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*Lieutenant Governor*

# State of New Jersey

## HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL

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**CARL J. RICHKO**  
*Chairman*

**BENJAMIN L. SPINELLI, ESQ.**  
*Executive Director*

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Budget & Finance Committee

**FROM:** Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director

**DATE:** December 4, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Committee Meeting Minutes – December 1, 2025

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held on Monday, December 1, 2025, at 12:06 pm via Zoom. The following participants were present:

Committee: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Visioli, and Committee Member Kibler

Governor's Authorities Unit (GAU): Michael Eleneski, Associate Counsel

Highlands Staff: Ben Spinelli, Neda Hartman, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Allison Bittner, Corey Piasecki, Carole Ann Dicton, Kyli Engle, Herb August, Kelley Curran, Annette Tagliareni, and Diana Swiderski.

*Committee Chair Visioli opened the meeting at 12:06 pm.*

A roll call was taken. Committee Member Bush and Committee Member James were absent. All other committee members were present.

Committee Chair Visioli reported that the committee will discuss the following agenda items:

1. Town of Morristown – Open Space and Recreation Plan (\$30,000)
2. West Milford Township – Westbrook Trails Planning & Design (\$13,350)
3. Washington Township (Warren) – Land Use Plan Element Update and Climate Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (\$44,000)

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Prior to staff's overview of the grant requests, Executive Director Spinelli noted that if the committee approves the following grants, they will be approved under the Executive Director's Authority instead of going to the full Council for their approval.

At this time, Highlands staff gave an overview of the agenda items:

**Town of Morristown – Open Space and Recreation Plan (\$30,000)**

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Planning Manager, stated that the Town of Morristown is seeking a \$30,000 grant for their updated Open Space and Recreation Plan. The proposal includes public outreach and community participation as well as new opportunities for park space. The resulting Plan will meet the requirements of the NJDEP Green Acres Program, allowing for future open space funding throughout the Town. The work is expected to be completed in approximately 5 months.

Council Chair Richko expressed concern that the Highlands Council is giving Morristown funding even though they are a non-conforming municipality. However, Herb August, Grants Manager, responded that, historically, we have completed two build-out reports for the town, that this request is considered a conforming activity, and that it may be a "foot in the door" for future projects and collaborations.

*Committee Chair Visioli asked for a vote to approve the Town of Morristown Open Space and Recreation Plan under Executive Director's authority. All were in favor.*

**West Milford Township – Westbrook Trails Planning & Design (\$13,350)**

Allison Bittner, Principal Planner, stated that the Township of West Milford is seeking \$13,350 of grant funding to partner with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in order to create a trails plan and design work for the Westbrook Trails. The work would begin in March 2026 and include stakeholder engagement, scouting of fields, and GIS data collection and map design. The Highlands brand logo would be included on the trail signs.

Council Chair Richko noted that although the area is great for hiking, there is very little parking space on the grounds and should be addressed with the Trail Conference and Township.

*Committee Chair Visioli asked for a vote to approve the West Milford Township Westbrook Trails Planning & Design under Executive Director's authority. All were in favor.*

**Washington Township (Warren) – Land Use Plan Element Update and Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (\$44,000)**

Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, stated that Washington Township is seeking a grant of \$44,000 to update its 1994 Land Use Plan Element. Washington Township has recently become fully conforming with the Highlands and has completed Phase 1 of the Plan. The update includes a review of the changes in state statutes, evolving market demands and land development patterns, and planning and zoning practices. The Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment will also be included. The Land Use Plan Element Update is expected to be completed within 6-9 months.

*Committee Chair Visioli asked for a vote to approve the Washington Township (Warren) Land Use Plan Element Update and Climate Hazard Vulnerability Assessment under Executive Director's authority. All were in favor.*

*The meeting adjourned at 12:21 pm.*