

DRAFT FOR CHAIR REVIEW
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS COUNCIL
LOCAL PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

CHAIR REPORT
FOR THE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2006

On September 21, 2006, the Local Participation Committee held a meeting at the New Jersey Highlands Council office in Chester, New Jersey. Notice of the meeting was provided to the public on the Highlands Council's web site. Council members present at the meeting were: Mimi Letts, John Weingart, Tracy Carluccio, Scott Whitenack, and Debbie Pasquarelli. Council staff members present were: Dante Di Pirro, Tom Borden, and Patty Sly. Committee Chairwoman Mimi Letts called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. Ms Letts referenced her presentation of the Chair report which she made during the Council meeting.

The Committee reviewed the draft calendar of hearings and other activities anticipated to occur between the release of the draft Regional Master Plan and the plan adoption. The Committee sought to find a balance between leaving appropriate time before the hearings begin in order for materials to be made available for consideration, and sufficient time for the Council and staff to consider the public comments. Some Committee members expressed concern about the aggressive time table, but agreed that we must stay on course to meet deadline. The Committee recommended holding the 6 public hearings in the 4th, 5th and 6th weeks following draft release. In addition, two Council meetings will be held in the 6th, 7th and/or 8th weeks in order to consider the comments. Throughout the 8 week public comment period, written comments would be welcomed and shared with Council members and staff.

The Committee discussed the need for reviewing the draft with county and municipal officials. It was suggested that we hold regional meetings – one in the north, one centrally, and one in the southern part of the region. We will need to address concerns and questions of the municipal officials, the freeholders and the technical staff. In terms of a process for open houses to answer questions from the public, the Committee requested staff determine how to best structure the open houses.

The Committee reviewed the information gathered on prospective public hearing locations. The Committee acknowledged the need to pay room use and custodial fees in many instances and understands that this may run \$2,000 or \$3,000 total. Based on the input, the recommended venues are as follows:

Trenton: The State Museum, or the War Memorial

Morris/Somerset: The Hagerty Center at Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morristown, perhaps scheduling both day and evening sessions

Passaic/Bergen: Ramapo College, Mahwah

Sussex: Sussex County Technical School, Sparta

Warren: Warren Hills High School or Warren County Technical School, Washington

Hunterdon: Voorhees High School, Glen Gardner, or North Hunterdon High School

Staff will make reservations given the calendar guidance, room availability and consideration of holidays. The Committee reviewed the draft agenda for each hearing and recommended that the hearing officers be Council members, ideally from the region in which each hearing is held. They affirmed the need for a 15 minute overview with appropriate visuals.

Ms Letts then opened the meeting to public comment. A representative from Warren County Environmental Commission emphasized the importance of public outreach and stated that her organization, in conjunction with ANJEC, was planning information sessions. She added that people need time to “chew on things.” She also cautioned that some towns entirely in the planning area have not been engaged and will need a lot of information.

Chairwoman Letts adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.