

Disclaimer

These minutes reflect the actions taken by the Commission during its May 8, 2026 meeting. Although these minutes have been approved by the Commission, no action authorized by the Commission during this meeting, as reflected in these minutes, shall have force or effect until ten (10) days, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays excepted, after a copy of these minutes has been delivered to the Governor for review, unless prior to expiration of the review period the governor approves same, in which case the action shall become effective upon such approval. These minutes were delivered to the Governor on May 14, 2026.

PINELANDS COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES
May 8, 2026

All participants were either in-person or present via Zoom conference and the meeting was livestreamed through YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/live/t71T901B4e4>

Commissioners Participating in the Meeting

Nicholas Asselta, Alan W. Avery Jr., Deborah Buzby-Cope, Jerome H. Irick, Mark Lohbauer, Mark Mauriello, Jonathan Meade, William Pikolycky, Jessica Rittler Sanchez, Douglas Wallner and Chair Laura E. Matos. Also participating were Executive Director Susan R. Grogan, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Jay Stypinski and Governor's Authorities Unit representative Azeem Chaudry.

Commissioners Absent

Theresa Lettman, Gaetano Matro and Ryck Signor.

Call to Order

Chair Matos called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

DAG Stypinski read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

Executive Director (ED) Grogan called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum. Eleven Commissioners participated in the meeting.

The Commission pledged allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Chair Matos presented the open and closed session minutes from the Commission's April 10, 2026 meeting. Commissioner Pikolycky moved the adoption of the minutes. Commissioner Buzby-Cope seconded the motion.

The open and closed session minutes from the April 10, 2026 Commission meeting were adopted by a vote of 11 to 0.

Committee Reports

Chair Matos provided a summary of the April 24, 2026 Policy and Implementation Committee meeting:

The Committee approved the minutes from its March 27, 2026 meeting.

The Committee received a presentation on Monroe Township's 2025 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and Ordinance O:06-2026, adopting the Hightop Redevelopment Plan. The Committee voted to recommend these documents to the full Commission for certification. Staff will be discussing the plan and ordinance at this meeting.

One public comment was received, expressing concerns with a residential development application in Egg Harbor Township and its potential negative impacts on biodiversity and rare plant species in the vicinity. Staff will provide a summary of that application later on in the meeting.

Executive Director's Report

ED Grogan provided information on the following matters:

- The Fenwick Manor Rehabilitation continues to make progress. A storage container arrived last week where office furniture and excess files will be stored for the duration of the project. The final draft of the contract has been provided to the contractor. A preconstruction meeting has been scheduled for May 19th with the contractor, the architect and the Historic Trust. The meeting is required per the grant funding. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has approved the design documents for the project. Staff are awaiting a bond from the contractor and for an application to be filed with DCA for the necessary permits for the project.
- Staff issued a Request for Quotation (RFQ) for accounting services and assistance with the FY 2023 Audit. Unfortunately, no bids were submitted and the RFQ will be reissued. The Business Office is also preparing another RFQ, one for payroll services and a new time and accounting system.

- In response to Executive Order 5, staff prepared a spreadsheet detailing the types of permits and approvals the Commission issues including the type of information that is requested as part of the application process. Staff included information on what causes delays and how our process works and how it could be improved and shared the spreadsheet with the Governor's Office in late April. Staff hope to have an opportunity to discuss the Commission's process with the Governor's office and the committees being set up to address state agency permitting and efficiency because the Commission's application and approval procedures are unlike other agencies.
- The Commission was matched with a candidate from the Rutgers Scarlet Service Internship Program. The intern will be working in the Information Systems office and will be introduced at the June Commission meeting.
- Two new staff members, Gina Fernandes and Tia Sarriugarte, joined the Commission in April and were introduced.

