



**September 16, 2026, Minutes of the Meeting
Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission**

TIME: 10:00 a.m.
DATE: September 16, 2026
PLACE: Prallsville Mills, Stockton, New Jersey

ATTENDING COMMISSIONERS:

Vice-Chairman Robert Bostock attended the meeting in the Commission office. Commissioner Matthew Walsh, Commissioner Designee Robin Madden, Commissioner Douglas Palmer, Commissioner Randy Jones, and Commissioner Caryl “Chris” Shoffner participated via online platform and teleconference.

STAFF: Executive Director John Hutchison, Deputy Attorney General Jordan Viana, and Executive Assistant Erica Vavrence attended the meeting in the Commission office. Commission Engineer Damian Friebe, Communications Director Darlene Yuhas and Administrative Assistant Megan Black participated via online platform.

GUESTS: Stephen Gates, Chief Engineer, New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA); Michael Sellar, Facilities Manager, New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA); Maggie Mitchell, Superintendent, D&R Canal State Park; Eliot Nagele, Superintendent, Bulls Island Recreation Area and D&R Canal State Park; Bob Barth, D&R Canal Watch; Linda Barth, D&R Canal Watch; Robert von Zumbusch, President, Kingston Historical Society; Peter Lanfrit; Paul Harenberg; Kathy Hale; and Erica Moran.

Vice-Chairman Robert Bostock announced that this was a monthly meeting of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission and that the provisions of the “Senator Byron Baer Open Public Meetings Act” (OPMA) had been complied with in the scheduling of the meeting.

The Vice-Chairman announced that the meeting was being taped pursuant to the exception set forth at Section C.(1) of DEP Policy & Procedure 2.85 “Prohibition of Recording in the Workplace” Policy adopted on September 18, 2019.

Since some Commission members were participating via telephonic device pursuant to Article III,

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Section 4 of the Commission Bylaws, Vice-Chairman Bostock asked Executive Director Hutchison to call the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Absent
Commissioner Palmer	Absent
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

Director Hutchison stated that a quorum was present.

Administrative Items

Confirmation of the October 21, 2026, Meeting Date

Vice-Chairman Bostock announced that the next meeting of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission was scheduled for October 21, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Minutes

Approval of the Minutes of the August 19, 2026, Commission meeting

Vice-Chairman Bostock inquired if any of the Commissioners wished to propose edits or corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2026, Commission meeting as prepared by staff. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the minutes as prepared by the staff, which was seconded by Commissioner Shoffner.

At the request of Vice-Chairman Bostock, Director Hutchison then called the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Abstain
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Absent
Commissioner Palmer	Absent
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

The motion was approved.

Commissioner Palmer joined the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Review Zone Actions

Zone A Projects

#26-3613B NJWSA Station 523+80 -- Collapsed Rail Bridge Removal (Hopewell Township)
#26-3641D 77 South Union Street -- Renovations (Lambertville City)

Vice-Chairman Bostock asked if any Commissioners or members of the public had questions or

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comments about the Zone A projects. Hearing none, he asked the Executive Director to provide a brief description of each project and then requested a motion to approve both Zone A projects. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the projects, which was seconded by Commissioner Shoffner.

Vice-Chairman Bostock asked Director Hutchison to call the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Absent
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

Zone B Projects

#25-0355A	12 Railroad Avenue -- Mixed-Use/Residential Development (Ewing Township)
#26-1454F	15 Cranbury Road -- Residential Apartment Development (Cranbury Township)
#26-3034B	Lawrence Middle School -- Renovations/Site Improvements (Lawrence Township)
#20-5640	789 Hamilton Street -- Proposed Mixed-Use Building (Franklin Township)
#22-5853	96-104 Schoolhouse Road -- Proposed Warehouses (Franklin Township)

Vice-Chairman Bostock asked if any Commissioners or members of the public had questions or comments about any of the Zone B projects. Hearing none, he asked the Executive Director to provide a brief description of each project and then requested a motion to approve all of the Zone B projects en bloc. Commissioner Walsh made a motion to approve all five project, which was seconded by Commissioner Palmer.

Vice-Chairman Bostock asked Director Hutchison to call the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Absent
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

Executive Director's Report

Director Hutchison reported on the workload for the period encompassing August 19, 2026, through September 15, 2026. In addition to the 7 projects listed on the agenda, the staff completed 22 deficient staff reports, 11 jurisdictional determinations, and 10 certificates of approval, and 11 general permits were issued. In addition to these matters, staff conducted or participated in 12 pre-application meetings related to proposed and pending projects. As of September 15, 2026, there were 26 projects undergoing review.

