

NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 19, 2023

PRESENT

CARL J. RICHKO)	CHAIR
KURT ALSTEDE)	VICE CHAIR
TIMOTHY DOUGHERTY)	COUNCIL MEMBERS
MICHAEL FRANCIS)	
ROBERT HOLTAWAY)	
BRUCE JAMES)	
DANIEL J. VAN ABS, PhD)	
MICHAEL SEBETICH, PhD)	
JAMES VISIOLI)	
RICHARD VOHDEN)	

VIA TELECONFERENCE:

MICHAEL DRESSLER)

CALL TO ORDER 194TH meeting of the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council was called to order at 4:02pm at the Highlands Council Offices in Chester, NJ.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken. All Council Members were present. Member Dressler was present via teleconference. *The following staff members were present: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kelley Curran, Judy Thornton, Allison Bittner, Neda Hartman, Herb August, Annette Tagliareni, Carole Ann Dicton, and Tom Tagliareni. Others present via teleconference: Thomas F. Holl, Associate Counsel, Governor's Authorities Unit (GAU). Deputy Attorney General's (DAG's) office: Jason Kane via teleconference.*

Chair Richko announced that the Highlands Council has a new GAU representative and welcomed Thomas Holl, Associate Counsel.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT was recited.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chair Richko announced that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) awarded approximately \$10M in grants to local government agencies, nonprofit groups, universities, and others to fund projects that will improve water quality and reduce the impacts of nonpoint source pollution from stormwater on publicly accessible lakes. The funding comes from the federal American Rescue Plan Act award.

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- Greenwood Lake Commission – awarded \$1M for a comprehensive stormwater/nonpoint source management inventory and to perform extensive water quality and Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) monitoring.
- Lake Musconetcong Regional Planning Board - awarded \$572,000 for continued operation of a mechanical weed harvester on the lake; and
- Lake Hopatcong Commission was awarded \$1M – Chair Richko asked Member Francis to provide a summary on this grant. Member Francis noted that Highlands Council awarded grant funding for the planning. This grant will address projects for the four municipalities surrounding Lake Hopatcong to:
 - Reduce Phosphorus
 - Install & remove biochar sleeves
 - Sediment removal
 - Aeration systems

Chair Richko noted in the last five years, the Greenwood Lake and Lake Hopatcong Commissions have worked well together on lake management.

At this time, Chair Richko asked for nominations for the election of officers.

Resolution – Election of Vice Chair

Member James nominated Kurt Alstede as Vice Chair and moved the resolution.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 11-0.

Resolution – Election of Treasurer

Member Visioli nominated Bob Holtaway as Treasurer and moved the resolution.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 11-0.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Spinelli provided a number of updates:

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- New Monthly Report – we have a new format (formerly the Executive Director’s Report was only available to the Council). This report is now available to the public.
- Current staff openings: Receptionist and GIS Specialist positions have been filled. The scientist position is pending candidate’s acceptance.
- Warehousing Issues – actively engaged in putting together Highlands-specific warehouse guidelines. There are two (2) bills in the Senate on warehousing. Highlands has made comments to both bills.
- Forest Management Guidelines – actively engaged in putting together Highlands-specific forest management guidelines. Senator Smith convened the Forest Stewardship Task Force and Highlands made comments/recommendations for any proposed legislation.
- Affordable Housing Committee will discuss a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to support and develop guidance on affordable housing for Round 4 obligations.
- Plan Conformance Committee will discuss a resolution requesting an allocation from the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) to the Highlands Council. CBT funds currently go to Green Acres and SADC, but not the Highlands Council. This funding would re-invigorate Highlands Open Space programs and enable us to match federal Highlands Conservation Act funding.
- Climate Policy – continue to work with New Jersey Future on guidance for our municipalities.

In conclusion, Mr. Spinelli added that moving forward, Council staff continues to engage in public outreach with our partners (municipalities, counties, non-profit organizations, educational institutions) and comment on legislation pertinent to our mission: Below are some of our projects we are currently working on:

- Open Space/Recreation Plans
- Watershed-Based Plans
- Agricultural policies to support the ag community
- Forest Stewardship work
- Affordable Housing policy
- Engage in research work with Montclair State University on HABs
- State climatologist to site a weather station in the Highlands to fill a gap in their data collection.

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

Council Comments

Member Sebetich commented on forest stewardship and forest management and asked what the Council will do to prevent deforestation in the future.

At this time there was discussion on ways to potentially address deforestation in the future.

