



State of New Jersey

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LISA J. PLEVIN
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Budget & Finance Committee
From: Lisa J. Plevin, Executive Director
Subject: Committee Meeting Minutes – October 7, 2021
Date: October 15, 2021

A Budget and Finance (B&F) Committee meeting was held on Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 9:00am via Zoom video conference.

Committee Chair Holtaway opened the meeting at 9:00am. The following participants were present:

Committee: Committee Chair Holtaway, Council Chair Richko, and Members James and Visioli.

Highlands Staff: Lisa J. Plevin, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Keri Green, Judy Thornton, Corey Piasecki, Herb August, Ranji Persaud, and Annette Tagliareni.

Governor's Authorities Unit: Jeffrey Nielsen, Associate Counsel

Highlands Council FY2022 Highlands Protection Fund Budget:

Herb August, Highlands Council Grants Manager, reported that the FY2022 Highlands Protection Fund Budget is an estimate of potential expenditures between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 on tasks required by the Regional Master Plan, Department of Environment Protection (NJDEP), and the need to continue to facilitate Highlands municipal and county conformance. The State re-appropriation funds total \$2,182,352 for new Plan Conformance initiatives. Council staff has estimated the need for FY2022 to be approximately \$1,922,250 for municipalities and \$225,000 for county Plan Conformance Grants. All grants are reimbursement-based with final budgeted amount determined by approved scopes of work and deliverables.

Mr. August noted that Council has already approved grants totaling \$335,750 for the following municipalities: Harding Township, Vernon Township, Phillipsburg, Hopatcong Borough, and West Milford.

Mr. August added that Highlands Council staff will be recommending additional grant requests in this meeting. Mr. August also noted that the Highlands Council intends to extend/close approximately \$248,000 for inactive grants awarded as far back as 2009. These grants will expire at the end of FY2022 (June 30, 2022). Mr. August provided a summary and historical sheet for this budget.

Chair Richko asked for a list of those inactive grants. Mr. August responded that the committee will review these grants and make recommendation on which grants to extend/close.

Ms. Plevin also responded that Council staff routinely reviews grant inactivity and that these funds go back to Treasury.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Highlands Council FY2022 Highlands Protection Fund Budget to the Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

Highlands Council FY2022 Highlands Protection Fund Grant Requests

Ms. Plevin reported in addition to the scopes of work previously approved by the Council, there are a few anticipated grants. Scopes of work for these anticipated grants will be required prior to receiving the grant funding.

Washington Borough (Warren County), Plan Conformance Petition Grant (\$105,000)

Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, reported that Washington Borough's Petition for Plan Conformance was approved by the Council earlier this year. The Borough has taken a proactive role in completing Plan Conformance tasks with Master Planning, Redevelopment Planning, and Center Planning underway. The Borough expects to complete additional implementation tasks in FY2022 including a Stormwater Management Plan, Economic Development Plan, Highlands Master Plan Element, and Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan. Each of these activities will be completed consistent with the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the Highlands Regional Master Plan and Municipal Lan Use Law.

Committee Chair Holtaway commented that the Borough's Economic Development Plan will work together with the Council's Regional Economic Sustainability Plan in the works.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Washington Borough (Warren County) grant for Plan Conformance Petition (\$105,000) to the Council for consideration. Member Visioli made a motion and Member James seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

Byram Township (Sussex County), Lake Management Plan - \$150,000

Judy Thornton, Principal Planner, reported that Byram Township is considered the Township of Lakes, having more than 50 small and medium-sized lakes. This regional approach to lake management has recently been implemented in Ringwood Borough, West Milford Township and Rockaway Township. A watershed assessment of the watersheds surrounding 15 lakes will be conducted. The work will include desktop modelling, historic data review, pollutant removal

analysis, a stream/watershed water quality sampling event, in-lake water quality monitoring, trophic state analyses, and final reporting.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Byram Township (Sussex County) grant for Lake Management Plan (\$150,000) to the Council for consideration. Chair Richko made a motion and Member James seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

Chester Township (Morris County), Stormwater Management - \$50,000

Corey Piasecki, Principal Planner, reported that Chester Township's Petition for Plan Conformance was approved in 2010. The Township is seeking funding in accordance with that Petition to complete a Stormwater Management Plan that will address the Highlands requirements as well as the revised NJDEP Stormwater Management Rules. Funding will allow the Township to identify and schedule maintenance for all stormwater inflows and outfalls as well as identify opportunities for green infrastructure and municipally important areas for groundwater recharge.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Chester Township (Morris County) grant for a Stormwater Management Plan (\$50,000) to the Council for consideration. Chair Richko made a motion and Member James seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

Hunterdon County, Economic Development Grant - \$75,000

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Planning Manager, reported that Hunterdon County's Petition for Plan Conformance was approved by Council earlier this year. The County is taking a positive leadership role in facilitating sustainable economic growth in the county. They have undertaken tourism initiatives, as well as land use and zoning analysis to anticipate where economic activities may fit within their municipalities. In FY2022, the County's anticipated projects for the Economic Development grant are:

- Action agenda items to implement the Economic Sustainability Plan, scheduled to be released later this year; and
- Corridor planning associated with Routes 78 and 22.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the Hunterdon County grant for Economic Development Planning (\$75,000) to the Council for consideration. Chair Richko made a motion and Member James seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

At this time, all staff left the meeting except, Lisa Plevin, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Ranji Persaud, and Annette Tagliareni.

FY2022 General Operating Budget

Ranji Persaud, Manager of HR, Fiscal and Office Services, reported that the Council received \$2,429,000 in State Appropriations. With a carryover bank balance and miscellaneous revenues projected, the Council is expected to have an FY2022 General Operating Budget of \$2,789,041.08. Mr. Persaud noted that Council received an increase in State Appropriation for operational costs to address the anticipated increase in salary expense, etc. due to CWA contract agreement with

Highlands CWA employees. The reserve also includes salary adjustment consideration for non-CWA employees who did not receive any increases.

Chair Richko asked for a status regarding the Council's lease. Ms. Plevin noted that the Council staff is currently preparing a new lease as the current lease ends this calendar year. Ms. Plevin noted that the new lease will list several requested improvements/renovations to the building. The new lease will be reviewed by Council's DAG.

At this time, Committee Chair Holtaway commented on the raises for unionized staff and asked what is being done for the non-unionized staff. Committee Chair Holtaway added that salary issues can affect morale.

Ms. Plevin noted that the New Jersey Workplace Democracy Enhancement Act, passed in 2018, required employees that perform union-type work be included in the union's bargaining units, unless they meet statutory exclusions. Ms. Plevin added that staff in the union have received raises; and discussions regarding non-union employee raises has been raised with the Governor's Authorities Unit (GAU) as a follow up to a memorandum requesting raises for non-union employees.

Member James commented that associations are sometimes formed for these matters.

At this time, Jeffry Nielsen, GAU Associate Counsel agreed with Committee Chair Holtaway's comment regarding how salary issues can affect morale. Mr. Nielsen provided some background on the discussions held regarding non-union employee raises.

Member James was in support of compensating non-union employees and looks forward to recommendations.

Mr. Persaud appreciated the advocacy and expressed his thoughts on the matter.

In closing, Ms. Plevin noted that she is aware of this matter and thanked everyone for their input.

Committee Chair Holtaway asked for a motion to move the FY2022 General Operating Budget to the Council for consideration. Member James made a motion and Member Visioli seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and all were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54am.