



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 May 7, 2025
Zoom Video Conference**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the May 7, 2025 video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) to order at 2:02 p.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 2:05 p.m.)
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member
Keith Henderson, Designee for Jacquelyn Suarez, Commissioner, Department of Community Affairs
Edward J. McKenna, Vice Chair, Public Member
Stephen Santola, Public Member
Julia Somers, Public Member
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member
Susan Weber, Designee for Francis K. O'Connor, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
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 March 5, 2025, with non-substantive changes suggested by Commissioner Harris. Edward McKenna made the motion, and Julia Somers seconded it. With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote: Ayes: (9) Danielle Esser, Bruce Harris, Edward McKenna, Keith Henderson, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Elizabeth Terenik, Susan Weber, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0) Abstains: (0) The April 2, 2025 minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Wright thanked the Commissioners and attendees for agreeing to move the time of the meeting, as the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) staff were recognized with the Governor's Team of Excellence Award for their efforts around the State Plan. Chairman Wright noted that he had been a veteran of the Office when it was much more highly staffed and stated that the current team does an incredible job delivering for the residents and businesses of New Jersey.

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 April 2 SPC meeting:

AED Lane thanked the Commission on behalf of the OPA staff for allowing them to move today's meeting to this afternoon. By moving the meeting, staff was able to attend the State Employee Recognition Day Award Ceremony to accept a Governor's Team of Excellence Award. He had nominated the team for their great work to advance the CA process, including holding 22 public meetings in a 45-day window.

AED Lane provided an overview of the Office's work since the April State Planning Commission. He noted that most of staff's efforts have been focused on Cross Acceptance (CA), but work continues on a wide range of planning efforts.

Plan Endorsement

- Staff is working with 15 municipalities who are currently working to achieve Plan Endorsement (PE) status. These towns are: Dover, Seaside Heights, Little Egg Harbor, Ocean Township (Ocean), Woodstown, Ocean City, Salem City, Barnegat, Sparta, Dennis, Berkeley, Manchester, Red Bank, North Wildwood, and Wildwood City, on mapping and other requirements toward PE.
- The Office continues to work with representatives of Little Egg Harbor regarding their PE petition. Staff met with the Township on April 16th to discuss numerous mapping issues. OPA developed a new map and will be meeting with NJDEP to discuss.
- OPA staff has been meeting with Ocean Township (Ocean County) officials on a regular basis regarding the proposed PE map. Staff recently received the Township's proposed map and are conducting a review before discussing it with NJDEP.
- Staff has been meeting with Seaside Heights officials regarding the proposed PE map. Staff provided NJDEP the latest version of the proposed map.
- The Office was contacted by North Wildwood's City Administrator to discuss resuming the pursuit of a center designation.
- The draft Salem City Planning & Implementation Agreement (PIA) was sent to the municipality for their review and comment. Staff followed up with the town's consultant to request additional information on mapping considerations, as well as updates on visioning and PIA review.

- OPA staff is reviewing NJDEP's latest map proposal for Barnegat and revised the map to reflect NJDEP's suggestion.
- Staff completed the draft PIA for Red Bank and the PIA was transmitted to DCA, DEP, and DOT. We are awaiting comments.
- The Office is working with Wildwood City regarding their PE petition. Staff determined that the final version of their Municipal Self-Assessment is still valid. Staff is drafting an updated O&C report. DEP and DOT were contacted to update their portions of the O&C report, which were prepared in 2022.
- Ocean City's draft PIA was distributed to DEP, DOT, and DCA for comment. We are awaiting comments.
- Lakewood Township submitted their Biennial Review Report (with a map amendment request). Staff will be meeting with NJDEP to discuss the requested map amendment.
- Staff continues to work on updating the Plan Endorsement Guidelines.
- Work continues refining the Plan Endorsement Tracking process and procedures.

OPA staff continues to assist the Office of Business Advocacy regarding potential development sites for businesses looking to locate or expand in NJ.

AED Lane attended the TransAction Conference, which focused on transportation planning matters and moderated a session with the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations (NJTPA, DVRPC and SJTPO) to discuss their efforts to update their respective long-range transportation plan. They highlighted how their plans are consistent with the goals of the SDRP and how they can help municipalities advance the goals of the SDRP. Over 50 people attended the session.

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

Transit Village Task Force, DVRPC Regional Technical Committee, DVRPC Board Meeting, DVRPC Transportation and Community Development Initiative Review Committee, SJTPO Regional Vulnerability Framework Discussion, SJTPO TAC Meeting, NJDEP Brownfield Quarterly Roundtable Meeting, OPA/DEP Managers Mapping Meeting, NJ IAC on Climate Resilience: Monthly Senior Staff Meeting, NJ Coastal Coalition Inc. Meeting, NJ Bayshore Council, NJ County Planners Association, and the IAC Extreme Heat Coordinated Communications workgroup.

