



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

DONNA A. RENDEIRO
Executive Director/Secretary

**New Jersey State Planning Commission
Minutes of the Meeting Held on September 4, 2024
Zoom Video Conference**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the September 4, 2024 video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) to order at 10:01 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
Frank Gaffney, 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 (joined at 10:18 a.m.)
Stephen Santola, Public Member
Julia Somers, Public Member
Edward J. McKenna, Vice Chair, 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 August 7, 2024, with non-substantive 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: (12) Danielle Esser, Frank Gaffney, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Nick Angarone, Shanel Robinson, Keith Henderson, Elizabeth Terenik, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Edward McKenna, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0). Abstains: (0). The August 7, 2024 minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Rendeiro reported that the recommendation made for a senior planner is still awaiting approval from the Civil Service Commission.

Director Rendeiro announced that Jeffrey Oakman, who was on the Commission as an executive branch appointee, is no longer with State government and no longer on the Commission. We are working to fill that spot as soon as possible.

Since the August 7 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 getting through Plan Endorsement.
- OPA and DEP agree with mapping for Woodstown and Seaside Heights. The files have been sent to the municipalities for their review and comment.
- The Plan Implementation Agreement has been sent to Seaside Heights for its review and comment. We received the Master Plan Statement of Objectives from the municipality.
- OPA and DEP agree with Newton's mapping and we are preparing to send the file to the municipality. The Plan Implementation Agreement has been drafted and forwarded to the municipality.
- Mapping is still under discussion with DEP on Barnegat and Ocean Township (Ocean County).
- Staff has begun working on the build-out analysis and the Opportunities and Constraints Report for Ocean City.
- Staff received the Municipal Self-Assessment and resolution from Red Bank. Review will begin.
- Maps have been created for Manchester, Salem City, Berkeley, and Dennis to be updated to include the new flood database.
- It is our understanding that the Little Egg Harbor governing body met with their consultant to discuss the proposed map. Of concern is that many of their centers have been shrunk due to the presence of Threatened and Endangered Species. We informed the consultant that if the developer were to do a Habitat Suitability Determination that were to prove otherwise, the municipality can come in for a map amendment. We are awaiting their response.
- We received a request regarding a possible map amendment request for Brigantine. The request came from a developer representative who was referred to us by DEP. The project is requesting sewer service but DEP cannot provide service due to the planning area. It is unlikely that a map change will be able to be granted because the planning area is PA 5b which is a barrier island.

- The Office received a call from Bernardsville inquiring about their endorsement status, which expired on March 31, 2023. The Borough is working with a consultant to pursue conformance with the Highlands but if that process does not work out they will reach back out to us. The Borough is also working with the county regarding the State Plan update.

The final Beta of the NJ Smart Growth Explorer (previously called the Development Suitability Mapping) will be presented to the Commission later in this agenda. The name was changed as there was some concern that former name would indicate that it would be part of the State Plan Policy Map and therefore become policy. This is strictly an informational tool that will be demonstrated by John Hasse of Rowan University. Once presented, it will be available for to use for free by the public. The Explorer will be the subject of a League of Municipalities Conference Session.

We met with FEMA representatives regarding including repetitive loss data into the Smart Growth Explorer. Data does exist but much of it is protected and cannot be shared. They were able to provide a workaround for some of the data and we will consider adding it at a future date. In the meantime, we continue to discuss how this important data can be included.

As a result of OPA's participation in the New Jersey FEMA Accelerator Program we have been invited, along with participating municipalities, to participate in a webinar put on by FEMA on resilience topics.

The Office has been in discussion with the Department of State's Cybersecurity Officer to develop training specifically for municipalities. While that's not specifically in our purview, it's another way we can help the municipalities.

The Office is working on an Affordable Housing Guidance. It is DCA's purview to identify a number but we want to provide an Affordable Housing Guidance so municipalities can comply equitably with their affordable housing obligation.

The Office is taking a look at the PACT Real rules to see where it will be impacted by the State Plan. That review is ongoing.

Staff attended a DOT meeting for their Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The proposed document is policy based planning and broad scale, rather than project specific. The long range transportation plan network mentions utilizing state plan goals.

Staff reviewed the Climate Resilience Funding Directory Tool website and received the draft scores for the projects to be included in SJTPO's upcoming Regional Transportation Plan 2050 Update.