APPROVAL OF HIGHLANDS COUNCIL MINUTES OF DECEMBER 1, 2022

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the Council Minutes of December 1, 2022

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Member Holtaway made a motion to approve the Highlands Council Minutes of December 1, 2022. Member Alstede seconded it.

A roll call vote was taken. The Highlands Council Minutes of December 1, 2022 were APPROVED 11-0.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Visioli reported that the committee had reviewed the RFQ mentioned by Mr. Spinelli in detail and agreed to issue the RFQ for 30 days. The intent is to review proposals in early March for Council's consideration later in the month.

PLAN CONFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Resolution – Requesting an Allocation of a Portion of the New Jersey Corporate Business Tax for the Purpose of Funding the Highlands Open Space Preservation Programs

Committee Chair Dressler reported that a meeting was held in December. Committee Chair Dressler introduced Planning Manager Maryjude Haddock-Weiler to provide an overview of the committee meeting.

Ms. Haddock-Weiler reported that the two (2) items discussed during the meeting were:

- Request for CBT Funding for Highlands purposes.
- Requested approval to publish Alpha Borough's Amended Petition for Plan Conformance – Center Designation for 30 days, which is now posted for public comment.

Chairman Richko reported that the request for CBT funding is being considered today.

Mr. Spinelli noted that Council likely will consider Alpha Borough's Amended Petition in March.

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the resolution.

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

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

Council Comment

There was no Council comment.

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 11-0.

BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Resolution –Approval of Fiscal Year 2023 Highlands Protection Fund Capital Budget for Plan Conformance Funding Grants

Committee Chair Holtaway reported that the Budget and Finance Committee is recommending the approval of 2 grants totaling \$199,000. All grants are reimbursement-based with final budgeted amounts determined by approved scopes of work.

1. The Township of Vernon is requesting a grant of \$149,000 to conduct an assessment of 13 of the Township’s lakes and corresponding watersheds. The project will identify issues in those lakes/watersheds and develop an implementation plan to improve water quality.
2. The “Local Zoning Local Control” grant will provide up to \$5,000 each for municipalities to review their current zoning. This will help identify the potential for inappropriate or unwanted development, some of which we have seen in the proliferation of warehouse development. Approval of this grant will provide the Executive Director with the authority to issue grants for up to 10 municipalities.

Chairman Richko asked for a motion on the resolution.

Member Holtaway moved the resolution. Member James seconded it.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

Council Comment

Member Van Abs commented on the review of current zoning. Member Van Abs noted that there is a tremendous value to this kind of forensic zoning analysis, noting that many zoning codes were adopted decades ago and have not been reviewed since.

A roll call vote was taken. The resolution was APPROVED 11-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Presentation by Princeton Hydro – Restoration Plan for the Mount Arlington Municipal Beach

At this time, Chair Richko introduced Fred S. Lubnow, Ph.D, Senior Technical Director from Princeton Hydro who provided a presentation entitled “The Development of Site-Specific Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Management Plans.” The presentation may be found on the Highlands Council website at the following link:

www.nj.gov/njhighlands/about/calend/2023/jan19/Meeting_011923.pdf

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Members Sebetich, Van Abs, and Vice Chair Alstede had some technical questions, which Dr. Lubnow addressed.

Discussion of Watershed Restoration & Protection Plans

At this time, Kelley Curran, Science Manager, reported that Council staff wants to build upon the success associated with recently completed and in-progress watershed-based planning work in the region. Ms. Curran gave a short presentation on next steps to ensure watershed protection and restoration in the Highlands Region and spoke about details of a Request for Proposals that would be published shortly. Her presentation is included in the link above.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

There was no old/new business.

Public Comment

Dylan Medici, New Jersey Highlands Coalition - Mr. Medici spoke in opposition of the Highlands Designated Center in Alpha Borough due to a proposed expansion which he believes may result in loss of Highlands resources, including farmland soils, active agricultural fields, and sensitive environmental resources. Mr. Medici submitted his comments for the record on Friday, January 20, 2023.

Thomas Dallessio, Executive Director, Musconetcong Watershed Association – Mr. Dallessio commented that the Musconetcong Watershed Association is putting together a vision plan within the next year and wants to be a partner/collaborator with the Highlands Council on this effort.

Chair Richko asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Member James made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Member Visioli seconded it. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:19pm.

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: 3/16/2023

Name: Annette Tagliareni

Annette Tagliareni, Executive Assistant

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