



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 February 4, 2026 Zoom Video Conference

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wright called the February 4, 2026, video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) 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
Nick Angarone, Designee, Department of Environmental Protection
Keith Henderson, Designee, Department of Community Affairs
Amanda Gendek, Designee, Department of Transportation
Melanie Willoughby, Designee for Lt. Governor Dr. Dale Caldwell, Secretary of State, Department of State (joined at 9:51 a.m.)
Shanel Robinson, County Commissioner Director, County Member (joined at 9:33 a.m.)
Danielle Esser, Director of Governance, NJ Economic Development Authority
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member
Jeffrey Oakman, Public Member
Julia Somers, Public Member
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member
Edward J. McKenna, Vice Chair, Public Member
Thomas Wright, Chairman, Public Member

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

Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the minutes of January 7, 2026, with non-substantive changes. The motion was made by Bruce Harris and seconded by Danielle Esser. Ayes: (12) Joe Grillo, Nick Angarone, Keith Henderson, Amanda Gendek, Shanel Robinson, Danielle Esser, Bruce Harris, Jeffrey Oakman, Julia Somers, Elizabeth Terenik, Ed McKenna, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0) Abstains: (0) The January 7, 2026, minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Wright expressed enthusiasm about the new Sherrill administration, new partners in some state agencies, and building on the work that the Commission and the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) had done.

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 stated 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 work since the January 7, 2026, State Planning Commission meeting, with the exception of Plan Endorsement and State Plan updates, which would be covered later in the meeting.

Executive Director Lane reported that since the last Commission meeting, staff had attended various meetings, including but not limited to: the NJ Highlands Council Meeting, a meeting with Dover (Morris County) and the NJ Economic Development Authority, the NJ Interagency Council on Climate Resilience Monthly Senior Staff Meeting, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) Board Meeting, the NJ County Planners Association Meeting, the NJ Climate Resilience Collaborative Full Partnership Meeting, the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization's Policy Board Meeting, and the GIS Coordinator Roundtable.

He stated that staff will attend the following meetings later in February: the Interagency Council on Extreme Heat Coordinated Communications Workgroup Meeting, the OPA/DEP Staff level Mapping Meeting, the OPA/DEP Managers level Mapping Meeting, the NJ Interagency Council on Climate Resilience Monthly Senior Staff Meeting, the DVRPC Regional Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, the NJ County Planners Association State Plan Working Group, and the Plan4HealthNJ Advisory Council Meeting.

Executive Director Lane announced that temporary GIS Specialist Nikisha Mistry started with the Office of Planning Advocacy on January 12, 2026, and had since been working on a wide range of mapping efforts.

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

PLAN ENDORSEMENT UPDATE

Executive Director Walter Lane reported that staff continued to work with Little Egg Harbor, North Wildwood, Salem City, Dennis, Manchester, Wildwood City, and Ocean City, as well as Woodstown, Barnegat, Sparta, and Berkeley, on mapping and other requirements needed to achieve Plan Endorsement.

He stated that the Office of Planning Advocacy plans to present Woodstown's Plan Endorsement Petition at the February 18, 2026, Plan Implementation Committee Meeting.

Executive Director Lane continued that Wildwood City submitted numerous files documenting their community visioning efforts. Staff reviewed the waiver request and met with the City on January 23, 2026, to discuss the same. Staff approved the visioning waiver request and sent an approval letter on January 27, 2026. The Office of Planning Advocacy continues to work with the City on the proposed center boundary and is reviewing the proposed map.

He stated that staff met with Ocean City to discuss the status of their petition. Staff highlighted the benefits of endorsement, and the City will inform staff in the coming weeks if they wish to proceed with Plan Endorsement.

Executive Director Lane reported that staff is developing the draft Plan Implementation Agreement for Berkeley, which will be shared with state agencies and the municipality for review and comment.

He continued that the staff is working with Manchester to advance their Plan Endorsement Petition. The draft Opportunities and Constraints report and the build-out analysis are being updated, and staff recently provided a brief status update to the municipality.

Chairman Wright asked Executive Director Lane if feedback from the municipalities and their petitions had changed with the adoption of the State Plan. A brief discussion ensued with Executive Director Lane identifying current conversations around the new planning areas, and Chairman Wright noting that keeping an eye on trends would be useful.

With no further comments or questions from the Commission, Chairman Wright asked Executive Director Lane to provide the State Plan Update.

STATE PLAN UPDATE

Executive Director Walter Lane reported that staff have been working to catalogue the roughly 1,500 State Plan Policy Map amendments submitted during the Cross Acceptance process and deferred until after the adoption of the new State Plan. Staff created a tracking spreadsheet, categorizing all requested amendments by types of changes, location, and justification provided, among other details. Staff re-read all Cross Acceptance Responses and public comments to ensure all potential map amendments were included in the master list, and is now in the process of gathering all associated spatial data.

He stated that staff is also developing the initial framework for a process by which the Commission might review and approve requested map amendments. The process will be based upon provisions of the current State Planning Rules for amending the State Plan Policy Map; the initial draft will likely be shared with the Commission in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Somers asked about the possibility of approving changes in phases, from least to most complicated. Executive Director Lane responded that Assistant Planners Felix Zamora and Laura Gould had been categorizing the changes, in part by level of difficulty. All requested changes will be reviewed, along with supporting materials, and a comprehensive recommendation will be made, with the aim of treating all requests equally. A public hearing will most likely be held in each county, with the decision on how to fully amend the map being considered on an ongoing basis.

