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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: RMP Amendment Committee

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

DATE: May 14, 2026

SUBJECT: RMP Amendment Committee Meeting Minutes of May 6, 2026

The Regional Master Plan (RMP) Amendment Committee met on Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at 1:30pm via Zoom.

RMP Amendment Committee Members present: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Alstede, Members Kibler, Oswald, Smith and Van Abs.

Highlands Council Staff Members present: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kelley Curran, Jocelyn van den Akker, Neda Hartman, Corey Piasecki, Carole Ann Diction, Diana Swiderski and Annette Tagliareni.

Governor's Authority Unit (GAU): Azeem Chaudry, Associate Counsel.

Committee Chair Alstede opened the meeting at 1:32pm. At this time, Members Oswald and Smith were absent, but joined later in the meeting.

Mr. Piasecki opened the meeting by providing a PowerPoint presentation outlining the below Monitoring Program Recommendation Report (MPRR) chapters, fundamental RMP Issues, recommendations, and then opening it to committee members for their comments/questions.

- Water Resources
- Water and Wastewater Utilities
- Future Land Use

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Water Resources

Mr. Piasecki reviewed the recommendations included in the Water Resources chapter of the MPRR.

- Highlands Restoration: Water Deficits
- The Efficient Use of Water
- Water Quality Restoration

After Mr. Piasecki's presentation on the Water Resources MPRR chapter, there were several comments/questions:

Chair Richko asked about data centers in the Highlands. It was noted that there is one in Parsippany and several others proposed in parts of the region. Mr. Spinelli emphasized that Highlands staff will need to explore design criteria for data centers. There was then discussion regarding a closed loop system for cooling.

Committee Member Kibler asked if Highlands staff has any concerns regarding impervious surface. Mr. Spinelli responded that there are certain parts of the region acceptable for development, redevelopment and centers.

Committee Member Oswald was present at approximately 1:50pm.

Committee Member Kibler also asked about the collection of groundwater data. Mr. Spinelli responded that we have limited data because groundwater data for stream flow is few and far between and needs better data collection.

Committee Member Kibler then asked how we prioritize and what is the process regarding water use when in a drought (agricultural uses versus golf course uses). It was noted that the Highlands can anticipate water demands in specific areas, i.e., agriculture versus new development, but have no authority on water demands. It was noted by Committee Member Van Abs that the operational control is through the Governor.

Lastly, Committee Member Kibler asked if we have a mechanism in mind regarding water user fees. Mr. Piasecki responded that there has been legislation to make that happen in the past but it has not been successful. Need to advocate for it.

There was continued discussion about ways to implement a water user fee.

Water and Wastewater Utilities

Mr. Piasecki then reviewed the recommendations included in the Water and Wastewater Utilities chapter of the MPRR

- Wastewater Utilities
- Waste Waters System Maintenance

Member Kibler asked if there are areas identified that would be practical to remove individual systems for alternative wastewater systems. At this time there were discussions regarding Chester, Califon and Bloomsbury Boroughs' issues regarding failing septic systems and possible municipal funding through the I-Bank.

Committee Member Smith was present at approximately 2:03pm.

At this time, Committee Member Alstede spoke about some concerns regarding Chester Borough's expansion of wastewater treatment capacity and the prioritization of it.

Future Land Use

Due to time constraints, it was decided to discuss the Future Land Use chapter of the MPRR at the committee's June 2nd meeting and to extend the time of that meeting.

Mr. Piasecki asked the committee members to submit their comments/edits to the MPRR chapters we spoke about today within the next couple of weeks.

It was noted that the following MPRR chapters will be discussed at the next committee meeting:

- Future Land Use
- Natural Resources
- Landowners Equity
- Implementation

The RMP Amendment Committee adjourned at 2:25pm.