



State of New Jersey

Department of State
New Jersey State Planning Commission
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MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
*Lt. Governor
Secretary of State*

THOMAS K. WRIGHT
CHAIRMAN

WALTER C. LANE
Executive Director/Secretary

New Jersey State Planning Commission Minutes of the Meeting Held on May 6, 2026 Zoom Video Conference

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the May 6, 2026, video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission to order at 9:31 a.m.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

It was announced that notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting had been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL

Members Present

Joe Grillo, Designee for President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, Board of Public Utilities (joined at 9:36 a.m.)
Nick Angarone, Designee for Ed Potosnak, Acting Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection
Keith Henderson, Designee for Jacquelyn Suarez, Commissioner, Department of Community Affairs
Michael Manzella, Designee for Priya Jain, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Melanie Willoughby, Designee for Lt. Governor Dr. Dale Caldwell, Secretary of State, Department of State (joined at 9:52 a.m.)
Shanel Robinson, County Commissioner Director, County Member
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member
Danielle Esser, Director of Governance, NJ Economic Development Authority
Jeffrey Oakman, Public Member
Stephen Santola, Public Member
Julia Somers, Public Member
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member
Edward J. McKenna, Vice Chair, Public Member (joined at 9:37 a.m.)
Thomas Wright, Chairman

Others Present through Video conference

See Attachment A

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Wright asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Before asking for a motion to approve the minutes, Chairman Wright indicated that Executive Director Walter Lane would provide comment. Executive Director Lane stated that due to his recusal from the Sourlands matter, he had been recently advised not to sign or approve meeting minutes including any discussion of the Sourlands. He also noted that he had not participated in any discussions regarding the Sourlands, nor drafted or reviewed any portion of the minutes related to that matter. As he would therefore be unable to sign the April 1, 2026, State Planning Commission Meeting minutes, Executive Director Lane suggested that Chairman Wright do so in his stead, if approved by the Commission. As such, the only change to the draft April 1, 2026, State Planning Commission Meeting minutes would be a modification to reflect that Chairman Wright would be signing the minutes in place of Executive Director Lane. Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the amended minutes of April 1, 2026, with the understanding that he would be signing the minutes in place of Executive Director Lane. The motion was made by Keith Henderson and seconded by Jeffrey Oakman. Ayes: (8) Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Michael Manzella, Bruce Harris, Jeffrey Oakman, Stephen Santola, Elizabeth Terenik, Tom Wright Nays: (0) Abstains: (3) Shanel Robinson, Danielle Esser, Julia Somers The April 1, 2026, minutes were not approved.

At 9:36 a.m., Deputy Attorney General Craig Keiser requested that the Commission and Office of Planning Advocacy staff enter closed session. Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the Commission entering closed session. The motion was made by Danielle Esser and seconded by Jeffrey Oakman. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes (12) Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Michael Manzella, Shanel Robinson, Bruce Harris, Danielle Esser, Jeffrey Oakman, Steven Santola, Julia Somers, Elizabeth Terenik, Ed McKenna, Tom Wright Nays: (0) Abstains: (0) The Commission voted to approve entering closed session.

Administrative Assistant Sara Bennett was instructed to move all attendees, not to include Commissioners or Office of Planning Advocacy Staff, to the waiting room, and the meeting recording was paused.

At 9:49 a.m., the Commissioners, Office of Planning Advocacy staff, and Deputy Attorney General Craig Keiser exited the closed session and Administrative Assistant Bennett began the meeting recording and returned all attendees from the waiting room back into the meeting.

Chairman Wright recalled the previous vote to approve the April 1, 2026, meeting minutes. He then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Ed McKenna and seconded by Michael Manzella. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. During the vote, Administrative Assistant Bennett indicated that Commissioners Robinson and Somers were recused from voting on the minutes. Ayes (10) Joe Grillo, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Michael Manzella, Bruce Harris, Jeffrey Oakman, Steven Santola, Elizabeth Terenik, Ed McKenna, Tom Wright Nays: (0) Abstains: (1) Danielle Esser Recusals: (2) Shanel Robinson, Julia Somers The April 1, 2026, minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Wright shared that he heard Governor Sherrill speak the week prior to an audience of over 1,000 people at an event held in New York City. Along with the Governor's recent issuance of an Executive Order on housing, he was pleased to see how the priorities of her administration align with the work done by the Commission on the State Plan.

With that, Chairman Wright ended his comments and ceded the floor to Executive Director Walter Lane for his report.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Before presenting his report, Executive Director Walter Lane noted that all comments made using the chat feature would be read into the meeting record for the sake of transparency, and introduced Craig Keiser, Deputy Attorney General to the Commission. He proceeded to provide a brief overview of the Office of Planning Advocacy's work since the April 1, 2026, State Planning Commission meeting.