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The Director reported that fee collections totaled \$36,850 for the month, which he noted was better than the \$29,000 collected in 2025, and the \$25,500 reported in September 2024. With the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2027 completed, the Commission had collected \$126,575. Phrased in a different way, he said that with 25% of the fiscal year over, the Commission has collected 32.8% of its anticipated annual appropriation amount.

On September 10, Director Hutchison said he attended the Commission's Fiscal Year 2027 first quarter budget meeting with DEP Office of Management and Budget (DEP/OMB) staff. He said the two takeaways of note are that DEP/OMB suggested that, in light of strong fee collections in FY 2026 and the first three months of FY 2027, the Commission annual anticipated appropriation amount be raised from \$385,000 to \$400,000. The final adjusted fee collection total for FY 2026 was \$392,725 so the Director said he had no particular concern about this adjustment. He said that fee collections were typically influenced by many trends in the State and national economy, and the Commission would constrain its spending and "cut our coat to match our cloth," if revenues were not robust at the end of the fiscal year.

The Director said that the second issue discussed at the budget meeting was the continually vexing situation regarding the imposition of fringe and indirect budget costs on the Commission by the Department of the Treasury. DEP/OMB agreed to submit another request for the Commission to be exempted from these costs, which are estimated to be 66.05% for fringe and 20.49% for indirect, respectively. As long-serving members of the Commission were aware, these are charges against the Commission budget are not currently included in the Commission application fee structure. If enforced, they would impose a significant fiscal impact on the Commission's current unexpended balance, which totaled \$314,223. When applied to the Commission's \$364,000 salary line, the fringe and indirect charges would total around \$315,000, leaving the Commission with a scant \$49,000 for emergency building repairs, litigation costs, IT purchases, or maintenance of the Commission vehicle, etc.

Director Hutchison reported that there was a standing-room-only turnout at the Commission's fifth and final Master Plan public engagement session held on September 8 at the Headquarters Branch of the Mercer County Library in Lawrence Township. Participants from several surrounding municipalities attended and enthusiastically shared their thoughts and ideas about shaping the future of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

As the public comment period concluded, MC Fuhrman and Associates (mcfa), the Commission's subconsultant for public engagement, reported that more than 170 comments were captured in a special database linked to the QR code and the "Submit Your Comment" link on the Master Plan landing page on the Commission website. Commission staff will be working with colleagues at the Office of Information Technology (NJOIT) to update the website with information that could be shared as the project advanced.

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Commission staff had distributed laminated posters featuring the QR code at highly visible locations throughout the park. Now that the comment period had been concluded, the Director thanked Mr. Barth for retrieving them from the park.

With regard to the project timeline, the Commission's lead consultant, Clarke Caton Hintz (CCH), has allowed a bit of additional time to deal with the inevitable 11th-hour submission of public comments and late-arriving surveys that are being submitted by municipalities, key stakeholders and others who were unable to attend any of the five public engagement sessions held over the summer.

The Director also noted that it very recently came to his attention that colleagues in the State Park Service wished to meet directly with members of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to share their thoughts about the park. The Commission staff, of course, was pleased to accommodate this request. To that end, the Commission staff offered the office conference room for such a meeting, which is equipped with the recently acquired OWL device. In that way, Commission staff not only would capture an accurate transcript of their comments, but also make participation convenient for those whose duties make it impossible to attend in person. The Director said he was awaiting submission of the email addresses of those who wish to participate, so that an online invitation could be sent.

At this time, Director Hutchison said the meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 30. He said that while it was anticipated that such a meeting at this late date would impact the project timeline, the delay was worth it, so the Commission was able to receive colleagues' perspectives. The Director also thanked CCH Principal Michael Sullivan for agreeing to moderate the meeting, which is outside the scope of work of the Master Plan contract, and evidence of the strong working relationship with Commission staff.

In the meantime, the Director said, CCH was organizing the public comments received thus far, and this information will be provided to the project's subject-matter experts on our Technical Advisory Committees for use as they begin composing the preliminary draft of the updated Master Plan.

Director Hutchison reported that one of his preapplication meetings this month was with NJDOT, which is in the process of planning the replacement of the bridge that conveys Bridge Street over the Delaware and Raritan Canal in Stockton Borough. He said this project will likely entail a lengthy closure and detour of traffic, so the Director said it was good to hear the perspective of municipal officials on both sides of the Delaware River, who were in attendance.

The Commission project file digitization was rolling onward, the Director said. Administrative Assistant Megan Black scanned another 16 boxes of files this past month, bringing the year-to-date total to 118. A total of 497 boxes out of 526 boxes of project files have been digitized, which constituted 94% of the total.

