



State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 820  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0820

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

LT. GOVERNOR TAHESHA L. WAY  
*SECRETARY OF STATE*

THOMAS K. WRIGHT  
*CHAIRMAN*

WALTER C. LANE  
*Acting Executive Director/Acting Secretary*

**New Jersey State Planning Commission  
Minutes of the Meeting Held on July 2, 2025  
Zoom Video Conference**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Wright called the July 2, 2025, video conference of the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC) to order at 10:30 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**

Danielle Esser, Director of Governance, NJ Economic Development Authority  
Henry Gajda, Designee for President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, Board of Public Utilities  
Susan Weber, Designee for Francis K. O'Connor, Commissioner, Department of Transportation  
Bruce Harris, Municipal Member  
Edward J. McKenna, Vice Chair, Public Member  
Keith Henderson, Designee for Jacquelyn Suarez, Commissioner, Department of Community Affairs  
Shanel Robinson, County Commissioner Director, County Member  
Elizabeth Terenik, Public Member  
Melanie Willoughby, Designee for Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Secretary of State, Department of State (joined at 10:43 a.m.)  
Stephen Santola, Public Member  
Jeffrey Oakman, Public Member  
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**

Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve the minutes of June 4, 2025, with no changes. Ed McKenna made the motion, and Bruce Harris seconded it. With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote: Ayes: (11) Danielle Esser, Henry Gajda, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Ed McKenna, Keith Henderson, Shanel Robinson, Elizabeth Terenik, Stephen Santola, Jeffrey Oakman, and Thomas Wright. Nays: (0) Abstains: (0) The June 4, 2025, minutes were approved.

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

Chairman Wright noted that the earlier Plan Development Committee Meeting was constructive and included early results from some of the ongoing Negotiation Sessions (NS). He continued that, thus far, second sessions have not been necessary and encouraged the Commissioners to read the reports provided by The Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) which underscore the importance of all the work being done.

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

## **ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Since the June 4 SPC meeting:**

AED Lane provided an overview of the Office's work since the June State Planning Commission (SPC), with the exception of State Plan updates, which would be covered later in the meeting.

### **Plan Endorsement**

- Staff is working with 15 municipalities to achieve Plan Endorsement (PE) status. These towns are: Dover, Seaside Heights, Little Egg Harbor, Ocean Township (Ocean), Woodstown, Ocean City, Salem City, Barnegat, Sparta, Dennis, Berkeley, Manchester, Red Bank, North Wildwood, and Wildwood City.
- Staff met with Ocean Township (Ocean County) officials regarding the proposed PE map.
- Staff reviewed the Seaside Heights map with NJDEP. The Borough adopted a resolution approving the map and the Planning & Implementation Agreement (PIA) on June 18th. Staff hopes to bring the PE petition to the July PIC meeting.
- Staff approved Dover's visioning waiver request and informed the municipality. Staff held a meeting with Dover representatives and NJ Transit to discuss redevelopment opportunities on June 23rd. Staff hopes to bring their PE petition to the July PIC meeting.
- Dialogue continues between North Wildwood and OPA regarding their reentry to the PE process. Staff provided guidance to the town regarding the appointment of their Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee.
- Staff continues to review the proposed Center boundary submitted by Woodstown and assist with the PE process.
- The draft Salem City PIA was sent to the municipality for their review and comment and awaits additional information on mapping considerations.
- Staff is reviewing NJDEP's latest map proposal for Barnegat and are revising the map to reflect their PE petition.

- Staff completed the draft PIA for Red Bank and the PIA was transmitted to DCA, DEP, and DOT for review and comment. Staff met with NJDEP staff to discuss the proposed center map and NJDEP agreed to expand the center boundary.
- Staff is working with Wildwood City regarding their PE petition. Preparation of the Opportunities and Constraint (O&C) report is nearly complete. A Next Steps letter has been drafted and the buildout analysis is complete.
- Lakewood Township submitted their Biennial Review Report (with a map amendment request). NJDEP does not support the proposed map amendment. Staff met with Township Officials on June 26th to advise the Township that the proposed map amendment cannot be supported at this time. The Township may attend an upcoming SPC meeting to voice their concerns regarding this decision.