He reported that staff continued working on wide range of activities to advance implementation of the new State Development and Redevelopment Plan, providing technical planning assistance to extensive array of planning partners while diligently working with Dennis, Manchester, Wildwood City, Sparta, Ocean City, Little Egg Harbor, North Wildwood, Salem City, Barnegat, and Berkeley on requirements needed to achieve Plan Endorsement. Later in the meeting, representatives from Little Egg Harbor would speak about the status of their Plan Endorsement petition. Staff hopes to bring both Little Egg Harbor and Wildwood City's petition to the Commission in the coming months.

Executive Director Lane stated that staff continued to attend various meetings, including the following: New Jersey Highlands Council, State Agricultural Development Committee Meeting, NJ Interagency Council on Climate Resilience Monthly Senior Staff Meeting, NJ Delaware Bayshore Meeting, NJ Business Action Center Quarterly Economic Development Officials Meeting (North, Central, South), DVRPC Board Meeting, NJ County Planners Association Statewide Planning and Smart Growth Committee Meeting, NJ Transit Village Taskforce Meeting, Rutgers Studio Class Presentation on Climate Change Resiliency and Hazard Vulnerability Assessment and Plan Endorsement Discussion, Sustainable Jersey – Certification Standards Committee Meeting, NJ Complete Streets Summit, NJ Highlands Coalition Awards Luncheon, NJ Faith Action Center Launch Event, and the NJ County Planners Association Monthly Meeting.

Lastly, Executive Director Lane reported that interviews for the Geographic Information Systems Specialist position would be conducted in the coming weeks.

With the report complete, Chairman Wright asked Executive Director Lane to present Resolution 2026-03 Approval and Adoption of the 2025 State Planning Commission Annual Report.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2026-03 Approval and Adoption of the 2025 State Planning Commission Annual Report

Executive Director Walter Lane stated that Resolution 2026-03 approves and adopts the 2025 State Planning Commission Annual Report. The report details the work completed by the State Planning Commission and the Office of Planning Advocacy throughout 2025, as well as outlining the 2026 goals. He thanked Assistant Planner Laura Gould for her work on the new layout and format of the report, as well as assisting with editing the document with Senior Planner Steve Simone. Lastly, he noted that Commissioner Harris' non-substantive revisions were incorporated into the revised final draft, which was distributed on April 5, 2026.

Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2026-03. The motion was made by Bruce Harris and seconded by Julia Somers. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (14) Joe Grillo, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Michael Manzella, Melanie Willoughby, Shanel Robinson, Bruce Harris, Danielle Esser, Jeffrey Oakman, Stephen Santola, Julia Somers, Elizabeth Terenik, Ed McKenna, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) Resolution 2026-03 was approved.

The Resolution can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/resolutions/2026-03-Approval-Of-2025-Annual-Report-Certified-Final.pdf>

The 2025 Annual Report can be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/2026-05-06-Final-2025-Annual-Report.pdf>

With Resolution 2026-03 approved, Chairman Wright asked Executive Director Walter Lane to provide an update on the next agenda item, and introduce the representatives from Little Egg Harbor.

Little Egg Harbor Township Request to Discuss Plan Endorsement Process

Executive Director Walter Lane introduced Mayor Kenneth Laney and Deputy Mayor Dan Maxwell of Little Egg Harbor Township. He noted that like many towns, the Township has been in the Plan Endorsement process for some time. Having been actively worked on during his tenure as Executive Director, the petition is close to being presented to the Plan Implementation Committee and the Commission.

Mayor Laney addressed concerns about their Plan Endorsement process, which began in 2019, including delays, reduced centers, center expirations, mapping disagreements, and lack of coordination between state departments. Executive Director Lane outlined next steps, including having shared an updated map with the Township and sending an updated Plan Implementation Agreement, with the potential for the process to be completed in the coming months.

Further discussion amongst the Commission focused on mapping and environmental constraints for a property in Little Egg Harbor Township. Executive Director Lane explained that the property, which contains an affordable housing project, is currently mapped as Planning Area 5 rather than as a part of the center due to environmental constraints. The group discussed the need for a detailed discussion at the upcoming Plan Implementation Committee meeting, where mapping and environmental data will be presented to help resolve the issue. Commissioner Angarone emphasized the Department of Environmental Protection's role in protecting environmental resources and promoting smart growth. Executive Director Lane noted that the process could be streamlined by reexamining the State Planning Rules.

With no additional comment from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked Executive Director Lane to provide the State Plan Implementation Update.

STATE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Executive Director Walter Lane provided an update on the State Plan Implementation, including discussions with the Plan Implementation Committee at the April 15, 2026, meeting about mapping changes and a recommended three-month window for submitting map amendment requests.

