



# State of New Jersey

Department of State  
New Jersey State Planning Commission  
P.O. Box 820  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0820

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 June 1, 2026 Zoom Video Conference**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Wright called the June 1, 2026, video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission to order at 9:32 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 9:37 a.m.)  
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 9:35 a.m.)  
Shanel Robinson, County Commissioner Director, County Member (joined at 9:48 a.m.)  
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 (joined at 9:35 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.

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

As a quorum had not been reached, Chairman Wright deferred the vote on the minutes until additional Commissioners arrived.

Chairman Wright shared that he looked forward to the upcoming presentation from Rowan. He also commended the Office of Planning Advocacy staff for their continued work on the designation of the Special Resource Areas, noting that this effort helps to honor the commitment made to communities as part of the State Plan adoption process.

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. He proceeded to provide a brief overview of the Office of Planning Advocacy's (OPA) work since the May 6, 2026, State Planning Commission (SPC) meeting.

He reported that staff continued working on wide range of activities to advance implementation of the new State Development and Redevelopment Plan, while diligently working with 11 municipalities on requirements needed to achieve Plan Endorsement. Executive Director Lane also noted that the *State Planning Commission Office of Planning Advocacy Annual Report 2025* was finalized based on SPC meeting feedback and posted on OPA's website, along with the past four years of reports. The report link would be distributed to all interested parties as well as the county and municipal mailing lists within the next few days to highlight last year's work by the Commission and OPA.

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

Executive Director Lane stated that staff continued to attend various meetings, including the following: the Extreme Heat Coordinated Communications Workgroup Meeting, NJ Association of Counties Conference, NJ Land Trust Summit, South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization's Technical Advisory Committee, South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization's Policy Board Meeting, Megalopolitan Coastal Transformation Hub Annual Meeting, DVRPC Board Meeting, State Agricultural Development Committee Meeting, Sustainable Jersey Annual Summit, GIS Coordinating Roundtable Meeting, New Jersey Highlands Council Meeting, and the State of Resilience: A Conversation with the Region's Chief Resilience Officer.

With the report complete and noting that a quorum had been reached, Chairman Wright returned to the Approval of Minutes agenda item.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Before Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the minutes, Executive Director Walter Lane provided comment. Executive Director Lane stated that due to his recusal from the Sourlands matter, Chairman Wright would be signing the minutes in his stead.

Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the minutes of May 6, 2026, with no changes, and with the understanding that he would be signing the minutes in place of Executive Director Lane. The motion was made by

Danielle Esser and seconded by Joe Grillo. Before the vote was taken, Administrative Assistant Sara Bennett indicated that Commissioner Somers was recused from voting. Ayes: (9) Joe Grillo, Keith Henderson, Michael Manzella, Melanie Willoughby, Danielle Esser, Jeffrey Oakman, Stephen Santola, Elizabeth Terenik, Tom Wright Nays: (0) Recusals: (1) Julia Somers Commissioner Robinson was not present when the vote occurred. The May 6, 2026, minutes were approved.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Rowan University Presentation: Rehabilitating Abandoned Properties in Chelsea, Atlantic City: A Vision Plan**

Commissioner Terenik introduced a Rowan University undergraduate Planning Studio project focused on revitalizing blighted properties in Atlantic City's Chelsea neighborhood, where approximately 22 properties are formally identified as abandoned among 95 vacant properties. Dr. Mahbubur Meenar, Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, Planning, and Sustainability at Rowan University, and faculty advisor, introduced Nolan Wilkins, Adam Montgomery, and Sean Olcese, who presented their Planning Studio project.

The students presented their four-month project on abandoned properties in Atlantic City, which began with a public presentation and survey of residents. The students then developed a comprehensive prioritization model called ReVAMP (Revitalization Assessment Model for Properties) that evaluates properties based on parcel characteristics, access and proximity, site and neighborhood conditions, and community perception to help identify investment opportunities. Using ChatGPT's image generation tools in a planning context, with some sites touched up in Photoshop, images were created and presented as a visioning exercise exploring what selected abandoned properties in Chelsea could look like after rehabilitation or reconstruction. The team presented recommendations including prioritizing smaller-scale rehabilitation projects, and implementing an 8-step development process; the team also outlined funding sources and development incentives.

Following the presentation, Andrew Jackson of Pennington Borough raised questions about preventing gentrification and improving local infrastructure. The ensuing discussion included gentrification as a natural market process, and the work Chelsea Economic Development Corporation (Chelsea EDC) is undertaking to mitigate its negative effects through initiatives like promoting financial incentives for current residents to become homeowners. Commissioner Terenik explained that the city offers up to \$57,000 in grants and forgivable loans to help existing residents purchase homes, and noted that while some displacement may occur, the goal is to achieve the positive aspects of gentrification without pushing current residents out.

The group discussed the property ranking model developed by the Planning Studio students, where Mr. Olcese explained they used a straight across ranking with equal weights due to time constraints, though they acknowledged some important factors like sewer/water availability were not included. Commissioner Terenik shared insights about working with developers on challenging properties and advocated for market-rate housing mix rather than additional deed-restricted affordable housing. The discussion also touched on the usage of AI in the project, and on how to best use the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Commissioner Somers asked if the students had spoken with the community participants after the completion of the project, and if Atlantic City would be using the model moving forward. Dr. Meenar indicated that a public presentation was provided via Zoom. Commissioner Terenik explained that while local developers are interested in redeveloping these properties, property owners are reluctant to sell at reasonable prices, and government intervention is needed. Chelsea EDC may use the model along with other strategies to address 19 remaining abandoned properties, with one property currently in the pipeline.

