



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
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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 March 5, 2025
Zoom Video Conference**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the March 5, 2025 video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) to order at 10:32 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
Joe Grillo, Designee for President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, Board of Public Utilities (joined at 10:36 a.m.)
Edward J. McKenna, Vice Chair, Public Member
Susan Weber, Designee for Francis K. O'Connor, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Megan Fackler, Designee for Francis K. O'Connor, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member
Julia Somers, Public Member
Nick Angarone, Designee for Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, Department of Environmental Protection
Keith Henderson, Designee for Jacquelyn Suarez, Commissioner, Department of Community Affairs
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member (joined at 10:45 a.m.)
Thomas Wright, Chairman
Shanel Robinson, County Commissioner Director, County Member (joined at 10:36 a.m.)
Stephen Santola, Public Member
Melanie Willoughby, Designee for Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Secretary of State, Department of State
Jeffrey Oakman, Public Member

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 February 5, 2025, with no changes. Bruce Harris made the motion, and Danielle Esser seconded it. With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote: Ayes: (11) Danielle Esser, Megan Fackler, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Edward McKenna, Keith Henderson, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) The February 5, 2025 minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Wright stated that there had been a Plan Development Committee (PDC) meeting earlier this morning where Acting Executive Director (AED) Walter Lane gave an overview of some of the early comments and feedback received at the public meetings held around the state. The Commission members were pleased to hear that attendees asked detailed questions about land use planning and raised interesting ideas about policies, mapping, and other items. He thanked AED Lane and expressed excitement regarding the upcoming meetings and having an opportunity to digest and respond to comments.

Chairman Wright continued that he, AED Lane, and others attended a forum the day prior in New Brunswick, hosted by Rutgers University. He had the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion, moderated by Sheena Collum, around the future of the State Plan with Commissioner Suarez, State Senator Singleton, and others. He shared that it was great to have a full room of engaged individuals discussing the need for the State Plan. There was a lot of discourse around balancing growth and development with preservation and finding suitable places to develop. The conversations underscored the importance of the State Plan and how vital the document and policies are for the future of New Jersey. He thanked the folks at Rutgers who'd organized that event.

Lastly, Chairman Wright welcomed the newest member of the SPC, Commissioner Jeffrey Oakman, recently confirmed by the Senate. Commissioner Oakman previously represented the Governor's office on the Commission and played a valuable role in crafting the Preliminary Plan now going through Cross Acceptance.

He then ceded the floor to AED Lane for his report.

ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Since the February 5 SPC meeting:

AED Walter Lane provided an overview of the Office of Planning Advocacy's (OPA) work since the February 5, 2025 State Planning Commission. He noted that while most staff efforts have been focused on Cross Acceptance efforts, work continues on a wide range of planning efforts.

Plan Endorsement

- Staff is working with Dover, Newton, Seaside Heights, Little Egg Harbor, Ocean Township (Ocean County), Woodstown, Ocean City, Salem City, Barnegat, Sparta, Dennis, Berkeley, Manchester, and Red Bank on mapping and other requirements toward Plan Endorsement.

- OPA awaits documentation from Dover on their community visioning efforts as required by Plan Endorsement and hopes to bring Dover's Plan Endorsement Petition to the PIC in the coming months. OPA is assisting in setting up a meeting between Morris County and NJ Transit to discuss redevelopment opportunities.
- The draft Salem City Planning & Implementation Agreement was sent to the municipality for their review and comment. Staff also discussed various mapping concerns related to this petition and are awaiting feedback from the municipality.
- Staff will provide guidance to Maurice River regarding the submission of their Biennial Report.
- Staff is working with Lakewood on their Biennial Report with a potential mapping amendment request.
- Staff met with Somerset County to discuss the re-endorsement of the Somerset County Regional Center. AED Lane recused himself from these discussions.
- Work continues on refining the Plan Endorsement Tracking process and procedures.
- As the Cross Acceptance advances, we may need to pause Plan Endorsement work later this year.

Work continues on the Affordable Housing Guidance Document, the updated Plan Endorsement Guidelines, brownfields webpage, mail processing procedures and the Standard Operating Procedures Manual. Staff is recreating our Locator Map in ESRI Experience Builder.

OPA will launch the E-News blast effort within the next few weeks which will be distributed to OPA's email lists. The blasts will be sent quarterly and will contain information regarding grants, and work that the Office and the SPC have underway.

The Warehouse Guidance Document continues to be noticed throughout the country. Staff recently provided information to an urban planner from Lake County, IL.

Staff is making the final revisions to the SPC Annual Report intending to provide a draft to the Commission at the April SPC meeting.

Staff is working to address the questions wastewater service questions raised at the last meeting.