The Office is working with DEP on posting extreme heat data and information on the BAC social media.

We will be attending the Governor's Conference on Housing and Economic Development on September 17 and 18 and the Jersey Shore Chamber Meet the Mayors event on September 19.

OPA is monitoring 15 bills, 9 of which directly impact either OPA or the SPC. All Bills but one (which has not yet been introduced) are currently in Committee.

Commissioner Harris asked what kind of factors are being considered in regard to the Affordable Housing Guidance.

Director Rendeiro responded that some items that would be considered when trying to cite housing are public transportation, infrastructure where there may be job centers, making it easier for folks to get around without a car, and not putting affordable housing in flood plains. If a municipality is built out, the suggestion would be to look at underutilized properties that could be redeveloped. While redevelopment isn't in A4 as a method, we believe that looking at properties that are underutilized is a good way for built out communities to comply with their obligation.

Commissioner Harris asked if the impact of housing on the community in terms of traffic and school population was being looked at.

Director Rendeiro replied that she had done an analysis a couple of years ago that could be included. Housing sizes are getting smaller and the impact on schools isn't what it traditionally was in the 1980s when we were building sprawling communities with large lot single-family zoning. The smaller, denser developments are showing much less impact on schools. Traffic may have to be addressed differently.

Commissioner Harris responded that this would be helpful because those are the objections heard most frequently regarding building housing and is not sure that the objections are well founded. It would be beneficial if there were guidance from the State. Around five years ago, Rutgers did a study on school-age children in affordable housing. That was very helpful and based on actual developments in New Jersey.

Director Rendeiro replied that she has two examples, one where there were around 200 units and only seven school-age kids. If you site the affordable housing in places where there is public transportation, meaning a train, bus line, or paratransit, traffic may be impacted less.

Commissioner Harris responded that the average person seems to think that everyone in an apartment building leaves at the same time and returns at the same time. This is not the case. There is a new 250-unit apartment building in Chatham that he drives by frequently and rarely sees a car coming in or going out. There are endless debates about whether the traffic studies are accurate. Some more official guidance would be extremely helpful.

Commissioner Somers suggested making it easier for municipalities to find funding to create affordable housing themselves as so many municipalities run on a tight budget.

Director Rendeiro stated that research has been done on both the state and federal levels and has included some links in the guidance.

Chairman Wright commented that equitable planning for affordable housing is a term that is used often and some components are fundamental in not creating new segregated communities within municipalities. He is hopeful that the piece is more aspirational and talks about citing all the aspects mentioned previously to make new, beautiful, affordable housing that's part of a community. He asked that along with the minutes, research be circulated to the Commissioners as he'd be interested in seeing updated reports and noted that sharing resources is a valuable part of the State Planning Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

State Plan Update

Director Rendeiro indicated that while waiting for the preliminary plan, work has begun with counties and municipalities on the mapping process. Survey 1,2,3, an electronic ESRI product, allows boundaries of centers and planning areas to be manipulated to communicate proposed changes between municipalities, counties, and the State.

A two-part county training has been developed. The first part is available on Public Input. It provides information on how they work with municipalities, and the second is how they consolidate all the information and send it to the State. Part two is being recorded this week and will be available on Public Input shortly.

While some municipalities hesitate to start the process until the Preliminary Plan is published, OPA continues to provide technical assistance through interns, consultants, or internal staff. The consultant, Heyer, Gruel, and Associates has been assisting with Bergen County, which has declined to be the negotiating entity, and with other counties needing assistance.

So far, 11 counties have accepted the role of Negotiating Entity. The Office has received resolutions for more than half of the State. Four kick-off meetings have been held for the Bergen County municipalities. Bergen County has 70 municipalities and about 20 to 25 participated in the kick-off meetings. Mike Davis from Heyer, Gruel, and Associates is working to distribute information and is following up with letters and emails.

The Office held kick-off meetings with Gloucester and Morris Counties. Burlington County has decided to postpone until the preliminary plan is issued.

Later in today's agenda, there will be a further discussion on the next step in employment projections. We felt that the population projections presented at last month's meeting were fairly appropriate and a good base to work with, but the employment projections were not spot on. We will be presenting two alternative proposals.

The Office continues to work with DCA on reconciling both offices' developable land analysis. Rowan has put together what their factors are. We will send this to DCA so that a comparison can be completed.