The May 21st Plan Implementation Committee will be canceled as there are no petitions or related matters ready for the Committee's review and consideration. Based on feedback AED Lane has received from members of the SPC, the Office will send two notifications to the Commission for Committee meetings. The meeting materials will be sent via email and a calendar invite on the Wednesday before the meeting.

OPA's three interns, Gabriela Duncan, Langley Oudemans, and Jack Dankers, will be completing their internships next week. They have been important members of the team and done tremendous work supporting the County planning partners throughout Cross Acceptance. He personally thanked them for all of their great work.

Lastly, AED Lane reported that Myles Elgart will be leaving the team to work for a planning consulting firm. Myles was a great team member and was a key contributor to the CA and PE efforts and will be missed. He wished Myles much success in his new position.

Chairman Wright noted that the amount of work being done is incredible and reported that he had heard positive feedback about the TransAction panel. He then opened the floor for Commissioner comment.

Commissioner Esser asked AED Lane if the work underway updating the PE guidelines was a standard update or a process and procedure update for the public.

AED Lane responded that the updates were varied and once completed would be brought to the PIC and then the SPC for review. The goal is to streamline the process, eliminate inconsistencies, and ensure that current practices are reflected.

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

STATE PLAN UPDATE

Status of Activities and Public Responses to Date

AED Lane reported that staff has been diligently working on a range of activities to advance the CA process. See Attachment 1 for the Cross Acceptance Timeline detailed by AED Lane.

- The Office continues to provide technical assistance to numerous counties and municipalities through either interns, our consultant, or internal staff. Staff is providing some level of technical assistance to every county.
- Two responses to the Request for Proposals for additional technical planning assistance services, mapping policy assistance, and editing services for the final SDRP were reviewed and scored by staff, and a consultant was selected. Administrative tasks are underway to finalize the award and to execute the contract.
- Public Information Meetings have been held in all 21 Counties as well as with the Highlands Council, thereby fulfilling the Public Information Meeting requirements of the State Planning Act and Rules. The total number of attendees is 517.
- A sample resolution for the use by Negotiating Entities to approve the transmittal of their County Cross Acceptance Responses to the SPC was developed and distributed to the Counties.
- Drafts of the Public Meeting summary notes were provided to all counties and the Highlands Council to review. All Negotiating Entities were given until 5/2/25 to provide comments and corrections. The final versions will be posted to the website next week.
- OPA staff has secured meeting locations for two of the six Public Hearings on the revised draft Plan. In-person Public Hearings will be held at the Burlington County Library in Westampton and at the Public Safety Training Academy in Morris Plains. The remaining four Public Hearings will be held virtually. All of these meetings are tentatively scheduled for the week of September 15th.
- Staff continues to update the comment tracking report, which contains all comments received on the draft SDRP to date, and will provide regular monthly updates to the SPC.
- The Office continues to meet regularly to discuss potential changes to the mapping protocols and criteria based upon the comments received to date regarding the draft SDRP. Once staff has finalized potential recommendations, staff will seek feedback and direction from the PDC.
- OPA received a proposal from Rowan University to maintain and enhance the NJ Smart Growth Explorer. Staff reviewed and approved the proposal and are working to execute the contract.
- Staff continues to attend informational meetings with various stakeholders on the State Plan and provides presentations as requested. Staff gave an overview of the SDRP at the AIA-NJ Meeting on April 30th, and AED Lane will be presenting at the Monmouth County League of Women Voters Meeting in mid-May. AED Lane will be participating in a session at the NJ Conference of Mayors Spring Meeting to provide an overview of the draft SDRP. He is also working with the NJ Conference of Mayors and Rutgers Bloustein to hold a seminar on the draft SDRP for the NJ Conference of Mayors. This event will be held in mid-June. More details will be made available shortly.
- The Office continues to work with the Highlands Council staff and has received a high-level draft of the comments received through their outreach process.
- The Highlands Council is representing seventy-four (74) Highlands municipalities; the remaining fourteen (14) will be represented by their respective counties.

- Staff continues to review various sections of the IA/INA developed by Rutgers and Rowan Universities which will be ready for SPC review in early June.
- A printable version of the Citizen's Guide has been finalized and uploaded to the OPA website.

Before AED Lane asked Lisa Avichal, Senior Planner, to provide a brief update on the Special Resource Area request for the Sourlands Region, he informed the Commission that they will be asked to adopt a resolution at the June SPC meeting. The resolution would appoint the members of the Plan Development Committee to serve as the SPC's Negotiating Committee during the negotiation phase of Cross Acceptance.