AED Lane noted that during past State Plan updates, PE was paused; however, the Office has determined to continue the PE process. He highlighted the tremendous job and extraordinary volume of work staff have been doing to ensure all tasks are completed.

OPA staff continues to assist the Office of Business Advocacy regarding potential development sites for businesses looking to relocate or expand in NJ.

Staff also attended a large number of meetings, such as but not limited to:

New Jersey Coastal Coalition Meeting, State Plan Interagency Workgroup, NJCPA Statewide Planning/Smart Growth Committee Meeting, Route 29 Boulevard Study Working Group, OPA/DEP Staff Level Mapping Meeting, OPA/DEP Managers Level Mapping Meeting Group, DVRPC Board Meeting, SJTPO TAC Meeting, and NJ IAC on Climate Resilience.

Staff attended the NJ Planning & Redevelopment Conference and presented at two panel sessions. AED Lane and Lisa Avichal participated in a virtual panel discussion regarding the Smart Growth Explorer with representatives from Rowan University and the Fair Share Housing Center. Over 80 attendees joined the virtual session. AED Lane and Lisa Avichal met with representatives from Joint Base McGuire regarding mapping military installations from the State Plan after that presentation. Additionally, AED Lane was on a panel entitled Planning to Thrive in Rural Areas: Small Town Sustainable Planning Initiatives in the Garden State. The session was well attended with many meaningful questions posed, and potential leads for PE were identified.

### **Approving a Special State Planning Commission Meeting for July 30, 2025**

AED Lane informed the Commission that a special SPC meeting would need to be held on July 30th to approve the release of the draft Impact Assessment (IA) Report. The draft IA report must be approved for distribution prior to August 1st in order to meet the requirements of the State Planning Rules that stipulate the draft IA report must be available for review 45 days prior to the first public hearing, tentatively scheduled for October 6th. The Office anticipates providing the draft IA to the Commission by July 23<sup>rd</sup>; it is currently with the Governor's office for review.

The SPC meeting currently scheduled for August 6th may be held in order to approve the release of the draft Statement of Agreements and Disagreements (SAD) document, which will summarize the results of the Negotiation Sessions that are being held in July. Currently, two Negotiation Sessions are scheduled for each county and the Highlands Council. If most or all of the second Negotiation Sessions are not needed, staff may be able to have the draft SAD document ready for release at the July 30<sup>th</sup> SPC special meeting. In that event, the regular August 6, 2025 meeting may be canceled. Once the first round of Negotiation Sessions are complete on July 25, 2025, staff will be able to make a recommendation regarding the need to hold the August SPC meeting. The August Plan Development Committee meeting will be held as currently scheduled on August 6<sup>th</sup>.

AED Lane thanked the Commission for their patience and understanding as OPA works to meet all the requirements of the State Planning Act within the compressed timeframe, with the goal of having the Commission adopt a new State Plan in December. He then concluded his report and asked the Commission to take formal action to approve the Special SPC Meeting on July 30th.

Chairman Wright asked for confirmation that AED Lane was asking the Commission to vote to approve the Special SPC Meeting on July 30, 2025.

AED Lane responded affirmatively.

Before Chairman Wright proceeded with the vote, he mentioned that during the last State Plan adoption, PE was suspended. He commended the OPA team for being able to move forward with PE, as it is important to show the communities that we are active partners in the process. Chairman Wright then asked AED Lane if the Commission would receive a briefing on the IA during the special July 30th meeting, and asked for confirmation that the Commission would be approving the release of said document.

AED Lane confirmed that the SPC would be releasing the IA for public comment and that an overview would be provided at the July 30th meeting. He stated that Rowan and Rutgers did a great job with the IA and provided an excellent summary of the impacts that the State Plan has had over the years. AED Lane noted that a benefit of the Plan not being updated in over 20 years is that there is 20 years of data showing the positive benefits of having a State Plan, despite it being a voluntary document.

The data show that there has been significant growth in developed areas; the amount of land lost to suburban sprawl is markedly less than the trend predicted in 2001. It also demonstrates the tremendous investment made in the more developed communities as well as along the rail lines, and quantifies the amount of housing built in Planning Areas 1, 2, and 3, as opposed to Planning Areas 4 and 5. The IA is about 150 pages, including summary tables that highlight the idea that without the State Plan, additional acres in environmentally sensitive areas would have been developed.