Executive Director Lane continued that over the coming weeks, he and other staff members would be presenting on the new State Plan at various forums. Later that evening, he would speak at a Rutgers Comprehensive Planning Class, with the DVRPC's Regional Technical Advisory Committee Meeting, the Central Jersey Transportation Forum, the NJ Institute of Technology's Creative Placemaking class, and the NJ Transportation Planning Authority's Freight Initiatives Committee following later in the month.

Additionally, he stated that he has drafted panel session proposals for the NJ Association of Counties Conference as well as the NJ Planning Conference. Both sessions will highlight the work done by the Counties and planning partners during Cross Acceptance, and how they will utilize the new State Plan to advance their planning priorities.

Executive Director Lane reported that he had begun contacting state agencies and regional planning partners to set meetings to discuss how best to collaborate to advance the implementation of the new Plan and support regional planning efforts.

Lastly, Executive Director Lane stated that after his report had concluded, Senior Planner Lisa Avichal would provide an update on the work underway regarding the Special Resource Areas. If specific questions were posed regarding a Special Resource Area from which he, Commissioner Somers, and Commissioner Robinson had previously recused themselves, they would be moved to the waiting room during that part of the discussion.

Chairman Wright noted that the topic of Special Resource Area designations received a great deal of input during Cross Acceptance and remained a top priority for him as well. He then asked Senior Planner Lisa Avichal to provide the update.

Senior Planner Avichal stated that during the last Commission meeting, staff were asked to draft two memos on Special Resource Areas: one comprising a list of the requests received during the State Plan update process, and one outlining a process for evaluating and potentially recognizing these areas.

She continued that staff had drafted an initial memo regarding the list of requests, and are contacting all counties that previously expressed interest in a Special Resource Area designation to determine whether they would like to move forward with formal recognition of those areas by the Commission. Once the meetings with the counties are concluded, staff will finalize the memo and submit it to the Commission. Meetings with the counties have been scheduled from late February to early March. Due to Commissioner recusals, the memo will omit one request to avoid the disclosure of information that would present a conflict. Commissioners not subject to the recusals will receive a separate supplemental memo including the additional request.

Senior Planner Avichal continued that regarding the evaluation and approval process, the new State Plan indicates that a formal application process must be in place for the Commission to consider recognizing an area; staff have been meeting regularly to develop and finalize an initial draft of the Special Resource Area Application, a document which would be the first step of the process to recognize those areas. The four sections of the draft Special Resource Area Application are as follows: the name and geographical extent of the area, the significance of the area to the entire state, the current constraints and resources (such as a description of the economic challenges or development pressures the area faces), and the benefits of Special Resource Area recognition.

She concluded that staff anticipates having a draft of the application prepared for submission to the Commission in the coming weeks. This document will help facilitate the initial meetings with the counties considering pursuing Special Resource Area recognition.

Commissioner Harris asked Senior Planner Avichal how many Special Resource Areas have been requested, to which she responded that six requests have been submitted at this time.

Commissioner Somers asked if the requests ranged in size, complexity, and benefit of designation. Senior Planner Avichal indicated that the conversations during the initial meetings with the requesting counties will produce all relevant information.

Chairman Wright emphasized that while the Cross Acceptance process allowed any private citizen to propose a Special Resource Area designation, the State Plan process is also meant to be a collaboration between state, county, and local

government. While the Commission may decide to take action on its own, communication with local partners would take place first.

Senior Planner Avichal added that during the process of the Statements of Agreements and Disagreements, any requests for Special Resource Area designation were discussed with the relevant county.

Chairman Wright asked the Commissioners if they had any further questions or comments regarding anything previously discussed. As no member commented, he opened the floor to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

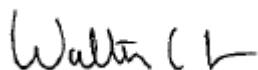
John Crane of Bernards Township raised concerns about the lack of clear communication regarding upcoming map changes, and asked what notification would be done. Executive Director Walter Lane stated that all changes would be discussed at the regularly scheduled State Planning Commission meetings as well as the upcoming public hearings. The schedule of meetings, along with agendas, is posted on the Office of Planning Advocacy website. Chairman Wright emphasized that the map is never a static document.

Kamal Saleh, Union County, asked if the state would consider funding mechanisms to assist counties in completing their master plans. Executive Director Lane stated that a benefit of Plan Endorsement is the technical support that the state agencies and planning partners commit to municipalities. Additionally, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations may provide funding toward those efforts.

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 Shanel Robinson. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



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

ATTACHMENT A
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES
DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2026 TIME: 9:31 AM

Anthony Soriano, Morris County
Barbara Allen Woolley-Dillon
Becky Hall, Hunterdon County
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Carolina Montes
Charles Shadle
Chris Carney, Sussex County Commissioner
Daniel T. Brown
Dave Clark
David Schley
Glen Van Olden, NJ Farm Bureau
Glory Aboderin
H. Dumont
Hannah Genereux
Jacqueline Rivera
Jason Kasler, AICP, PP (NJPO)
Jelena Lasko, NJDOT
John Crane, Bernard's Township
Julie Bunt, NJDOS
Kamal Saleh, Union County
Katherine Fullerton, Hunterdon County
Katie Elliott, Pinelands Commission
Khalid Anjum
Larry DiVietro
Laura
Ludmila Areco Cantero
Matt Baumgardner
Melissa Thompson
Michael Davis, HGA
Michael J. Manzella, NJDOT
Mirah Becker, Middlesex County
Oscar Parham, NJRA
Ruth Foster, NJDEP
Sandy Collom
Sharon
Susan Weber, NJDOT
Tom Stanuikynas, Burlington County