The County Cross Acceptance Reports are due on May 30th. At this time, it appears that almost all counties will meet this deadline. Due to various Planning Board and County Commissioner meeting schedules, a few counties will not be adopting their resolutions to transmit their reports to OPA until the 1st week of June. However, all counties have committed to providing a draft of their reports by the May 30th deadline. This will allow the Office to begin preparing for the negotiation sessions while waiting for the final reports.

The Negotiation Committee (and staff) would meet with the County Negotiating Committees to address and resolve all items outlined in the respective County Cross Acceptance Reports. The results of these negotiation sessions will be the basis for changes to the Plan. A revised draft Plan will be brought to the PDC and the SPC in August for approval. Once approved, the revised draft Plan will be released at the end of August for public comment.

AED Lane concluded his update by expressing the hope that the Commission recognizes that OPA is doing everything possible to achieve the goal of adopting an updated SDRP by the end of this year.

Due to AED Lane's recusal from all Somerset County matters, he will not be participating in any Sourlands regional special resource area discussions and Lisa Avichal will provide a brief update.

At this time, AED Lane was placed in the Zoom waiting room, and Ms. Avichal provided an update on the Sourlands region topic.

Ms. Avichal shared that she reached out to the DAG regarding Commissioner recusals on the Sourland topic and is awaiting a response.

She continued that the Office has received a total of 118 comments requesting the designation of the Sourland Mountain Region as an Area of Critical State Concern, an additional 12 comments since last month's report. All comments were included in the SPC packet in the comments log. One of those 12 new comments was a letter from Senator Shirley Turner who stated that she has heard from a number of constituents who are concerned that the Sourland Mountain Region is not included in the Preliminary Plan as an Area of Critical Concern. Senator Turner wrote to OPA on behalf of her constituents to request the Commission's attention and to consider the need to protect the Sourland region. Ms. Avichal sent a response letter back to the Senator's Office which had been reviewed by the Chief of Staff at NJ Department of State, the Governor's Office, and NJ Legislative Affairs Office prior to being sent. Ms. Avichal offered to send the Commission both the Senator's letter and the response letter for review.

Ms. Avichal stated that since the last PDC and SPC meetings, OPA staff has been working on developing an implication report on the designation of the Sourland Mountain Region. The report should be sent to the Commission in the coming months, if not by the June SPC.

Ms. Avichal finished by reporting that the Office has also received three comments regarding the Skylands as being designated as an area of Critical State Concern. Staff is reviewing the comments.

Before having AED Lane return to the meeting, Chairman Wright asked the Commissioners if they had any further questions or comments regarding Sourlands.

Commissioner Somers asked Ms. Avichal for a definition of the Skylands.

Ms. Avichal responded that none of the comments received provided a map or geographic definition of the Skylands and as such, internal discussions are ongoing in OPA.

With no further comments from the Commission, AED Lane was returned to the meeting.

Chairman Wright thanked AED Lane for detailing the upcoming timeline and asked if there a target for Commissioner participation in the negotiation sessions.

AED Lane responded that Rules require that at least one member of the Commission participate in the negotiating sessions, so the aim is for at least one or two of the Committee members to be in attendance. When the Office receives the Cross Acceptance Reports, details regarding how many items are to be discussed and reviewed will be included. Taking that all into account, the anticipation is that at least two virtual sessions will be held with each county. AED Lane continued that he expects that holding the meetings virtually will ensure higher levels of participation, particularly during the summer months.

Commissioner Wright asked AED Lane if the meetings are open to the public.

AED Lane responded that periodic reports would be produced and that he would need to confirm the details of public participation. The Office envisioned municipal stakeholders being involved if the county brought them to the meetings.

Commissioner Somers stated that she will be available for the upcoming meetings.

Commissioner Harris asked which county representatives would be present at the meetings.

AED Lane replied that the Rules do not specify who needs to attend the meetings. OPA has provided unofficial guidance to the counties suggesting that they ensure that someone permitted to make decisions on behalf of their respective county is in attendance. The suggestion is that one or two County Commissioners who serve on the Planning Board be members of the Negotiation Committee, along with a mixture of other staff.

With no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Wright opened the floor to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

With no comments from the public, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Julia Somers and seconded by Edward McKenna. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: MAY 7, 2025 TIME: 2:02 PM

Albert Dib
Andy Jackson
Anthony Soriano, Morris County
Barbara Allen Woolley-Dillon
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Charles Shadle, DAG
Chris Helms
Daniel Hauben
Dave DuMont
David Schley
Dillon McNamara
Donna Rendeiro
Greg Polyniak
Jason Kasler
Katherine Fullerton, Hunterdon County
Rachel DeFlumeri, Dept. of Agriculture
Rick
Ruth Foster, NJDEP
Samantha DeAndrea
Shannon Spillane
Steven Bruder, NJ SADC
Susan Bristol, The Watershed Institute
Tom Strowe
Tony Poklasny