



New Jersey Highlands Coalition July Update

Highlands Council Nominees

Four new Council members were seated at the June 16th meeting: Chairman James Rilee (Mayor, Roxbury); Robert Walton (Freeholder, Hunterdon); James Mengucci (Councilman, Lopatcong); and Timothy Dougherty (Mayor, Morristown). Acting Chairman Jack Schrier will now serve as Vice Chairman.

Michael Dressler (Bergen County Surrogate) and Bruce James (Passaic County Freeholder Director) will join the Highlands Council at the next meeting.

Conformance

Four conformance petitions were considered at the June 16th Council meeting: Hackettstown, Bloomsbury, Bloomingdale, and Pohatcong.

Only two of the towns were approved, Bloomsbury and Bloomingdale. Bloomingdale was approved despite the no-votes cast by Rilee and Walton. The Council's consideration of Pohatcong will be continued at the next meeting. Hackettstown's petition was denied.

The decision to deny the petition of Hackettstown is unprecedented. Although the vote was 7-4 in favor of approval, 8 votes are required to approve a motion.

Francis, Alstede, Walton, and Chairman Rilee voted against the petition. Francis and Alstede argued that as a condition of receiving a Highlands Center designation, the town must also accept the designation of a Receiving Zone for Transfer of Development (TDR) credits. Rilee and Walton offered no explanation for their negative votes. After considerable discussion about the impact and possible legal implications of the denial, Carluccio made a motion to reconsider the vote. The Council agreed to further discuss the motion at the next meeting.

We are concerned about the arguments of Alstede and Francis. The Highlands Act did

not assign TDR Receiving Areas, nor is it a required aspect of conformance in the Regional Master Plan. Hackettstown may not be held to arbitrary standards that are without foundation. Nor may Council members Walton and Rilee deny a petition without reference to the policies of the Act and the Plan that the municipality is deficient or causes their petition to be inconsistent.

The July Highlands Council meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting will be on August 3rd at 4:00PM.

Environmental Action Day

On June 20th, the Coalition joined with nearly 30 other environmental, labor, and faith-based groups to oppose proposed sweeping rollbacks of key environmental regulations and legislation that are necessary to protect our air and water. The day was spent reaching out to Legislators and participating in a rally on the Statehouse steps. Several Legislators spoke in support at the rally. The Coalition's presence included Robert Reid and Lauren Theis from URWA, Wilbur MacNeil and Cheryl Barnes from Weequahic Park Association, Tom Koven and Harriet Grose.

During our time in the State House, a bill to prevent the governor from pulling out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was released from the Senate Judiciary Committee and was approved by the full Senate on June 27th.

Other News

On June 17th, we took a large group from Fellowship Village in Basking Ridge on a van tour of the southern Highlands.

We would like to do additional tours in the spring and the fall; if you know of a group that is interested in taking a Highlands Tour contact Elliott Ruga at elliott@njhighlandscoalition.org.

Upcoming Events

On July 13th we will be screening the NJN documentary "Highlands Rediscovered" on the lawn of the Rutherford House in Allamuchy Township: details to follow.

Also, for current listings of Highlands-wide events, go to the "Highlands Events" section of our [website](#).

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition represents a diverse network of organizations - small and large, local, regional, statewide and national - and individuals with the common goal to protect, enhance and restore the New Jersey Highlands and to preserve the quality and quantity of drinking water both for the 850,000 people in the

Highlands as well as the more than 5.4 million people in surrounding areas who depend on Highlands water. For more information visit our [website](#).