The presentation can be found here: [nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/2026-06-03-SPC-Rowan-University-Presentation-Rehabilitating-Abandoned-Properties-In-Chelsea-Atlantic-City-A-Vision-Plan.pdf](https://nj.gov/state/bac/planning/documents/meeting-materials/2026-06-03-SPC-Rowan-University-Presentation-Rehabilitating-Abandoned-Properties-In-Chelsea-Atlantic-City-A-Vision-Plan.pdf)

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

**STATE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

Executive Director Walter Lane provided an update on the implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, explaining that during a detailed review of the State Planning Rules, the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) staff identified unclear provisions regarding different processes for the SPC (State Planning Commission) as well as state agencies to initiate changes to the State Plan Policy Map. This could lead to a potential for inconsistent outcomes and procedures, as the term “State Agency” is used interchangeably throughout the text. He noted that staff are working to confirm their interpretation that here are two separate processes and will share a detailed overview and timeline once resolved. If the interpretation proves incorrect, OPA may recommend that the Commission update the Rules. Executive Director Lane also mentioned a wide range of ongoing outreach activities, including presentations at various conferences and forums, and continued coordination with state agencies and regional planning partners.

With no comment from the Commission, Chairman Wright Assistant asked Planner Laura Gould to provide the Special Resource Areas Recognition Process Update.

**SPECIAL RESOURCE AREAS RECOGNITION PROCESS UPDATE**

Assistant Planner Laura Gould presented an initial draft application for Special Resource Area (SRA) recognition, outlining five key sections including point of contact, identification, significance, constraints, and benefits. Several questions were raised for the State Planning Commission regarding application eligibility, requirements for proving uniqueness and significance, municipal support requirements, and where to describe the need for additional regulatory authority. The draft application is in early stages and staff welcome feedback from the Commission.

The Commission discussed the process for recognizing SRAs with the group suggesting that while the process should have a high bar similar to the Highlands Act, it should not require unanimous local government support. Executive Director Walter Lane reported that staff would revise the application based on Commission feedback and work to refine process timelines to create an evaluation rubric, which would be brought back to the Commission. He aims to have the application finalized by the end of 2026.

With no further questions or comments Chairman Wright asked Executive Director Lane to provide the Plan Endorsement Update.

**PLAN ENDORSEMENT UPDATE**

Executive Director Walter Lane provided updates on the Plan Endorsement process, and noted progress with Dennis, Manchester, Wildwood City, Sparta, Ocean City, Little Egg Harbor, North Wildwood, West Wildwood, Salem City, Barnegat, and Berkley. He reported that Wildwood City’s petition would be presented at the June 17, 2026, Plan Implementation Committee meeting, and if the Committee recommends advancing it, it would be presented at either the July 1, 2026, or the August 5, 2026, State Planning Commission meeting. Executive Director Lane also noted that if a State Planning Rules update is initiated, several opportunities to streamline the Plan Endorsement process have been identified.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

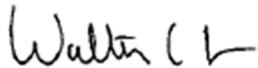
Grant Lucking of the NJ Builders Association suggested including housing needs information in Special Resource Area applications.

Tim Evans of New Jersey Future recommended investigating linking redevelopment analysis to fair share housing obligations, and proposed that the State Plan talk about how to identify where redevelopment possibilities exist. Executive Director Lane suggested that the topic would be appropriate for a session at a future Planning and Redevelopment Conference.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further comments from the Commission or the public, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Julia Somers and seconded by Jeffrey Oakman. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



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Walter C. Lane  
Secretary and Executive Director  
Date: July 1, 2026

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES**  
**DATE: JUNE 3, 2026 TIME: 9:32 AM**

Adam Montgomery, Rowan University  
Andrew Jackson  
Anthony Soriano, Morris County  
Barbara Allen Woolley-Dillon, NJDEP  
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County  
Cordy Taylor, Salem County  
David Schley  
Donna Rendeiro  
Emma Martin, Chelsea EDC  
Grant Lucking, NJ Builders Association  
Jason Kasler, NJPO  
Jayden Wright  
Joe Hankins  
Julie  
Kamal Saleh  
Katherine Fullerton, Hunterdon County  
Kathleen Long, NJDCA DLGS  
Katie Elliott, Pinelands Commission  
Keisecra  
Loren  
Dr. Mahbubur Meenar, Rowan University  
Matt Baumgardner  
Matt Johnson  
Mirah Becker, Middlesex County  
Niurca Louis, NJDOS  
Nolan Wilkins, Rowan University  
Olivia Hirsch  
Rosa Frias, NJRA  
Ruth Foster, NJDEP  
Sandra Collom  
Sean Olcese, Rowan University  
Sharon Mascaro, NJSEA  
Thaxton  
Tim Evans, NJ Future  
Tom Stanuikynas, Burlington County