AED Lane emphasized that during the July 30, 2025, meeting, the draft IA would be approved for release by the SPC, and any changes that need to be made can be done when the public comments are addressed, similar to the SAD. It would be approved at the September SPC meeting, along with the revised Draft Plan, at which point Cross Acceptance would officially end. Next, the public comment period on the revised Draft Plan would commence, followed by the adoption of the final SDRP. He stated that a timeline reflecting the process would be provided to the Commission.

With no further discussion or questions, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve a Special State Planning Commission Meeting for July 30, 2025. The motion was made by Danielle Esser and seconded by Ed McKenna. Chairman Wright asked for a roll call vote. Ayes: (11) Danielle Esser, Henry Gajda, Susan Weber, Bruce Harris, Ed McKenna, Keith Henderson, Shanel Robinson, Elizabeth Terenik, Melanie Willoughby, Stephen Santola, and Thomas Wright Nays: (0). Abstains: (0) The Special State Planning Commission Meeting for July 30, 2025, was approved. Commissioner Oakman did not vote.

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

## **STATE PLAN UPDATE**

### **Cross Acceptance Update**

AED Lane reported that OPA staff continues to provide technical assistance to numerous counties and municipalities through consultant or internal staff and are providing some level of technical assistance to every

county. Staff continues to update the comment tracking report which contains all the comments received on the draft SDRP to date. The latest version of the summary was included in the Commission's Meeting Packet.

Staff continues to attend informational meetings with various stakeholders to present information on the State Plan and provide presentations as requested. AED Lane presented at a NJ Conference of Mayors Forum co-hosted with Rutgers Bloustein on the draft SDRP on June 17<sup>th</sup> and presented at the Monmouth County League of Women Voters Meeting on June 19<sup>th</sup>. He will be part of a panel on the State Plan at the League of Municipalities Conference.

The final County Cross Acceptance Reports were due on May 30<sup>th</sup>. As of the day of the SPC meeting, the Office has received 19 final reports from Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren Counties, as well as the Highlands Council. The Office has received draft reports from Bergen, Cumberland, and Salem Counties, with final reports expected this week. AED Lane thanked the counties for meeting the tight timeline and providing quality engagement in the spirit of partnership and collaboration, and shared that all final reports were posted to the OPA website.

AED Lane requested that a member of his team put the link to the Cross Acceptance Reports in the chat; Sara Bennett provided the following link: <https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/state-plan/coordination/>

He reported that Negotiation Sessions have been scheduled with all Counties and the Highlands Council and advertised via public notices in various newspapers. Two sessions were scheduled for each negotiating entity. The public will be able to attend these meetings and provide comments at the end of the meeting. If negotiations are completed during the first session, the second session will be canceled.

Before the Negotiation Session, staff held "prep meetings" with all 22 Negotiation Entities to develop the negotiation agendas for the Negotiation Sessions. All County Response Documents were reviewed and discussed with the Negotiation Entity to collaboratively create the list of negotiation agenda items. Any commentary or statements included in the County Response Documents that were not added as a negotiation agenda item will be shared with the Commission and all state agency partners. Examples of comments not included would be the inclusion of a specific improvement to a state highway corridor or a permit for a particular project. He acknowledged the huge effort by staff to review and analyze these lengthy reports and then create tracking sheets to develop the negotiation agendas, all in less than three weeks.

AED Lane reported that, based upon the discussions at the "prep meetings", final negotiation agendas will be prepared and posted on the OPA website at least 48 hours prior to the Negotiation Sessions. Each agenda item will be discussed to produce a list of statements and disagreements. Due to the expedited timeline, the SPC's Negotiation Committee will have to either agree with or disagree with the suggested change. The Committee will agree to provide updated/new text in the final draft SDRP or disagree with the proposed change and will not make any changes to the current draft of the SDRP. Staff will provide proposed updated/new text for the final draft SDRP to the PDC for their review and consideration. Once approved, the final draft SDRP will be presented to the full SPC for approval to release and initiate the next round of public comment. If the final draft of the SDRP does not fully address the previous comments that were received, interested parties will have another opportunity to provide comments during the public comment period and at the six public hearings being held in October.

