

**NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS COUNCIL
BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**CHAIR REPORT
FOR THE MEETING OF MAY 18, 2006**

On May 18, 2006, the Budget and Finance Committee held a meeting at the New Jersey Highlands Council office in Chester, New Jersey. Council members present included the Committee Chair Debbie Pasquarelli, Janice Kovach and Mimi Letts who participated by way of conference call. Highlands Council staff members present included Dante Di Pirro, Tom Borden, Steve Balzano and Ranji Persaud.

The Committee discussed and reviewed the Highlands Council's Regional Master Plan Development Budget. Mr. Balzano provided an overview of the two additional budget items relating to Land Equity and the Highlands Graduate Studies program. After discussion, the Committee accepted the recommended changes to the Regional Master Plan Development Budget. The Executive Director added that ongoing State budget hearings will impact both the Highlands Council FY06 and FY07 Operating Budget and the Regional Master Plan Development Budget.

The Committee then examined the internal procedures for disbursements and edited a draft policy for the payment of invoices. The draft policies included provisions to ensure that the Highlands staff and Executive Director coordinate and obtain approval from the Treasurer in advance of the disbursement of funds. Minor modifications of the by-laws were examined to advance to the full Council. Committee members and staff will continue to collaborate and address key issues on language and interpretation before presenting the matter to the full Council.

The Committee also considered the Staff recommendation to retain professional accounting services. Such services would assist the Highlands Council's maintenance of proper accounting procedures. The Council staff solicited proposals and interviewed two accountants. The recommendation was made to contract with the accounting firm of John L. Ezyske & Company. This recommendation was based upon the firm's considerable experience with State agency accounting practices and the more reasonable of the proposed costs for both professional services and software installation. The Committee considered and approved the staff recommendation and agreed to advance the proposal to the full Council.

After opening the meeting for any public comment, and receiving none, the Committee adjourned.