Park Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Mitchell introduced Eliot Nagele, the new Superintendent for Bulls Island Recreation

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Area and the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. She said he would be focusing his efforts on the feeder canal and recommended that he be contacted directly if anyone has issues to be handled or concerns.

Superintendent Nagele said he would be stationed at Bulls Island Recreation Area, and that he looked forward to working with the Commission. He said that his background was in natural resource management and that most recently he had been working for the Nature Conservancy as director of finance in New Jersey. He noted that he was born and raised in Lawrence Township, Mercer County, and the park has been meaningful fixture throughout his life.

Superintendent Mitchell said that her focus will be the main -- or Kingston -- side of the canal State Park, and that anyone who needed assistance in that area should still contact her directly.

Vice-Chairman Bostock thanked Superintendent Mitchell for service as the sole Superintendent for the 70-mile linear park, adding that many viewed the responsibility as requiring two people, and she managed the role as if she were two people. He wished her much luck with her duties.

Superintendent Mitchell reported that the Big Bear Gear's Delaware River tubing concession was concluding its seasonal operations, and the parking area at the Cooley Tract on State Highway Route No. 29 in Kingwood Township was expected to reopen to the public in the coming weeks.

Superintendent Mitchell also notes that State Park Service maintenance staff on the main section of the canal has repaired key boardwalk sections within the Six Mile Run site and the Turning Basin area. Also, maintenance staff on the Kingston side has been using their small Ventrac[®] tractor, purchased with trail grant funds, to mow and widen towpath areas.

Superintendent Mitchell said that during the Labor Day weekend, a large tree was toppling at the Point Pleasant area. No one was injured, and she said Superintendent Nagele did a great job in taking precautions to ensure visitors stayed away from the area. Once the tree was removed, the area was fully reopened.

Superintendent Mitchell also noted that the State Park Service is aware of fencing being installed along the park multiuse trail in the Duck Island area and are discussing the issue internally to address the activity.

Mr. Barth asked Superintendent Mitchell if she had received any further information as to when the State Park Service intended to open the trail on the berm side in Stockton Borough between the canal and the Delaware River. The Superintendent responded that the State Park Service hoped to open the trail, that Superintendent Nagele has been made aware of the issue, and discussions are being held with the NJWSA to work out details.

Noting that D&R Canal Watch was eager for information from the Somerset County engineer, Mr. Barth asked Superintendent Mitchell if she had any details on the status of a pedestrian-activated crossing and beacon proposed for the multiuse trail in proximity to the Weston Causeway, which she stated was a dangerous area. Superintendent Mitchell said she would look into the matter.

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Mr. Barth reported that the “Canal House Challenge” held on September 13 had been a success, with more than 100 people visiting all 5 canal buildings -- East Millstone, Blackwells Mills, Griggstown, Kingston and Port Mercer -- and thus earning a small prize. He said that this was the third challenge hosted by D&R Canal Watch, and the response had been so good that there was interest in expanding the buildings open for visitation to include those on the feeder section of the canal in the future.

Mrs. Barth said that D&R Canal Watch was selling its full-color 2027 calendar to raise funds for the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. The photographs featured in the calendar were taken by park users and selected by judges who had viewed all entries.

New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) Report

Mr. Sellar reported that the contractor hired to repair the Prallsville Mills culvert pit and the wastegate modification had begun preliminary site work.

He said that the NJWSA is continuing herbicidal treatment for Hydrilla in the Delaware and Raritan Canal; but, that some challenges arose which necessitated pushing back the tentative date for completion until mid-October. Hydrilla is a highly invasive aquatic plant from Asia that, if not controlled, could impede water flow in the canal.

Mr. Sellar said that no harmful algal blooms (HABs) had been reported in the canal.

He said that NJWSA consultants were closely reviewing revised plans for the Lightpath Company’s proposed fiber optic cable project and associated horizontal directional drilling under the canal in the vicinity of Prospect Street in the City of Trenton.

Mr. Sellar also reported that NJWSA maintenance crews were engaged in mowing duties and the removal of debris and trees that had fallen into the canal. Further, he said that the NJWSA’s autumn leaf removal activities would begin on the weekends sometime around October 17, and that crews would be out working on this task on Saturday and Sunday mornings for about six weeks.

Executive Session

None.

New Business

None.

Old Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Written Public Comments

None.

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Adjournment

There being no other business, Vice-Chairman Bostock entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Shoffner made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Palmer.

Vice-Chairman Bostock called for a vote on the motion to adjourn, which was unanimously approved by a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hutchison", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Hutchison, Secretary