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Chairman

BENJAMIN L. SPINELLI, ESQ.
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Budget & Finance Committee

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

DATE: January 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Committee Meeting Minutes – January 6, 2026

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 12:28 pm via Zoom. The following participants were present:

Committee: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Visioli, Committee Members Kibler and Bush

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

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

Committee Chair Visioli opened the meeting at 12:28 pm.

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

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

1. Borough of Morris Plains, Morris County – Plan Conformance Assessment
2. Morris County, Morris County Park Commission (MCPC) – Natural Resources Inventory
3. Borough of Netcong, Morris County – Center Implementation

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

Borough of Morris Plains, Morris County – Plan Conformance Assessment (\$15,000)

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Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, stated that the Borough of Morris Plains is seeking a Plan Conformance Assessment Grant. The assessment will include an evaluation of the impacts of the Highlands Conformance Ordinance, Master Plan Reexamination, and Highlands Master Plan Element on the Borough's existing Planning and Zoning documents.

Committee Chair Visioli asked for a motion to move the Borough of Morris Plains' Plan Conformance Assessment grant to the full Council for consideration. Council Chair Richko made the motion and Committee Chair Visioli seconded it. All were in favor.

Morris County, Morris County Park Commission (MCPC) – Natural Resources Inventory (\$27,900)

Kelley Curran, Science Manager, stated that the Morris County Park Commission has requested a grant to conduct a Floristic Inventory and Assessment at one of their facilities: the 596-acre James Andres Memorial County Park in Randolph. Work would include a plant list inventory, including rare and invasive species, stewardship issues that threaten plant integrity, the calculation of floristic quality metrics, and a report summary; all of which will be conducted within one year.

Committee Chair Visioli asked for a motion to move the Morris County Park Commission's Natural Resources Inventory grant to the full Council for consideration. Council Chair Richko made the motion and Committee Member Kibler seconded it. All were in favor.

Borough of Netcong, Morris County – Center Implementation (\$88,000)

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Planning Manager, stated that the Borough of Netcong is requesting grant funding for additional tasks, after the approval of their Petition for Plan Conformance and Center designation at the April 17, 2025, Council Meeting. Due to the request of the NJ Department of Treasury requiring resolutions with specific items listed, these additional tasks and their anticipated costs include a Center Planning (\$30,000), Circulation Plan element (\$30,000), Housing Element and Fair Share Plan (\$25,000), and Environmental Resource Inventory (\$3,000). These would incorporate a review of transportation trends, challenges, and recommendations related to road safety, the preparation of the Environmental Resource Inventory using the Highlands Interactive ERI tool, center planning community outreach, and the preparation and adoption of a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

Committee Chair Visioli asked for a motion to move the Borough of Netcong's Center Implementation grant to the full Council for consideration. Council Chair Richko made the motion and Council Member Bush seconded it. All were in favor.

On another matter, Ben Spinelli, Executive Director, announced that five municipalities that were previously approved for Highlands Center designations were notified that the designations had expired due to lack of progress on implementation. Two towns responded indicating interest in reinstating their center designations. James Humphries, Director of Planning, Science & GIS, noted that Council needs to do their due diligence with regard to the State Planning Commission regarding center designations, and that Highlands Centers are now considered equivalent to State Plan Centers. It was noted that no funding was reimbursed to these municipalities for their approved center designations since the work was never completed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:42 pm.