Preliminary Plan is not adopted by the end of the year, having it done by next year is going to be a great challenge. Director Rendeiro is told that discussions are still ongoing but would love to see something come to the Commissioners a couple weeks before the November meeting. It is a difficult challenge to get through because the top priorities of all the individual State agencies have to be considered together.

Chairman Wright commented that Director Rendeiro has been representing the Office and the Commission well to the agencies and the Governor's office, and urging them to move forward. It's important that the key agencies

that will be implementing the Plan, and in particular the Governor's office and their policy people, feel comfortable with it and that's taking some time.

Commissioner Somers remarked that given the guidance that each agency is providing, there is probably no right answer. If this continues until there is a right answer, we will never get there.

Director Rendeiro responded that we keep pushing for something to come out because this is a Preliminary Plan and will be open to at least six months of public comment.

Commissioner Harris asked where the Preliminary Plan would be coming from.

Director Rendeiro responded that it would be presented to the Commission by OPA. The Commission will have a few weeks to review it and make comments. The Governor's office is a balancing act between all the State agencies. We need to get comments from the State agencies, get them on board with what the Preliminary plan says, and understand that everyone will not get 100% of what they want.

Commissioner Angarone noted that EPA is not involved in any negotiation over the State Plan at this time and that all the department's comments on the Plan were submitted months ago. That being said, he wanted to comment as New Jersey's Chief Resilience Officer and felt obligated to recognize what had been seen over the past several days in the South as it is still being determined who and what are still with us. If nothing else, he hoped that we all take the lesson that no area is safe from the impacts of climate change, for example, the extreme levels of storm surge and flooding experienced in Florida through Tennessee. There are no climate-safe zones. Another example is the extreme heat that we continue to experience. Arizona has had 100 days of 100-plus-degree temperatures and in New Jersey, we had multiple heat events this summer. He felt obligated to mention that during the Commission meeting and thinks the Commission needs to consider that we need to incorporate that into all decision making.

Director Rendeiro responded that much of that discussion is happening at the policy staff level in the Governor's office. The policy folks assigned to DEP are pushing more for the environmental folks. The economic development policy folks are making sure that we incorporate economic growth. Those conversations are taking into account the comments that we received from Commissioner Angarone. She thanked Commissioner Angarone and stated that the comments were appreciated. Director Rendeiro shared that she has several friends in the Asheville area, one of whom has not been heard from yet. Another of whom lives up on the mountain where the roads will likely be impassable for months and it is being determined how to deliver supplies to them during that time. The threats are real. Who would have thought that flooding would cause an issue at the top of a mountain? Commissioner Angarone has a strong point but we also need to ensure that we have jobs and housing that's affordable for people. That's why this is such a challenge.

Commissioner Somers commented that she agreed 100% with Commissioner Angarone. It's not a question of if, it's a question of when this comes to New Jersey. Most likely sooner rather than later and to ignore that is to completely abrogate our responsibility. Economic growth is going to look different because of these challenges that we are facing. We'll be growing in different ways in different places.

Director Rendeiro agreed that things must be done differently.

Chairman Wright thanked everyone for their comments and expressed that he shared everyone's concerns. He then asked Director Rendeiro if she would like to introduce Tim Evans from New Jersey Future who would be presenting on employment projections.

Continued Discussion on Employment Projections

Director Rendeiro stated that a concentrated version of what had been presented at the last SPC had been sent out which included a number of different charts. The information was broken into categories. The first of which is a historical chart that takes the methodology that we're proposing and applies it to the 2001 Plan as well as comparing the 2001 estimates for employment against what we had put in the 2001 Plan. The population projections from 2001 into 2020 were spot on. They were 0.3% off the estimate in the 2001 Plan. However, the employment numbers were overstated at that point. The first chart goes over some historical data and the second chart details how we compare the methodology from the MPOs to what we're proposing. We included some graphs for ease of viewing as suggested by one of the Commissioners.

Mr. Evans proceeded to present on the employment projections.

Director Rendeiro proposed that any initial questions would be answered, and then the Commission should digest the presentation and let her know if there were any questions, comments, or concerns. If there is agreement, the methodology could be put on the agenda for approval at the November meeting.

Chairman Wright stated that the idea of a 25% plus increase in employment in New Jersey by 2023 is neither believable nor credible. He recalled some tension 20 years ago when the information was initially presented, but it was accepted at that time. It was thought that there would be a changed relationship between New Jersey and its neighboring states. As people moved into New Jersey, they would be much more likely to be working there as opposed to prior generations where people commuted to Philadelphia and New York. We accepted that as a major change that didn't end up happening. He expressed appreciation for the research and work done by Mr. Evans.

Director Rendeiro added that the 2001 Plan showed a population growth of about 900,000 and an employment growth of 800,000 which didn't make much sense.