He reported that a comprehensive review of the State Planning Rules conducted by the Office of Planning Advocacy staff revealed unclear provisions that could be interpreted in different ways, leading to a potential for inconsistent outcomes and procedures. While the Rules describe separate processes for the State Planning Commission and for State Agencies to initiate map changes, the term "State Agency" is used interchangeably throughout the text. Staff believes that the intent is to establish two distinct processes and are working to confirm this interpretation. Once clarified, a detailed overview and timeline for the requested mapping changes will be shared. However, if the interpretation is incorrect, the Commission may need to update the Rules to ensure efficient processes to address map amendments and update other sections to ensure the effective operation of both the State Planning Commission and the Office of Planning Advocacy.

Executive Director Lane mentioned ongoing coordination efforts with state agencies at the Interagency Workgroup, and with information provided by state agency partners, a document outlining the benefits of being consistent with the State Plan as well as the benefits of the Plan Endorsement process is being updated and will be shared with the Commission. He also outlined upcoming outreach activities, including presentations at various conferences and meetings with various state agency and regional planning partners.

With no comment from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked Administrative Assistant Sara Bennett to move Executive Director Lane, Commissioner Somers, and Commissioner Robinson to the Zoom waiting room due to their

previous recusals around the topic of the Sourlands, which would be discussed during the next agenda item. With that completed, he asked Assistant Planner Laura Gould to provide the Special Resource Areas Update.

SPECIAL RESOURCE AREAS UPDATE

Assistant Planner Laura Gould provided an update, explaining that the Sourland Conservancy had requested recognition as a Special Resource Area, but the three associated counties (Hunterdon, Mercer, and Somerset) were withholding their position until seeing the State Planning Commission's response. The Commission sent a response letter to the Sourland Conservancy, stating they were developing a new Special Resource Area application process. After the letter went out, the Office of Planning Advocacy had a follow-up meeting with Hunterdon, Mercer, and Somerset Counties, who indicated that they would like more detail about the full process, and would need to confer with their Commissioners before taking a position on the Sourlands potential designation as a Special Resource Area. The Commission discussed the boundary mapping process and the need for scientific evidence to support a Special Resource Area designation. Assistant Planner Gould also emphasized that no applicant had formally begun the application process as the Commission had not yet approved the process or application.

With the discussion regarding the Sourlands complete, Chairman Wright requested that Administrative Assistant Sara Bennett return Executive Director Walter Lane and Commissioners Robinson and Somers to the meeting. Once Administrative Assistant Bennett returned the recused individuals to the meeting, Chairman Wright asked Assistant Planner Gould to provide and update on the process for recognizing Special Resource Areas.

Assistant Planner Gould outlined a multi-step process, recommended by the Plan Implementation Committee, for recognizing Special Resource Areas that includes an entity's submission of a letter of interest, pre-meeting with Office of Planning Advocacy staff, formation of a workgroup for application completion, Plan Implementation Committee review, public comment and state agency review period, and final State Planning Commission decision. The process aims to distinguish between cases seeking legislative authority versus those needing regular facilitation, with the goal of urging legislative action for areas deemed worthy of special protection. The Commission provided feedback on the process, while questions were raised about local government involvement and decision-making criteria. The consensus of the Commission was that there were no changes needed to be made to the proposed process, with Chairman Wright expressing support and emphasizing the need to move forward quickly with the draft application.

With no further questions or comments Chairman Wright opened the floor to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Britta Forsberg, Executive Director of Save Barnegat Bay spoke regarding concerns about the Little Egg Harbor Township Plan Endorsement process. Executive Director emphasized that there would be additional opportunity to provide comment when the Office of Planning Advocacy brings the petition and staff recommendation to the Plan Implementation Committee meeting, followed by the State Planning Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments from the Commission or the public, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Ed McKenna and seconded by Jeffrey Oakman. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas K. Wright". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Thomas K. Wright
Chairman
Date:

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: MAY 6, 2026 TIME: 9:31 AM

Andy Jackson, Pennington Borough
Anthony Soriano, Morris County
Barbara Woolley-Dillon, NJDEP
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Britta Forsberg, Barnegat Bay
Craig Keiser, DAG
David Schley
Donna Rendeiro
Emily Lescano, Morris County
Jelena Lasko, NJDOT
Jim Oris
Karen Argenti
Katherine Fullerton, Hunterdon County
Katie Elliott, Pinelands Commission
Kelly Lettera
Mary Delaney
Matt Baumgardner
Max Carlson, Warren County
Mayor Laney, Little Egg Harbor Twp.
Deputy Mayor Maxwell, Little Egg Harbor Twp.
Michelle Delisfort
Mirah Becker, Middlesex County
Olivia Hirsch
Rosa Farias, NJRA
Ruth Foster
Sabrina Rodriguez
Samantha De Andrea, Somerset County
Sharon Mascaro, NJSEA
Tim Evans, NJ Future
Tim Gleason, NJBAC
Tom Stanuikynas, Burlington County
Tony Agliata