

**RESOLUTION 2026-07**  
**NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL**  
**APPROVAL OF WEBSITE HOSTING AND MAINTENANCE PROPOSAL AS A**  
**COMPONENT OF BRANDING AND MARKETING PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act), N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq., has created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council); and

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Council is tasked with implementing the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, section 6.g of the Highlands Act authorizes the Highlands Council to enter into any and all agreements or contracts to effectuate the purposes of the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Act at N.J.S.A. 13:20-2 declares that the New Jersey Highlands is an essential source of drinking water, providing clean and plentiful drinking water for one-half of the State's population and contains exceptional natural resources such as clean air, contiguous forest lands, wetlands, pristine watersheds, and habitat for fauna and flora for the citizens of the State; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Highlands Act charges the Highlands Council with protecting the Region's natural resources, as well as supporting sustainable economic conditions; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 17, 2008, the Highlands Council adopted the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP), which became effective on September 8, 2008, to guide implementation of the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, an Economic Sustainability Plan for the Highlands Region was developed over an 18-month period, and subsequently released by the Highlands Council in December 2021 to supplement the economic development section of the RMP, analyzing current economic conditions in the Highlands and setting forth a series of goals and objectives to strengthen the Region's economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the Economic Sustainability Plan identifies a series of actions devised to advance the stated goals and objectives, one of which is the creation of a branding and marketing plan which is intended to create a distinct Highlands image and reach a broad audience; and

**WHEREAS**, in November of 2023, the Highlands Council prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking firms with varied expertise in tourism, branding, and marketing for the purpose of positioning the Highlands Region to increase tourism, support agriculture, bolster local businesses, and improve economic sustainability; and

**WHEREAS**, following the review of applicant submissions and conducting interviews, the Highlands Council, by resolution 2024-10 in October of 2024, awarded the Branding and Marketing contract to North Star Place Branding + Marketing (North Star), the applicant determined to be best suited to meet the needs articulated by the Highlands Council's RFP; and

**WHEREAS**, North Star developed a comprehensive Branding and Marketing Plan for the Highlands Region that includes the development of a unique brand, a marketing campaign, and an implementation action plan capturing the region's unique environment and diverse tourism and recreational opportunities for visitors; and

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**WHEREAS**, one of the components of the RFP was to create a place branding website which would serve as a digital hub to curate, promote, and manage a unique, authentic identity for the Highlands Region, attract visitors and enhance economic development; and

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Tourism Website was launched on February 25, 2026, and has already received significant positive feedback. The website is intended to serve as a centralized resource where visitors and tourists can access information about the many attractions, destinations and assets available in the New Jersey Highlands; and

**WHEREAS**, ongoing hosting and maintenance are necessary for the continued operation and effectiveness of the website. To that end, North Star has submitted a proposal for a 3-year Agreement to provide website hosting and maintenance services, including reporting on website usage metrics. It is anticipated that additional content and features will be added over time, some of which may be completed under the 3-year agreement. Highlands staff will also receive training to administer updates as well; and

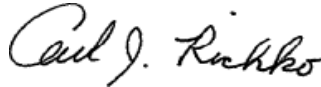
**WHEREAS**, Highlands Council staff recommends that the Highlands Council authorize the Executive Director to extend the contract with North Star for a timeframe of three years for the aforementioned website hosting and maintenance services, at a total cost of \$29,622, to be funded through the RMP Implementation Fund; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:20-5.j, no action authorized by the Highlands Council shall have force or effect until ten (10) days, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays excepted, after a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council has been delivered to the Governor for review, unless prior to expiration of the review period the Governor shall approve same, in which case the action shall become effective upon such approval.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Highlands Council that the Executive Director, or their designee, is hereby authorized to extend the North Star contract for three years for website hosting and maintenance, for an amount not to exceed \$29,622.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 19th day of March, 2026.



Carl J. Richko, Chairman

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<b>Vote on the Approval of Resolution</b>	<b>Motion</b>	<b>Second</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Councilmember Alstede			√			
Councilmember Amoroso			√			
Councilmember Basralian			√			
Councilmember Bush			√			
Councilmember Dougherty			√			
Councilmember James						√
Councilmember Kibler			√			
Councilmember Koop		√	√			
Councilmember Le Frois	√		√			
Councilmember Marano			√			
Councilmember Oswald			√			
Councilmember Smith			√			
Councilmember Van Abs			√			
Councilmember Visioli						√
Chairman Richko			√			