Director Rendeiro presented a Plan update to the Atlantic County Board of Commissioners. They are supportive of doing the process but would love to see the preliminary plan come out as soon as possible.

Director Rendeiro stated that the next two items on the agenda are the final beta version of the New Jersey Smart Growth Explorer which will be presented by John Hasse of Rowan with Makenzie Franco as back-up and the discussion on the employment projections with Tim Evans from NJ Future.

Presentation of the Final Beta Version of the New Jersey Smart Growth Explorer

Director Rendeiro emphasized that the New Jersey Smart Growth Explorer is an informational tool, not a policy which is why a resolution for approval will not be requested. It is a gathering of data from different sources and compiling it in one location. The data can be utilized by developers and municipalities to make informed decisions about where development can go as opposed to where there may be push back, perhaps due to environmental factors or lack of infrastructure. When John Hasse has completed the presentation, the link will be provided. The presentation was referred to Mr. Hasse.

Mr. Hasse proceeded to present the final beta version of the New Jersey Smart Growth Explorer. The presentation can be found at: <https://nj.gov/state/bac/planning/mapping/nj-smart-growth/>

Commissioner Harris asked if the areas of redevelopment are designated by the municipalities.

Mr. Hasse indicated that the information is from the DCA.

Commissioner Harris asked if the pink areas indicated opportunities for redevelopment.

Mr. Hasse responded that the pink areas referred to urban land use as of 2020. What you're seeing now is the combined map. If you turn on the urban lands and make the opacity full, the donut holes show non-developed land. If we look at the model, the more orange, the higher the development factors. If it's green or blue, there are higher environmental factors. We don't want to just develop all the undeveloped land; the urban pink areas should also be considered for future redevelopment. The green fields that are coming out as orange and dark orange have more factors that suggest redevelopment as opposed to environmental protection. The areas that are dark blue and dark green suggest the environmental resources there are important such as open fields, forests or wetlands. Don't assume that it's an open green field that is a green light for development. It doesn't say that you can't develop it, it's just showing the combined factors that we have in this model.

Commissioner Harris asked if the pink indicates that the areas are developed.

Mr. Hasse responded that it is land use urban 2020 and is developed. It is all the developed land in the DEP data set. It could be industrial, housing, a parking lot, or any altered land that has been developed and has been identified in the land use mapping of the DEP. It doesn't say if it's ripe for redevelopment but anything that's developed will eventually probably be redeveloped once the donut holes are filled with open space or development.

Mr. Hasse continued that an ancillary project is being worked on related to this topic, which is what's remaining. You can unfold the reference layers and see the Highlands management areas, the Pinelands, and CAFRA. But we also have this remaining landscapes beta that's on another part of the NJ Map project that we're doing with Director Rendeiro. Essentially, this is the same data that we just saw put together in a different model. In that model, everything that's urban but has some constraints such as a flood zone, a wetland, etc. is mapped as orange. Those orange constrained areas are developed now, but they should not be thought about as places to redevelop. Preserved open spaces are green and everything purple is undeveloped and unconstrained, such as a farm field or a forest. Everything blue is not developed as of 2020 but has some kind of constraint, such as a floodplain, wetlands, or a steep slope. This is going to be a really important map in understanding where there are possibilities for development or redevelopment. The remaining undeveloped, unconstrained lands are the purple blobs. Statewide, there's not a lot of remaining undeveloped and unconstrained land.

Commissioner Harris commented that some of those areas should be preserved, even if they don't have environmental constraints. In some urban areas, more parks and open space is needed. That's something for the municipalities to evaluate.

Commissioner Somers asked if the data for the map will be automatically updated to be current and accurate.

Director Rendeiro responded that as the data sources are updated, the data layers could be updated. It's a question of when the data sources are updated.

Commissioner Somers suggested that there should be some way of finding the metadata to find out when it's been most recently updated.

Mr. Hasse explained that after the beta version, there will be a link added which when clicked will have more detailed information, including source data and where the metadata is located. He continued that updating the data is key for this to have a real, meaningful impact. If the data is shown to be flawed, the project could be undermined. He hopes that Rowan is the mapper of this and although it does not belong to Rowan, it's on the NJ Map platform. The idea of putting all the layers together and making a model was a collaboration with Director Rendeiro's office and the stakeholders she brought into the State Planning Update process. To have a future, this needs to be updated and can't just sit on a server. We would have to figure out how to make this sustainable, which would mean a regular updating protocol at least twice a year where the latest data is gathered and the model is rerun.