Chuck Horner, Director of Regulatory Programs, provided information on the following regulatory matters:

- Mullica Township completed an application for a 3,300 square foot building addition to its existing municipal building. The Commission previously approved an application for an entirely new public safety building for the Township's police department. The Township determined that a new building was cost prohibitive and is no longer moving forward with that application, instead it will construct the building addition. That application is available for public comment later in the meeting.
- Also available for comment at today's meeting is Burlington County's application for the Shamong Township traffic circle also known as a roundabout. The Commission received and responded to public comment when the application was submitted in April of 2025. Many of those comments were concerned with the proposed intersection type and the use of taxpayer money for that intersection. Staff responded to all those public comments, indicating that the Commission would be reviewing the application for all the standards that are within our regulations including: endangered species, wetlands protection and cultural resources. In those responses, staff did indicate that the Commission does not have regulations that address intersection designs. Intersection designs are up to the applicant, typically a public development applicant such as a municipality, county or the state.
- Staff continue to work with the owners of Sweet Amalia restaurant in Franklin Township. Staff contacted the applicant and encouraged them to submit certain information in order to figure out a solution to the issue. Staff then followed up with a letter on May 1st. The applicant submitted information later the following week and staff is currently reviewing the submission. The applicants are proposing a restaurant on a two-and-a-half-acre parcel served by a septic system. The Commission's regulations use expected wastewater flows for a restaurant to determine if the groundwater quality standard can be met. Wastewater

flow calculations are provided to us by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Currently the applicant is attempting to take wastewater flows that were assigned to an adjacent commercial ice cream stand and the wastewater flows that were assigned to the prior farm market that existed and use those flows to essentially “grandfather the flows” that are coming from the proposed restaurant.

Brad Lanute, Chief Planner, provided the following update:

- Staff anticipates two presentations at the May P&I Committee meeting regarding the REAL rules and the impacts in the Pinelands Area. The first part will cover amendments related to Flood Hazard Areas, Coastal Zone Management Areas, and Freshwater Wetlands. The second part will focus on amendments to stormwater management.
- The Land Use Programs Office continues to work through a high volume of affordable housing-related ordinances and zoning changes. Through the end of April, a total of 72 draft or adopted ordinances were received, the majority of which relate to the Fourth-Round affordable housing plans.

Mr. Lanute provided an update on a few of the more involved zoning proposals including:

- Jackson Township has requested and been granted an additional three-month extension of the Commission’s review period as it works to address the substantial issues identified by staff.
- Staff have also been working through the review of 10 ordinances adopted by Manchester Township since the beginning of the year. Staff anticipate that a couple of those involving zoning changes within the Township’s Regional Growth Area will likely come before the P&I Committee in June.
- Staff also met with representatives of Waterford Township last month to discuss proposed zoning changes within the Haines Boulevard Redevelopment Area, which represents one of the largest undeveloped tracts within the Township’s Regional Growth Area. The Township requested staff feedback on the rezoning proposal prior to adoption, and we plan to provide comments early next week. Any significant rezoning within that area will likely come before the P&I Committee later this summer.

Lastly, Mr. Lanute mentioned a coordination effort with the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). He said in late April, staff from the BPU contacted the Commission regarding three solar development proposals located in the Pinelands Area. These three projects are seeking participation in the New Jersey Competitive Solar Incentive (CSI) Program and are requesting land use waivers from the BPU because the projects are located within the Preservation Area — one in Pemberton Township on a former landfill and two in Lacey Township at the sites of active mining operations. Under the Solar Act of 2021, projects located in the Preservation Area are not eligible to participate in the CSI Program, which was the reason for the waiver request. BPU staff requested memos addressing both the application status of each proposal before the Commission and each project’s consistency with the CMP. Staff were aware of all three projects,

which were in various stages of the application review process. The requested memos have been provided.

Stacey Roth, Chief, Legal and Legislative Affairs provided the following updates:

- Financial Disclosure Statements must be filed by May 15th.
- Currently, the Artistic Materials litigation is scheduled for trial beginning on June 2nd. A motion filed by the Commission was granted to obtain financial documents related to Artistic Materials daily operations. Four boxes that included 15,000 documents are currently being reviewed and organized for trial. The Commission was successful in its motion to oppose Artistic's motion to quash the Commission's subpoena related to a \$700,000 mortgage line of credit from Farm Credit East. An in-person pre-trial conference with the judge is scheduled for May 18th.
- Assembly Bill A4275 was introduced on February 19th and would establish an online statewide tracking system or dashboard for certain state permits, licenses and certifications. The Office on Information Technology (OIT) would be tasked with creating and maintaining the system. The bill would require all executive branch agencies and independent state authorities to provide information to OIT. One of the goals is a system accessible to the public so that status of permits and certifications can be viewed. Staff support the bill but due to the Commission's outdated application database, it may be difficult for the Commission to provide the necessary information to OIT. The bill was reported out of Committee and is on its second reading.