Staff also attended multiple meetings including but not limited to:

- Transit Village Taskforce Meeting
- NJ Geospatial Forum General Meeting
- OPA/DEP Staff Level Mapping
- NJ Route 9 TOD Virtual Public Meeting
- IAC Extreme Heat Coordinated Communications workgroup
- NJDEP Brownfield Quarterly Roundtable Meeting
- NJ Coastal Coalition, Inc. Meeting

SPC Commission members will soon be receiving the financial disclosure form for completion.

With no questions or comments from the Commission, Chairman Wright requested that AED Lane move forward to new business, starting with the review of the endorsement of the Town of Newton to be followed by a presentation on the Muscanetcong 2050 Watershed Vision Plan by Thomas Dallessio.

NEW BUSINESS

Plan Endorsement of the Town of Newton

AED Lane requested that the Town of Newton representatives introduce themselves to the Commission.

Thomas Russo, Jr., Town Manager and Jessica Caldwell, Town Planner introduced themselves.

AED Lane stated that Newton is the first town to utilize the expedited Plan Endorsement process and referred the presentation to Myles Elgart.

Myles Elgart proceeded to present the Town of Newton Plan Endorsement petition. Mr. Elgart provided an overview of Newton's Plan Endorsement petition. The presentation can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/newton-spc-recommendation-report.pdf>

AED Lane stated that the petition had been presented to the Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) who recommended it move forward to the SPC for consideration and approval. He asked the town representatives for any comments.

Mr. Russo thanked the SPC for hearing the presentation as well as Mr. Elgart and Ms. Caldwell for their work. He shared that Newton has been a good steward of growth, development, and preservation and during his 17 years as Town Manager, it has been a pleasure to see how the town has grown in a thoughtful fashion. Ms. Caldwell echoed Mr. Russo's sentiments and stated that it's a model for how communities can coordinate with the State Planning Commission and work on consistency with the State plan and efforts to promote economic development, growth, and stability in rural communities and small towns. She concluded by thanking the SPC and Mr. Russo for his longtime leadership in the town and the town council.

Chairman Wright thanked AED Lane, Mr. Elgart, Ms. Caldwell, and Mr. Russo and asked the Commission members for questions or comments.

Commissioner Angarone said that he has worked on Newton for over a decade, delineated sewer service area, worked on the center, and is pleased to see the good work continue. He expressed happiness at their re-endorsement. Commissioner Angarone continued that Newton is a good example of acting as a regional center without the structure necessary to act as a center in the broader context of this portion of Sussex County. This was addressed in the draft State Plan and is worthy of further consideration.

Chairman Wright thanked Commissioner Angarone for his thoughtful comments. We're considering what the role of a regional center is more broadly, and whether we should contemplate how growth is happening countywide or in a larger region.

Commissioner Somers related Commissioner Angarone's comments to an earlier discussion at the PDC meeting regarding the rail line to Scranton being potentially extended beyond Dover. While the station will be in Andover, south of Newton, it would have a big impact on Newton. The value of regional planning and its impact on Newton and Newton's leadership is important.

Without any further questions or comments from the Commission members, AED Lane referred to Myles Elgart to read the resolution. AED Lane also stated that moving forward, resolutions will be sent to the Commission in the meeting packet. Mr. Elgart read the resolution.

Resolution of Approval 2025-02 Adopting Endorsement of the Town of Newton

The Resolution can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/resolutions/certified-resolution-2025-02.pdf>

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2025-02. The motion was made by Joe Grillo and seconded by Vice Chair McKenna. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (14) Danielle Esser, Joe Grillo, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Edward McKenna, Keith

Henderson, Shanel Robinson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) Resolution 2025-02 was approved.

Presentation: Resilient Musconetcong 2050: A Comprehensive Watershed Vision Plan by Thomas G. Dallessio FAICP/PP/CPM/FRSA, Executive Director Musconetcong Watershed Association and Laura Gould, Watershed Resilience Planner, Musconetcong Watershed Association

Chairman Wright welcomed Tom Dallessio, a former member of the State Planning Commission, and the staff of what was then called the Office of State Planning to give an update. He referred the presentation to Mr. Dallessio and Ms. Caldwell.

Mr. Dallessio congratulated the Town of Newton, the SPC, Mr. Russo, and Ms. Caldwell for their monumental effort. Approximately 31 years ago, Newton was the 1st community in New Jersey to be designated as a center in the State Plan. He had been the Planning Manager and had brought that recommendation to the SPC. Mr. Dallessio commended Mr. Elgart, AED Lane, and the staff on their tremendous work. Newton is a prime example of why the State Plan is necessary, how it has worked over the last 30 years, and an indicator of how it can work in the future

Mr. Dallessio and Ms. Gould proceeded to present Resilient Musconetcong 2050: A Comprehensive Watershed Vision Plan presentation. Mr. Dallessio thanked Ms. Gould for a fantastic presentation. Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) will work with municipalities, counties, the Highlands Council, and the communities within our watershed to advance this vision plan. He stated that we are closer to 2050 today than we are to the year 2000 and must recognize that it takes time to move forward. Mr. Dallessio emphasized that the vision plan can advance the goals and objectives of the State Plan and expressed interest in working with the State Planning Commission on advancing the idea of watershed-based planning

Mr. Dallessio continued that state agencies, counties, municipalities, and the public and private sectors must work together. Inspiration was drawn from the initial state planning process, Cross Acceptance, and the Plan itself. He underscored the critically important idea that watershed planning be supported and endorsed by state government in particular and looks forward to opportunities to collaborate in the future.