Commissioner Somers congratulated Mr. Hasse and Director Rendeiro on the incredible tool they created.

Commissioner Santola remarked that the point system could be debated but one of the great exercises of this is deciding where we want to grow. That's a part of our charge in the Plan and we're encouraging redevelopment, which is one of the top goals in the Plan. Facing the reality of home rule, the idea that all of the metrics are really 90% State government-driven, maybe 10% FEMA, the only one that's municipally driven is the area in need, which is a town saying we want this site to be pro-growth. You can have a discussion about what growth that might be, either housing, jobs, or entertainment. It seems to be the only municipal metric and we should figure out a way to create more value for it.

Mr. Hasse agreed that Commissioner Santola raised a good point and suggested that the centers designation is something municipalities have skin in the game with which may encourage more municipalities to create centers because they may get more points for it.

Director Rendeiro indicated that DCA still has to approve the area in need unless it's a planning area one, so there is some State input in all of this. She mentioned that Commissioner Terenik requested that we look at Atlantic City because many State agencies are looking to encourage growth in that area. Because of its location, Atlantic City does have a fair amount of environmental issues.

Commissioner Terenik stated that we need and want redevelopment in Atlantic City. The only environmental issue is flooding, but most of the area is on higher ground. There is a lot of opportunity for redevelopment in those areas. There is concern about conservation in the green spaces. There are many challenges because we're in an urban environment and have social and other issues. The entire city is an area in need of rehabilitation and redevelopment.

Director Rendeiro responded that this issue could be looked at in further detail at a later meeting and asked if there were any other questions or thoughts.

Mr. Hasse pointed out that if the boundary layers were opened, municipal boundaries and parcels can be turned on. If you click on any parcel, it will bring up the parcel explorer option and provide information on that parcel. We want feedback on this project, the point system, etc. and expect this to evolve over time. We may not want to go more than 20 layers in order to keep it manageable, but the layers may be replaced by other data. If you would like to provide input, there is a comment box that will bring you to a place where you can give comments

on the NJ Map part of it. If you navigate to the top where the “i” button is, a page will open with where the official State Plan comments will be located.

Director Rendeiro thanked Mr. Hasse for his presentation and requested that everyone look at and comment on the New Jersey Smart Growth Explorer. It’s a work in progress but will provide a lot of information in one place.

Chairman Wright commented that he is eager to see how communities and agencies will make use of it and asked Director Rendeiro if this will become a part of the Plan, the endorsement process, mapping areas and other things.

Director Rendeiro responded that it is an informational tool that will be utilized. We will have a training session Thursday morning at the League of Municipalities Conference. She thanked Frank Banisch for his comment in chat which stated that it was the best hour he had spent in a long time.

Continued Discussion on Employment Projections

As the presentation and discussion concluded, Director Rendeiro mentioned the concerns about the employment projections expressed during the previous SPC meeting. Those employment projections were from the MPOs and two of the three MPOs’ data included information from different states. Additionally, there was a question about whether we had enough money to hire a consultant, which we do not. At this point, there are still so many unknowns that even if we paid a consultant, it would be difficult to understand what the long-term impact of the COVID patterns will be. She had asked Tim Evans if he had data on employment per resident and if that is looked at historically, can the ratio be applied to population projections to come up with more reasonable employment projections. Director Rendeiro and Mr. Evans then brought this idea to consultants and did some historical validating. Mr. Evans will explain this process to see if it makes sense directionally. Approval will not be requested, but after the meeting, the numbers will be formatted and sent to the Commission and will be reconvened at the next SPC meeting. The presentation was referred to Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans proceeded to present on the employment projections.

Commissioner Somers asked if Mr. Evans was suggesting that the revised methodology be used for employment projections.

Mr. Evans replied in the affirmative and that the main reason for doing so is that it’s simpler and avoids the issues of learning what the MPOs did and why their baseline numbers were so much higher than the actual New Jersey Department of Labor.

Commissioner Somers responded that challenges may arise from someone with an MPO.