Chairman Wright commented that this was almost one job per person, similar to what was being given by the MPOs. It was accepted, but we should have pushed back harder.

Mr. Evans indicated that it might have been a stronger argument in 2001 because the 1980s was a more recent memory and where a lot of jobs that used to be in the big cities in other states changed to jobs in office parks in New Jersey. If he had the data from that time, a jump would probably be seen in the 80s in terms of how many jobs per resident were located in New Jersey. Even by the late 90s, that was already tapering.

Chairman Wright stated that, from wearing his RPA hat, from 1975 to 2000 for every ten jobs created in the tristate region, including Long Island, Hudson Valley, and Connecticut, one was in New York City and nine were outside the city with northern New Jersey getting the lion's share. For the last 20 years, it's gone back to almost nine out of 10 being in New York City.

Director Rendeiro remarked that it's difficult to see a recent trend because of the two years of COVID.

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jeffrey Surenian stated that there are 354 settlements reportedly that Fair Share Housing Center entered into with 354 municipalities across the State. His first question was if Director Rendeiro had those settlements.

Director Rendeiro replied that she did not have them in her possession but could probably easily find them if needed.

Mr. Surenian asked if Director Rendeiro thought that has an impact on how the State will develop just to comply with those settlements.

Director Rendeiro responded that it would have an impact. A part of the discussion is not only how we achieve those 354 settlements, but with the new obligation coming out shortly, how are we going to be able to address those obligations and make sure we do that in an equitable, non-vulnerable manner? Therein lies the question and the challenge.

Mr. Surenian asked if you know you are going to attempt to plan the State and you know these 354 settlements are going to have an impact, don't you need to have that?

Director Rendeiro responded that we know what the general concern is. We know that municipalities as part of those settlements largely have identified sites and in some cases, those sites have some environmental issues, primarily threatened and endangered species. But some may be located, generally not specifically, in flood plains and it doesn't make sense to put affordable housing where you're in vulnerable areas, where you're going to be impacting threatened and endangered species. One of the pieces in her update is that we're talking about developing an affordable housing siting guidance in the same way we did the warehouse guidance to help municipalities identify sites that they could use to achieve their affordable housing obligation.

Director Rendeiro continued that this is all in general. If you're in a built-out community and the perception is that there's no place to build, some of the guidance may say have you looked at that old abandoned strip mall that maybe you can redevelop into housing? Or can you put it where there is infrastructure where there's public transportation if you have public transportation? It's a way for municipalities to take a look at their obligation and figure out the best, most equitable, less vulnerable places to put that affordable housing. The number is going to be the number. It's a question about where you locate that housing and making sure you're doing it equitably. We don't at the State level get down to each municipality and their obligation unless they're going through Plan Endorsement, which is a very small percentage of the total municipalities. We don't go down to that level unless we are asked by the municipality to help them cite.

Mr. Surenian replied that his question does not go to future sites. His question goes to assessing what you have before you plan for the future and asked Director Rendeiro if she thinks it's important to know.

Director Rendeiro responded that again, we don't look at individual municipalities from a statewide level, we identify policies. If as a part of those 354 settlement agreements, they've identified locations, it becomes a permitting issue. We don't have the authority to look at an individual municipality's obligation and say yes, or no, or maybe this is correct or this is not correct. Conceptually, we have policies that should address that but we don't have the authority at the State Planning Commission to look at an individual agreement settlement and opine unless they are in Plan Endorsement. When they are in Plan Endorsement, we do look at them.

Mr. Surenian responded that he was not asking Director Rendeiro to opine on yes, no, what was approved. He was merely asking, does she know what was agreed to and how that impacts the State so that you can plan intelligently for the future of the State.

Director Rendeiro replied that we know globally; we don't look individually at the individual settlements.

Mr. Surenian commented that the settlements are precise.

Director Rendeiro responded that that is correct and we know what the policies that we want to promote are but the settlements may or may not but usually do indicate the locations and that's purely a local decision. Even though we have the settlement and if we reviewed every single one of those settlement agreements, that's not necessarily going to inform a statewide policy. The policy is to provide as much affordable housing as we possibly can. It's also a policy to ensure that we're not putting people in vulnerable areas and not putting people where it could be negatively impacting the environment. If an individual settlement comes back that does just that, we don't have the authority to say because you are in an area that is vulnerable, you can't put it here. We don't have the authority to do that. Knowing what those individual settlements say, we understand what those settlements are now and we will not ever get in the way of a court mandated agreement. If there is a court mandated agreement, that municipality is obligated to comply with that court mandated agreement and we cannot get in the middle of that. Nor would we want to because if it's a court mandate, it's a court mandate. The location, however, could be something that we could make recommendations about, but not mandate that it changes.