Chairman Wright thanked Mr. Dallessio and Ms. Gould for the presentation. He noted that much of the Commission's work is focused on the dialogue between state agencies, counties, municipalities, and the public sector. Chairman Wright expressed appreciation for the reminder of the importance of civic organizations, NGOs, and others, and their powerful role in implementing the vision and goals of the State Plan.

Mr. Dallessio indicated that the full story map is on their website. Additionally, the appendices include each reviewed plan including county, county agricultural development, environmental, and transportation plans. This could be a one-stop source for municipalities and counties in the watershed to find data and information on other plans.

Mr. Dallessio recommended that the State Planning Commission consider the idea of targets and ensure that the Impact Assessment and Infrastructure Needs Assessment go through. He stated that specific targets the public can understand, that state agencies will be able to use, and that will be able to achieve by the horizon year should be identified.

Commissioner Somers saluted the MWA for taking the leadership role and being the first to do something like this. She expressed surprise that there wasn't more talk about the fact that Musconetcong is the longest river entirely in the Highlands and the Highlands Regional Master Plan for all intents and purposes in the State Plan is the State Plan. Commissioner Somers suggested they go through the Cross Acceptance process with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

Mr. Dallessio requested that Ms. Gould talk about how the Highlands Regional Master Plan was used to develop this vision plan. Ms. Gould stated that she did read through the Highlands Regional Master Plan during the creation of the MWA Vision Plan. In the appendices, there is a plan coordination element and they ensured alignment with some of the basic goals of the Highlands Regional Master Plan. She continued that they plan to continue working with both the Highlands Coalition and the Highlands Council while working toward plan implementation.

Commissioner Somers responded that every town that has gone through conforming to the Highlands Regional Master Plan understands that you can always be more protective than the Regional Master Plan and would have liked to see a reflection of that in the plan.

Mr. Dallessio agreed with Commissioner Somers and stated that the other point that should have been mentioned is that this forms the basis for 319 Plan updates and new 319 Plans. A new update of the middle Musconetcong 319 plan has just been submitted to DEP. Approval is anticipated. Work continues now on the lower Musconetcong through a grant from the New Jersey Highlands Council to work with Hunterdon County municipalities which will result in a 319 Plan for the middle and the lower sections of the river. Mr. Dallessio reported that a National Water Quality Initiative Grant was received to look at the upper watershed area. With that information, in the next two years, they will have an updated comprehensive plan for the full watershed that no other watershed in New Jersey has at this time.

With no further comment from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked AED Lane to present the State Plan update.

STATE PLAN UPDATE

Status of Activities and Public Responses to Date

AED Walter Lane reported that staff has been diligently working on various activities to advance the Cross Acceptance process and thanked Jackie Rivera and Sara Bennett and the team for their work in making the meetings successful.

- Twenty (20) counties have accepted the role of Negotiating Entity. Bergen County provided a waiver resolution and Heyer, Gruel, and Associates (HGA) were hired to act as Negotiating Entity.
- Every county has submitted their work program. Staff has approved all but five and we expect to finalize those five over the next week or so.
- Ten Public Information Meetings have been held to date: Cumberland, Mercer, Salem, Somerset, NJ Highlands Council, Warren, Union, Essex, Morris, and Camden with Hunterdon later in the week.
- There have been 250 cumulative attendees at the public meetings held to date. Attendees have been a mix of local elected officials, the general public, interested parties, watershed groups, environmental groups, and so on.
- Overall, there seems to be support for the draft State Plan. The following are some of the types of comments we have received at these meetings:
 - Local land use issues and decisions
 - How the public engages in the local planning process
 - Importance of agriculture
 - Preserving farmland
 - Warehousing (supporting and opposing)
 - State agency implementation and coordination
 - Benefits of being consistent with the Plan/impacts of not being consistent with the Plan
 - Designation of Areas of Critical Concern Sourlands came up at two meetings

- Support for watershed planning efforts
- What does Equity Goal mean?
- Update of mapping criteria and Planning area designations

AED Lane thanked former ED Donna Rendeiro for her leadership, relationship building, and the coordination that went into the outreach efforts before the Plan was released which paved the way for a much smoother and collaborative process.

