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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: RMP Amendment Committee

FROM: Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director

DATE: March 16, 2026

SUBJECT: RMP Amendment Committee Meeting Minutes of March 10, 2026

The RMP Amendment Committee met on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 11:00am via Zoom.

RMP Amendment Committee Members present: Council Chair Richko, Committee Chair Alstede, Members Kibler, Oswald, Smith and Van Abs.

Highlands Council Staff Members present: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kelley Curran, Jocelyn van den Akker, Neda Hartman, Corey Piasecki, Carole Ann Diction and Annette Tagliareni.

Governor's Authority Unit (GAU): Michael Eleneski, Associate Counsel.

Committee Chair Alstede opened the meeting at 11:03am.

Committee Chair Alstede reported that this meeting will cover the essential process of monitoring the Regional Master Plan (RMP) since inception.

Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation to the committee. Mr. Piasecki noted that the Act requires a 6-year update to the RMP.

Mr. Piasecki's presentation outlined the plan for the 2026 Monitoring Program and Recommendation Report (MPRR).

- What is the Monitoring Program?
- Monitoring Program process

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- Highlands Act and RMP
- Implementation Experience
- Indicator Analysis
- Areas to address
- Topic Area Structure
 - Introduction
 - Highlands Act Goals
 - RMP Goals
 - RMP Programs (implementation mechanism)
 - Indicators (list with brief description)
 - Recommendations
 - Implementation Summary
 - Program Issues

Mr. Piasecki informed the committee that they will receive three chapters for their review and for discussion at the next RMP Amendment Committee scheduled on April 1, 2026 at 2:00pm via Zoom.

- Transportation & Air Quality
- Economic Sustainability
- Agriculture

Committee Member Kibler asked if we have a timeline for this process.

Mr. Piasecki responded that we will have ten chapters for the committee to review. As noted above, three of those chapters will be sent shortly. Another 2-3 chapters will be provided prior to the April 1st committee meeting. Mr. Piasecki noted that we are hoping to have a draft copy unformatted by mid-late June.

Mr. Humphries emphasized that the “Recommendations” section is what committee members need to review. Carole Diction, Communications Manager, noted that the beginning of the sections are nearly identical to the prior report so committee members can scan until they get to the indicator section.

Committee Member Kibler asked if the committee will discuss budgeting items.

Mr. Humphries responded that he would share the spreadsheet used during the previous Monitoring Program so the committee can see what were “funding asks” versus “funding.”

Committee Chair Alstede brought up some school budget issues and asked if they needed to be addressed through an indicator. Mr. Spinelli responded that it is an economic trend in the state at large.

Mr. Humphries shared that the Highlands Municipal Factbook was updated in 2025 and will show data helpful for the committee members.

As a point of interest, Council Chair Richko noted that he attended, along with Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, the Northern New Jersey & Highlands Region Mayors Luncheon and spoke with several mayors in the Highlands region. Council Chair Richko noted that the mayors are not blaming the Highlands Act for their funding issues but feel they should be reimbursed for their part in protecting the water resources in the region.

Committee Member Van Abs asked how Council staff wants feedback on the documents; how will they come to us and what is the deadline to return them?

Mr. Piasecki noted that the committee members will receive the documents in Microsoft Word and asked that the members use track changes when reviewing. As far as timing, Mr. Piasecki responded as soon as you can.

It was noted that the committee will not receive the larger sections all at once.

Committee Chair Alstede asked if during this process we will measure agriculture viability. Committee Chair Alstede noted that Brian Shillings from Rutgers has data that might be helpful for this process. Mr. Piasecki encouraged Committee Chair Alstede to send whatever agriculture data he feels would be helpful.

There was mention of a census for agriculture at the county level. Mr. Piasecki asked Chief Counsel Gallagher if Council staff can get access to tax assessment data. Ms. Gallagher responded that we could.

Going back to Committee Member Kibler's question on timeline:

- Draft document – completed by mid-late June
- Consultant (GIS) format layout of document
- Release document for public comment at August Council meeting
- Adopt document at December Council meeting

In conclusion, Mr. Humphries noted that Mr. Piasecki is the lead on this process/project and as noted earlier, the first few chapters will be provided in the next couple of days for the committee's review.

The RMP Amendment Committee adjourned at 11:52am.