Paul Leakan, the Communications Officer, said the Commission will host two upcoming presentations on ticks, following Commissioner Jessica Rittler Sanchez's inquiry into the topic during the last Commission meeting.

Mr. Leakan said that Zack Sieb, a tick biologist with the Monmouth County Office of Mosquito Control, will kick off the Pinelands Speakers Series at Commission's office with a program on June 18th. His talk will focus on tick biology, ecology, and tick bite prevention. Mr. Leakan said that the Commission will host another tick program during the Pinelands Summer Short Course at Stockton University's campus in Hammonton on July 17th. At that time, Dr. Jim Occi, a microbiologist with Rutgers Center for Vector Biology, will deliver a program focusing on the different species of ticks in New Jersey, including their biology.

Mr. Leakan also provided details on three other presentations that will be delivered during this year's Pinelands Speaker Series. Pinelands Commission Research Scientist Tyler Christensen will give a talk on owls of New Jersey. Commission Research Scientist Christine Healy will deliver a presentation on Pinelands frogs. Lastly, Commission Research Scientist Patrick Burritt will give a talk on eastern box turtles, along with details about the Commission's ongoing, radiotracking study of box turtles.

Public Development Projects and Other Permit Matters

Chair Matos introduced a resolution recommending approval of two public development applications.

Commissioner Lohbauer made a motion Approving With Conditions Applications for Public Development (Application Numbers 1986-0122.027 & 1987-0345.021) (See Resolution # PC4-26-10). Commissioner Pikolycky seconded the motion.

Director Horner said the first application is for the installation of a 142 linear foot sanitary sewer main at the New Lisbon Developmental Center. The sewer main is intended to provide a connection between the water treatment plant that exists at the Center and an existing sanitary sewer main. He said this will facilitate the backwash of their potable water treatment equipment.

He said the second application is proposing to pave an existing 30,000 square foot stone parking lot at Shawnee High School in Medford Township. Sidewalk improvements will also be undertaken.

Commissioner Rittler Sanchez asked if upgrades are necessary to the school's existing stormwater management facilities.

Director Horner said the applicant is removing impervious coverage as part of the application, which exceeds the amount of pavement being proposed. He said no additional stormwater facilities are required.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 11 to 0.

Planning Matters

Commissioner Lohbauer had to recuse from the discussion and vote on this matter. He was placed in a Zoom waiting room.

Chair Matos introduced a resolution to adopt the Hightop Redevelopment Plan.

Commissioner Buzby-Cope made a motion Issuing an Order to Certify Monroe Township's 2025 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and Ordinance O:06-2026, adopting the Hightop Redevelopment Plan (See Resolution # PC4-26-11). Commissioner Irick seconded the motion.

Chief Planner Lanute said the Hightop Redevelopment Area is located in Monroe Township's Regional Growth Area. It's a 26-acre site that is on the edge of the Pinelands Area. The parcel is vacant and forested. He shared a timeline of when the Ordinance was submitted to the Commission. A public hearing was held on April 8th, and no testimony or written comments were received. He said the current zoning is a commercial zone (RG-C) that does not allow residential uses. He said the redevelopment plan would permit both residential and commercial uses. The residential component of the plan would allow for densities up to 11 units per acre. It would include townhouses, multifamily stacked houses, and age-targeted townhouses. The plan will require a 20% set aside for affordable units for a total of 48 units. The commercial component would allow for a variety of retail uses, including all the uses that are already

permitted in the RG-C zone. The level of density that is allowed under the plan would permit up to 286 units. The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) would only require that the township provide for 78 units. However, the CMP allows municipalities to increase residential density in Regional Growth Areas for specific municipal objectives. In this case, the township is increasing density to meet their affordable housing obligation, in turn they must demonstrate that infrastructure is available and that no significant environmental limitations exist. Pinelands Development Credits (PDCs) are required for a percentage of the permitted dwelling units. There is an existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Pinelands Commission and Monroe Township's Municipal Utility Authority (MUA) that requires monitoring of wastewater flows. He said under that agreement there is a cap of 3 million gallons per day that is allowed to leave the Pinelands Area. Staff estimated the water demand for full buildout of this site and it has been determined that it will not trigger any additional monitoring or exceed that 3.0 million gallons per day limit. The redevelopment plan also contains a 25% mandatory PDC requirement, that exempts affordable housing units up to 48. The total opportunity for PDC use would be 60 rights or 15 full PDCs. He said staff has made a finding that this plan and housing element fair share plan and redevelopment plan comply with CMP standards. See attached presentation slides.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 10 to 0.

