

NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 18, 2024

PRESENT

CARL J. RICHKO)	CHAIR
KURT ALSTEDE)	VICE CHAIR
DANIEL BUSH)	COUNCIL MEMBERS
BRUCE JAMES)	
MICHAEL SEBETICH, PhD)	
DANIEL J. VAN ABS, PhD)	
JAMES VISIOLI)	
RICHARD VOHDEN)	

VIA TELECONFERENCE:

MICHAEL DRESSLER)
MICHAEL FRANCIS)

ABSENT:

TIMOTHY DOUGHERTY)
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CALL TO ORDER 207TH meeting of the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council was called to order at 4:00pm at the Highlands Council Offices in Chester, NJ.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken. Member Dougherty was absent. All other Council Members were present. Members Francis and Dressler were present via teleconference. *The following staff members were present: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kelley Curran, Ranji Persaud, Tom Tagliareni, Neda Hartman, Allison Bittner, Carole Ann Dicton, and Annette Tagliareni. Others present: Via teleconference – Bruce Vely, Deputy Attorney General’s (DAG’s) office; and Samuel Kovach-Orr, Associate Counsel, Governor’s Authorities Unit (GAU).*

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT was recited.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Chairman Richko reported that the New Jersey School of Conservation received state funding to continue and are now celebrating their 75th Anniversary. Chairman Richko also reported that the Council’s August 15, 2024 meeting will be cancelled and the next meeting will be September 19, 2024.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Mr. Spinelli provided several updates:

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1. The NJ Highlands branding project is underway – representatives from the project consulting team, North Star, accompanied staff on tours in all seven counties of the Highlands the week of July 8.
2. The Highlands Open Space & Recreation Plan is underway – public outreach and research phase in progress.
3. Senate Bill S-3466 and Assembly Bill A-4627 (CBT Funding) referred to the Senate and Assembly Environmental Committees.
4. Affordable Housing RMP Amendment public comment period closed on June 23. Council will consider a resolution to adopt the amendment.
5. Harding Township Petition for Plan Conformance (100% Planning Area) – Council will consider a resolution to approve the Township’s Petition.
6. Mount Olive Township Highlands Redevelopment Area Designation will be postponed once again at the request of the Township as they continue to work through a local issue.
7. Other resolutions on agenda - Council will consider a resolution for grant funding and extension of the FY24 budgets.
8. Recent meetings:
 - a. Jeff Everett, Executive Director, Garden State Public Trust, regarding a pilot program for Highlands
 - b. NJ League of Conservation Voters – stormwater utilities
 - c. Dr. Obrueta of Rutgers regarding a Water Resources Engineer
 - d. City of Newark to discuss collaboration opportunities
9. Additional services: Water Resources Engineer (part-time temporary basis) through DEP & Rutgers. Engineer will work primarily with Highlands towns on stormwater permit compliance.
10. 20th Anniversary event scheduled for September 6, 2024, at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morris Township. Details to follow. Also, a Science Symposium to share scientific research and data on the Highlands region scheduled for late October at the Kean Skylands campus in Jefferson to be held in partnership with Kean University.

At this time, Chair Richko asked if any Council members had comments or questions on the Executive Director’s report.

Council Comments

There was no Council comment.

APPROVAL OF HIGHLANDS COUNCIL MINUTES OF JUNE 20, 2024

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the Council Minutes of June 20, 2024.

Member Van Abs made a motion to approve the Highlands Council Minutes of June 20, 2024. Member Bush seconded it.

A roll call vote was taken. The Highlands Council Minutes of June 20, 2024, were APPROVED 9-0.

BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Committee Chair Visioli reported that the Budget & Finance Committee met on July 15, 2024, and noted that the committee recommended two resolutions for the Council's consideration.

Resolution – Approval To Extend The 2024 Fiscal Year Budgets At The Same Average Monthly Spending Level

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the resolution.

Member Visioli moved the resolution. Member James seconded it.

Council Comment

There was no Council comment.

Public Comment

Hank Klumpp, Tewksbury, NJ – Mr. Klumpp wanted to know why this isn't done once a year.

James Humphries clarified that this extension is to continue the prior fiscal year budget since the new fiscal year budget won't be finalized until October.

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 10-0.

Resolution – Approval of Fiscal Year 2024 Highlands Protection Fund Capital Budget for Plan Conformance Funding Grants

Committee Chair Visioli gave an overview of the grants the committee is recommending to the full Council for consideration.

At this time Mr. Humphries gave a presentation on the planning grant funding recommendations for the Budget & Finance resolutions. The presentation may be found on Council's website at www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/2024/jul18/preso_jul18.pdf.

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the resolution.