Mr. Surenian replied that he never suggested that Director Rendeiro should do that. He merely suggested that she needs to know what's going on with those 354 towns that are going to dramatically impact the future development of the State before you figure out what you're going to do, prospectively, and apparently you don't think you need to do that.

Director Rendeiro responded that she does think we need to do that but not at the municipal level.

Mr. Evans commented that OPA has no veto power over any individuals, any individual town's Affordable Housing Plan, nor do the Fair Share Housing Center and the other organizations that will sue the town have any obligation to make sure that the town's Plan is consistent with the State Plan as much as New Jersey Future would like them to.

Chairman Wright added that we would argue that the Plan Endorsement process is a better way to work out those competing issues and to help towns comply in the best possible way in terms of siting and design and that's an assistance that we provide. It should be viewed that way as opposed to a mandate or enforcement.

Director Rendeiro added that she understands that Mr. Surenian thinks that in order for us to put a policy in for the future, we need to understand what's happening on the ground. She understands that and believes that we do incorporate that in the context of the other goals within the State Plan.

Chairman Wright expressed thanks for the comment, question, and conversation and asked if any other member of the public would like to ask a question.

Frank Banisch commented that he thought that Mr. Surenian was saying that there is a vacant land map that doesn't have a representation of so many sites that are already committed to future development. Mr. Banisch thought that Mr. Surenian was saying that even though you're going to take account of that, if you're trying to look forward, what's the playing field on which we're going to play this all out because it's kind of a zero sum game. As you take land off the board and you project the same amount of development, the intensity increases on the remaining areas. The question wasn't quite as simple to relate to the other portions of the State Plan process, does think it's probably something you'd like to know more about, and there's a way to get that information if you want it.

Chairman Wright asked Director Rendeiro if this something that should be added as a layer in the State Plan mapper for these sites and is that a recommendation we could make to Rowan.

Director Rendeiro responded that there is a layer of what we're calling developable land as opposed to vacant land. They're two different things, but in order to discuss an obligation, it needs to be a consolidation of both State policy and local knowledge.

Chairman Wright stated that that's not the same. He thought that Mr. Banisch was suggesting that we ask them to create a layer in the map that is sites that have now been approved.

Director Rendeiro replies that we could ask but unless it's mappable with GIS coordinates it may be difficult which is why you would need to know local knowledge of where people are going to put things. At a minimum, we do have developable land as opposed to vacant land. We are conscious of distinguishing between the two and we are working with DCA to ensure that if we can't be consistent, we know where and why there are differences.

Chairman Wright stated that the question is, could a layer be created that was sites that have been selected?

Commissioner Somers asked if developable land includes redevelopment.

Director Rendeiro responded that Mr. Evans has a theory that anything that is developed is redevelopable.

Commissioner Somers stated that she believes that a lot of future affordable housing will be redevelopment.

Director Rendeiro agreed and stated that that's what is being included in the siting. There is also an urbanized layer in the Explorer which is all redevelopable. That goes back to the note that local knowledge is important. A4 does not address redevelopment, just states the obligation. There is a methodology but it does not incorporate redevelopment. As a part of our siting guidance, we would like to make sure that that's top of mind.

Tim Evans mentioned that his CO file was available for viewing and shared his screen. He stated that the graph shows the percentage of statewide residential certificates of occupancy that have been issued in municipalities that were at least 90% built-out at the beginning of the time period. Even recently in 2020-2022 over 70% of residential growth has been happening in places with hardly any developable land left. He agreed with Commissioner Somers that a lot of the affordable housing development is happening in places that are already developed on paper.

Commissioner Somers remarked that that's going to be the future of the Highlands. Just because we're in the Highlands doesn't mean there isn't going to be affordable housing created but most of it is going to be redevelopment.

Commissioner Angarone stated that just because there has been a settlement agreement does not mean that the location is actually permissible pursuant to State law and regulation. In almost every Plan Endorsement conversation we see locations that, to him, clearly did not consider whether they were feasible development locations. We find ourselves in the very difficult position of trying to recognize those settlements and the local obligations while at the same time recognizing and meeting the other State policies and legal requirements. Something to keep in mind during this conversation is not to make assumptions about the sites just because they've been part of a settlement agreement.

Director Rendeiro added that that's probably 80% of our Plan Endorsement discussions with DEP.

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 Elizabeth Terenik. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 a.m.

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: OCTOBER 1, 2024 TIME: 10:04 AM

Angela Knowles, APA NJ
Anthony Soriano
Carlos Rodrigues, APA NJ
Charles Latini
Erin Gilgan, DAG
Frank Banisch
Jaci Trzaska
Jack Zybura
Jeffrey Surenian
Jelena Lasko, NJDOT
Joe Barris, Monmouth County
Laura Nelson
Michael Davis, HGA
Susan Bristol, The Watershed Institute
Tim Evans, NJ Future
Tom Dallessio FAICP/PP
Walter Lane, Somerset County
William Olson