Commissioner Lohbauer returned to the meeting.

Public Comment on Development Applications and Items Where the Record is Open

Director Horner said there are four applications up for comment:

- Construction of a 3,300 square foot addition to the Mullica Township municipal building
- Construction of a roundabout in Shamong Township
- Replacement of a bridge and dam in Egg Harbor City
- Installation of 960 linear feet of sanitary sewer within the Delilah Road right-of-way in Egg Harbor Township

Joe Abegg said he respects the Commission's work, however he is tired of government overspending. He said local Emergency Management Services and school boards are in trouble. He said now that Atco Raceway is closed, the proposed traffic circle is no longer necessary. He said residents don't want the traffic circle and it's not needed.

Judy Shahinian of Shamong Township said she lives on Willow Grove Road and the traffic circle will have a direct impact on her home. She said the circle will encroach on her property and headlights will shine into her bedroom. She said the development of a traffic circle will also cause her home to lose value. She said the amount of traffic has decreased with the closure of Atco Raceway. She said the County engineer never provided the information that is requested. She said large farm equipment will not be able to maneuver the traffic circle. She also noted that there hasn't been an accident at the intersection in approximately one year. She said a new traffic study is necessary.

Harry Harper of Pemberton Township said he is very familiar with the intersection of the proposed traffic circle and has previously provided public comment on the issue. He said there will be six times more concrete and asphalt than there is now. He said the traffic circle is not necessary. He said residents in Chesterfield have been asking Burlington County for a traffic circle that's necessary and instead the county is installing one where it's not needed.

Dorothy Grobelny said she will not be directly affected by the traffic circle, but she doesn't support taxpayer dollars to fund the project. She said there are much worse intersections in Shamong that could use improvements. She added that the issue can be resolved with the installation of a three-colored traffic light. She said the addition of pavement will have a negative effect on the environment and it's a waste of money.

Lisa Jordan, Acting Shamong Township Clerk/Administrator, said she would have liked to have Township professionals at today's meeting but they were not given advance notice of this meeting. She said the Township is not in favor of the traffic circle. The County is relying on an outdated (2017) traffic study, and there have been significant changes in the amount of traffic at that intersection. She noted the location of the Brotherton Reservation and said the Township doesn't want the proposed roundabout in the area. She said it's unnecessary and a waste of taxpayer money. She said she is unable to speak on the engineering aspect of the project. She said she was able to get a copy of the plans yesterday and has many concerns about them. She asked for a second public comment period, where professionals can speak since advanced notice of this meeting was not provided. She said if the Commission is not able to do that, then the Township asks the Commission to put some thought into the impact the roundabout is going to have on the town, as well as the farming community.

Secretary's note: The monthly Commission meeting agenda and materials were shared via Constant Contact with all Pinelands Municipal Clerks and Mayors over a week in advance of the Commission meeting. In addition, the Shamong Township Solicitor was individually notified of the agenda for today's meeting.

Lester Grovatt said his family has lived in Burlington County for over 100 years. He does not support the traffic circle. He said it's a waste of money and time. He said there needs to be an updated traffic study now that the Atco Raceway is closed and the proposal needs to be reevaluated.