Member Visioli moved the resolution. Member James seconded it.

Council Comment

There was no Council comment.

Public Comment

Hank Klumpp, Tewksbury Township – Mr. Klumpp asked if we approved the Council minutes. Chair Richko said the minutes were approved.

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 10-0.

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PLAN CONFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Resolution - Highlands Redevelopment Area Designation: Mount Olive Township (Morris County), Block 8100, Lot 38; Block 8300, Lots 5, 5.02, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 11.01; Block 8400, Lot 1.

Chair Richko noted that the first resolution under Plan Conformance Committee will be removed.

For the record, Mr. Humphries noted the resolution is being carried over to the September 19, 2024 meeting.

At this time, Committee Chair Dressler reported that the Plan Conformance Committee met on July 16, 2024 and recommends the following resolution for Council consideration.

Resolution – Approval of The Petition For Plan Conformance For The Township of Harding, Morris County

At this time, Allison Bittner, Principal Planner and liaison to Harding Township gave a presentation on Harding Township’s Petition for Plan Conformance. The presentation may be found on Council’s website at www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/2024/jul18/preso_jul18.pdf.

Mr. Spinelli emphasized that the Highlands Land Use ordinance has been streamlined and Harding Township will be the first town to use this ordinance.

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the resolution.

Member Alstede moved the resolution. Member James seconded it.

Public Comment

Timothy Jones, Mayor of Harding Township – Mayor Jones thanked the Council for considering Harding Township’s Petition for Plan Conformation. Mayor Jones added that the Township has a long history of working towards conserving resources and looks forward to this partnership.

Hank Klumpp, Tewksbury Township – Mr. Klumpp wanted to know why the Highlands Council is now involved in fair housing.

Chairman Richko advised Mr. Klumpp that this is not the resolution currently being considered.

Council Comment

There was no Council comment.

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 10-0.

RMP AMENDMENT COMMITTEE

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Resolution – Adoption Of “RMP Addendum 2024-3: Highlands Affordable Housing Guidelines” As An Amendment Of, And Addendum To, The Highlands Regional Master Plan

Committee Chair Alstede reported that the committee had a hybrid meeting and the committee recommended moving the Highlands Affordable Housing Amendment to the full Council for consideration.

At this time, Mr. Humphries gave a presentation on the RMP Addendum 2024-3: Highlands Affordable Housing Guidelines. The presentation may be found on Council’s website at www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/2024/jul18/preso_jul18.pdf.

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the resolution.

Member Alstede moved the resolution. Member Van Abs seconded it.

Council Comment

There was no Council comment

Public Comment

George Cassa, Tewksbury Township – Mr. Cassa commended the Highlands Council for reconciling the Highlands RMP with the current affordable housing legislation, for addressing ambiguities and for the Highland Council’s support of ongoing efforts to provide additional guidance.

Elliot Ruga, New Jersey Highlands Coalition – Mr. Ruga stated that the Highlands Coalition supports the standards for welcoming more affordable housing in the Highlands Region, as more is needed, but in appropriate areas. For the record, Mr. Ruga wanted to know if there was a certification process for suspected vernal pools on vacant land, if currently uncertified, as many uncertified vernal pools need protection.

Committee Chair Alstede reported that this housing challenge is not new to the Council and this is the best the Council can do and he commends the staff for their efforts in assisting Highlands municipalities.

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 10-0.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

There was no old/new business.

Chair Richko opened the meeting for any public comment and noted the 3-minute limit.

Public Comments

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Hank Klumpp, Tewksbury, NJ - Mr. Klumpp wanted to know why the Highlands Council is doing more for affordable housing than water protection. Mr. Klumpp also questioned whether or not the Highlands Council has the expertise to be involved in warehousing. In conclusion, Mr. Klumpp suggested the State can rent property owner land for compensation that was promised.

Elliot Ruga, New Jersey Highlands Coalition – Mr. Ruga stated that the Highlands Coalition is pleased the Highlands Council is amending the conformance modules and hopes the Highlands Council is eliminating the referral ordinance. He believes that some municipalities who have adopted the referral ordinance, which was intended to be temporary until a Land Use ordinance was adopted, are using it as a permanent measure.

Chair Richko asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Member James made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Member Bush seconded it. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 4:42pm.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council.

Date: 7/29/2024

Name: Annette Tagliareni
Annette Tagliareni, Executive Assistant

Vote on the Approval of Minutes	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Councilmember Alstede						
Councilmember Bush						
Councilmember Dougherty						
Councilmember Dressler						
Councilmember Francis						
Councilmember James						
Councilmember Sebetich						
Councilmember Van Abs						
Councilmember Visioli						
Councilmember Vohden						
Chairman Richko						