AED Lane stated that Felix Zamora put together an infographic showing a summary of the comments received via our online form and email associated with the Preliminary Plan and presented the infographic. The information was broken into four broad categories. There were many questions and comments about public transit, overdevelopment, affordable housing, warehousing, environmental concerns, and resiliency and climate change issues. Additionally, several comments were making sure that everyone has input in the process, addressing equity issues, and working with communities that haven't typically been engaged in the planning process. The infographic will be updated to incorporate all public meeting comments.

He also reported on the following:

- Staff is preparing high level summaries of each public meeting which will be shared when they are finalized.
- We continue to provide technical assistance to our county partners by a consultant, our full-time staff members or our interns. We are assisting 16 of the 21 counties and the number is expected to increase. OPA interns Langley and Gabriella have been doing an incredible job and numerous counties have praised their work.
- Staff has attended numerous municipal kickoff meetings held by the counties to inform their municipalities of how the county conducts their Cross Acceptance efforts.
- Staff continues to attend informational meetings with various stakeholders on the State Plan. Staff will be making a presentation to a comprehensive planning class at Rutgers later today. AED Lane made a presentation to a class at NJIT. Staff made presentations to the Shore Builders Association of Central NJ and to a group of environmental organizations convened by the League of Conservation Voters. Builders like the predictability that the State Plan promotes in the development process and the environmental groups are happy that we're balancing economic development needs with protecting ourselves from the impacts of climate change.
- Staff continues to work with the Highlands Council on coordinating our efforts with the Cross Acceptance process. Staff continues to coordinate with Highlands Council staff regarding mapping issues. After review and comment by staff, the Highlands Council distributed a survey similar to the Cross Acceptance Report Template to Highlands municipalities on Monday. The Highlands Council is representing seventy-seven (77) Highlands municipalities; the remaining eleven (11) will be represented by their respective counties.
- There have been several inquiries about designating the Sourland Mountain Region as an area of critical concern.
- Staff has met with Rowan and Rutgers several times to discuss the status of the Impact Assessment and the Infrastructure Needs Assessment which will be ready for review this spring.
- OPA and Rowan will be presenting a virtual session at the NJ Planning Conference on the NJ Map and the NJ Smart Growth Explorer.
- About a week ago, the Citizen's Guide to the draft State Plan went live on our website. The guide will be highlighted at the upcoming public information meetings and on social media. The Business Action Center Public Information staff and the two student mentees from the Middlesex County Magnet School were of great help in completing the guide.
- The staff continues to monitor and update the public comment log with the comments we have received through various sources.

Chairman Wright encouraged interested parties to begin attending the monthly PDC meetings for updates.

Commissioner Somers congratulated AED Lane, former ED Donna Rendeiro, and OPA staff on their work preparing for this process. She reports receiving positive feedback regarding the Public Meetings. Commissioner Somers requested a quick and easy way access the mapping. AED Lane responded that he will follow up and noted that the tool is liked by both the builder communities and environmental groups, which is rare.

Commissioner Esser commended AED Lane and OPA staff on their work on Plan Endorsement amid Cross Acceptance.

Commissioner Oakman thanked Chairman Wright for his kind words at the beginning of the meeting. He expressed happiness to be back with the Commission and be part of the great work going on. Commissioner Oakman thanked AED Lane, former ED Donna Rendeiro, and everyone involved for their work.

Commissioner Santola stated that AED Lane does a professional, credible, organized, and thoughtful job representing the SPC and the Plan. He thanked AED Lane, former ED Donna Rendeiro, and OPA staff.

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

Donna Rendeiro thanked AED Lane for his phenomenal work.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments from the Commission or the public, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Edward McKenna and seconded by Julia Somers. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: MARCH 5, 2025 TIME: 10:32 AM

Alison Kopsco, PP, AICP

Amanda Gendek-DOT
Andras Holzman, Passaic County
Andy Jackson
Anthony Soriano, Morris County
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Charles Shadle, NJDAG
Chelsea
Chris Helms
Chery Chursz
Cordy
Dave Fisher
David Schley
Devian DeLeon
Dillon McNamara
Donna Rendeiro
Emily Evers
Eric Schradling
Glen Van Olden
H. Dumont
H. Knight
Jacob Thompson
Jason L. Kasler, AICP, PP, NJPO
J. Biegen
Jelena Lasko, NJDOT
Jessica Caldwell, Newton
John Shepherd
Joseph A. Brosnan
Joseph R. Vuich, PE, PP, CME
KC
Laura Gould
Max Carlson, Warren County
Katrina McCarthy, Rowan University
Max Carlson, Warren County
Melissa Thompson
Morgan Orozco, SEBM
Nick Cuozzo
Renee
Ruth Foster, NJDEP
Samantha Paradise
Susan Bristol, The Watershed Institute
Thomas Russo, Jr., Newton
Tom Dallessio, FAICP/PP