Michael Di Croce, Mayor of Shamong Township, said he is opposed to Burlington County's proposed construction of a new traffic circle. He said the project is unnecessary, fiscally irresponsible and environmentally damaging, and Shamong Township residents do not support the project. He said the volume of traffic at the proposed intersection has changed significantly since the closure of the Atco Speedway. The intersection has functioned adequately for years, and Burlington County has failed to present compelling evidence that the circle would improve traffic flow or public safety. He said the proposal is a misuse of taxpayer funds. He said residents will be forced to endure unnecessary construction, increased congestion during development, permanent alterations to the landscape, and intrusion of an oversized traffic structure inconsistent with the character of the Pinelands. He said the Pinelands exist because prior generations have recognized the need to protect this unique ecosystem from overdevelopment and unnecessary

intrusion. The disturbance of the habitat, increased impervious coverage and alteration of existing land conditions for a project of questionable necessity undermines the preservation mission entrusted to the Commission. He noted four of the five current members of the Shamong Township's governing body oppose the traffic circle. He said the County needs to seek alternatives such as the installation of a four-way stop, reduced speed limits along Stokes Road, enhanced signage and flashing or blinking traffic controls or a conventional traffic signal. These options would address any legitimate traffic concerns. He urged the Commission to reject this proposed circle/roundabout and instead require Burlington County to pursue less intrusive alternatives that balance public safety, fiscal responsibility and environmental preservation. He said the traffic circle is unnecessary.

Kerri Lyons of Shamong Township said the municipality is a very small, wooded town. The proposed traffic circle will ruin the look of the intersection and it will ruin property values. She said the County is relying on an old traffic study. She said there are other solutions than installing a traffic circle. She said the County should first try the following alternatives to solve the issue: installation of rumble strips, speed bumps or giant stop signs. She said no one in the township wants the traffic circle and it's a misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Ordinances Not Requiring Commission Action

Mr. Lanute said included in the packet was a lengthy memo regarding ordinances and master plan amendments reviewed and determined to raise no substantial issue with respect to the CMP.

In total, the memorandum covered 19 ordinances and one master plan amendment.

- Eleven of the ordinances, along with the sole master plan amendment, were related to fourth-round affordable housing obligations.
- Four ordinances from three municipalities, which include Monroe, Pemberton, and Waterford, prohibited data centers within those municipalities.

General Public Comment

Heidi Yeh of the Pinelands Alliance said there is a misconception that 20% is the maximum number of units that can be made affordable within a development. She said Pinelands Alliance is concerned by this. She acknowledged that such developments can be financially challenging. She said any affordable units over 20% would be required to purchase and redeem PDCs. She said the Alliance wants to raise awareness that there are plenty of developments that have more than 20% affordable housing units. More creative approaches, including funding mechanisms, are needed.

Other

Commissioner Rittler Sanchez said she has concerns about the proposed roundabout in Shamong, and she asked if it could be discussed at the next P&I Committee meeting.

Chair Matos said after the comments today, she has questions as well, but the application cannot be discussed at a Committee meeting. She said she would speak with the Executive Director and figure out the best approach.

Commissioner Rittler Sanchez said as a nearby resident she is affected and concerned.

Commissioner Irick said he is concerned about drainage associated with the roundabout and it would be nice to have a current traffic study.

Commissioner Buzby Cope said she agreed and raised concern about the farming equipment being able to maneuver the roundabout.

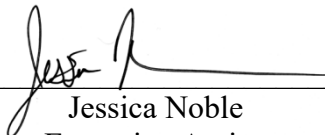
Director Horner said he will be retiring effective June 1st, after nearly 40 years of working at the Commission. He shared the story of how he was hired at the Commission and only imagined staying a few years before heading back to the private sector. He thanked past and present administrations for allowing him to continue working at the Commission since he is an at-will employee. He also thanked past and present Executive Directors. He suggested the Commission think about its focus over the next ten years. He said the Commission is a small agency that has no enforcement authority, and when a violation is reported to the Commission, staff spends a great deal of time assisting the town and writing letters to the violator to resolve the matter. He said because staff is spending time on violations, they are spread thin and other work must still be completed. He said as the Director of Regulator Programs, he wanted to thank both past and present employees of his office. He said they deal with the public every day and are asked to explain complicated regulations, including municipal zoning. He said they must write letters detailing complex application submissions and sometimes they are wildlife biologists. He said they do an excellent job. He closed by saying thanking the Commission and noting that he will miss everyone.

Several Commissioners thanked Director Horner for his patience and his dedication to the Commission and for handling many development applicants over the years. They wished him health and wellness in his retirement.

Adjournment

Commissioner Avery moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pikolycky seconded the motion. The Commission agreed to adjourn at 11:03 a.m.

Certified as true and correct:



Jessica Noble
Executive Assistant

Date: May 14, 2026