Director Rendeiro stated that the methodology doesn’t have to be used if it doesn’t meet our needs. Coming up with this alternative may at least be something to consider. She read Commissioner Harris’ suggestion that we graph some of the numbers for better ease of understanding and responded that this will be worked on in conjunction with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans agreed and stated that it would be great to have two graphs, one showing what the trends look like according to the MPOs, and the other if it’s done with our methodology.

Director Rendeiro stated that in the absence of proving that theory wrong, it's probably as good an estimate as we can get.

Commissioner Harris asked if the estimates are in aggregate or is there detail beneath them that shows jobs by category, like service versus professional or whatever the standard categories are.

Mr. Evans responded that he had not attempted to do that himself but when speaking with the SJTPO folks, their consultant looked at jobs by industry. He did not know if the other two MPOs did that level of detail or if they're looking at macro trends.

Director Rendeiro stated that in the future, this can be looked at and asked Mr. Evans what the result of the discussion he had with folks at RPA who had done a similar analysis was.

Mr. Evans replied that they thought we were generally on the right track with assuming that this relationship is constant and that it can be used to guide what we say about job growth. What they did at RPA was more data-intensive with data that we don't have. They were doing it the other way around by taking employment projections and indicating that this would require a certain amount of population growth.

Director Rendeiro commented that it would be interesting to see if this methodology would come up with similar numbers. She stated that the numbers presented would be cleaned up and a package sent to the Commission within a few days.

Commissioner Harris mentioned that he had been reading articles about the impact of AI and wondered what the impact would be on these numbers.

Director Rendeiro replied that a part of the challenge is that we don't know past the next three or four years, after which the landscape will change drastically for many reasons including AI, whether the COVID pattern will stick, further automation, and new industries like clean energy that might add employment.

Mr. Evans commented that if you were to look at the jobs per 100 residents at the national level going back 100 years, would that tell you how stable the relationship is over time and wouldn't be surprised if it would be. This wouldn't be the case for New Jersey's employment because of the suburban office park complex in the 1980s. New Jersey's ratio of jobs to residents went up noticeably in the 80s and 90s. That's because of where we decided to develop new land focused on the New York economic market. If you erased the geographic boundaries or looked at the whole country, or the whole mid-Atlantic, did anything change about jobs per 100 residents or was it just shifted geographically within the New York metro area? It would be interesting to look at what that relationship looks like over a longer period of time but at the scale of the whole national economy because the national economy has undergone interesting changes over the last 100 years. There's a constant number of minutes that people are willing to devote to commuting and maybe there's some natural equilibrium like that with how many jobs a given population can support. Even if AI takes people's jobs, we'll find other things for those people to do. People could have made similar arguments back in 2000 but we ended up having a similar ratio of jobs to residents in 2022 that we had in 1999.

Director Rendeiro commented that if you look at the jobs chart that Mr. Evans did, the dip was in 2009 which was after the 2008 crash. A lot of these differences are economic and not so industrial. You can make an argument that says the technology in 2005, 2006, and 2007 is way under what it was in 2008, 2009, and 2010, so it didn't seem to change it at all that much other than what happened after the crash.

Mr. Evans stated that these are questions an economist would have to answer.

Director Rendeiro remarked that if you asked five different economists, you may get five different answers.

Mr. Evans mentioned that there is one more tab at the end of the Excel file which looked at the last time New Jersey Department of Labor did a projection for 2032 and stated that they are still not quite done with the population projections.

Director Rendeiro asked if anyone had any other thoughts or comments and noted that Chairman Wright notified her that he had lost his internet connection.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments from the Commission or the public, Director Rendeiro asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Bruce Harris and seconded by Stephen Santola. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 TIME: 10:01 AM

Angela Knowles, APA NJ
Anthony Soriano
Barabara Woolley-Dillon, PP, AICP
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Bob Hornby, Hunterdon County
Carlos Rodrigues, APA NJ
Charles Shadle, DAG
David Smith, Senate Majority Office
Dave DuMont
Frank Banisch
Frances Brown
Jason L. Kasler, AICP PP
Katherine Fullerton, Hunterdon County
Jeff Kolakowski
Jelena Lasko
John Hasse, Rowan
John Peterson, SJTPO
Makenzie Franco, Rowan
Mirah Becker
Peter Kortwright
Rachel DeFlumeri, Dept. of Agriculture
Regine Delcy, Mercer County
Tim Evans, NJ Future
Tim Gleason
Tony Agliata