Based upon the results of the "prep meetings", it appears that there are only two requested changes that the State may not agree to make. These changes are prioritizing the ten goals of the Plan, and requiring expedited permitting reviews. These topics were discussed at length at the PDC meeting. For all of the other requested changes, staff feels revisions can be made to the draft SDRP to address said changes/comments. Such changes may include providing definitions for terms not in the glossary and providing clarifying language that will address

most if not all of the concerns that have been raised. He emphasized that there will be another public comment period on the final draft of the SDRP.

Staff has compiled a list of the statewide issues that affect multiple counties including the following: definition of parks, bringing back cores, enhancing the center designation, creating a list of designated, identified, and proposed centers, including language to clarify that the State Plan is a guide and not a regulatory document, and enhancing state agency coordination.

Once the Negotiation Sessions have been completed, staff will create the Statements of Agreements and Disagreement Document that will detail the decision that was made for each negotiation agenda item. The SPC will have to approve the release of the Statements of Agreements and Disagreement Document at either the July 30th or August 6th SPC meeting. Per the State Planning Rules, OPA staff must release “periodic reports” on the status of the Negotiation Sessions. Due to the highly compressed Negotiation Phase, only one month will pass before the release of the draft Statements of Agreements and Disagreement Document. Staff is recommending the release of a brief update report in mid-July summarizing the results of the first 12 or 13 Negotiation Sessions that will be held in early July. This was also supported by the PDC.

AED Lane concluded his report by thanking the Commission for their patience and understanding as OPA works to meet all the requirements of the State Planning Act within the compressed timeframe, to ensure that the Commission will be able to consider adopting a new State Plan by the end of the year.

Chairman Wright congratulated AED Lane for presenting a terrific report and thanked him and his staff for their thoroughness and efficiency in moving the process forward. He also agreed with AED Lane’s proposal of submitting an interim report on the first half of the Negotiation Sessions. This will allow the information to be more digestible and will provide an indication as to whether there may be larger issues moving forward. Chairman Wright added that the idea that the State Plan could mandate expedited review goes beyond its purview and jurisdiction. Additionally, one of the goals of the State Plan is to coordinate governance and create better integration and coordination between state agencies with the goal of providing permitting and decisions in a more timely fashion. However, this does not indicate a mandate.

Commissioner Harris noted that in a few instances, the chart of comments included only a cover letter and not the full comment. He requested that the comments be integrated. AED Lane responded that OPA will make the necessary updates.

Commissioner Santola advocated for ranking the goals in the State Plan. Chairman Wright replied that one of the intended changes to be made by the State Plan was to create more alignment toward redevelopment, building housing, and investing in compact, walkable, existing communities in downtowns and rural communities. He looked forward to reading the Impact Assessment to learn how that has occurred, as well as asking the consultants clarifying questions.

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**

No member of the public wished to comment.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further comments from the Commission or the public, Chairman Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Jeffrey Oakman and seconded by Shanel Robinson. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDEES**  
**DATE: JULY 2, 2025 TIME: 10:30 AM**

Andrew Hedin, DAG  
Angela Knowles  
Anthony Soriano, Morris County  
Augusto Dal'Maso  
Barbara Woolley-Dillon  
Bill Millette, Hunterdon County  
Chris Helms  
Cordy  
David Schley  
Dillon McNamara  
Elizabeth  
Glen Van Olden, NJ Farm Bureau  
Grant Lucking, NJ Builders Association  
James Humphries, NJ Highlands  
Jason Kasler, NJPO  
Jeff Kolakowski  
John Crane  
John Sever, Salem County  
Justin Meyer  
Katherine Fullerton, Hunterdon County  
Michael Davis, HGA  
Mirah Becker, Middlesex County  
Nick Cuozzo  
Noel Alexander, Lakewood Township  
Rose Davidson  
Samantha De Andrea, Somerset County  
Steven Bruder, NJ SADC  
Susan Bristol, The Watershed Institute  
Susan Gruel, HGA  
Tim Gleason, Ocean  
Tony Poklasny