

MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

JOSEPH BARRIS, PP, AICP, CFM
Director of Planning



WILMA MORRISSEY
Council Chairman

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the MONMOUTH COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Thursday, September 3, 5:00 p.m.
Via Webex

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Wilma Morrissey called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Wilma Morrissey, France Karras, Paul Johnson, John Vig

Members Absent: Jennifer DiLorenzo, Scott Thompson, David Kostka

Staff Present: Amber Mallm, Linda Brennen

- 3. REVIEW OF MINUTES:** The Council reviewed the February and May minutes. Mr. Vig made a motion to approve the February minutes and Ms. Karras seconded. With no objections, the February minutes were adopted. Ms. Karras made a motion to approve the May minutes, with no objections the May minutes were adopted.

4. REGULAR REPORTS

A. **Chairman-** Ms. Morrissey shared various articles. The articles covered topics such as the feasibility of building high-speed trains in the United States and a brief story describing a drive up to a cattle ranch on Gray Mountain in Navajo Nation Arizona, during COVID-19. Another article described a recent New Hampshire bill signed into law that would allow "roadable air craft," otherwise known as flying cars, to drive on roadways. While this technology is not widely produced, the article claims the law will encourage the expansion of flying cars. See articles attached. Ms. Morrissey asked Ms. Mallm to recall the September Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). Ms. Mallm explained that the STAC reviewed the revised stormwater control ordinances from Bradley Beach and Belmar.

B. **Planning Board-** As Ms. DiLorenzo is absent and Ms. Mallm and Ms. Brennen did not attend the August Planning Board meeting, however they summarized the September Planning Board agenda. They expect one resolution from the Amendment Review Committee to be addressed as well as resolutions approving the Bradley Beach and Belmar stormwater control ordinances.

C. **Staff-** Ms. Mallm described the September Dates to Remember. Ms. Brennen reported that the Amendment Review Committee has been working with NJDEP to revise their Amendment Review Procedures for several years now. This August, the revised Procedures were finally adopted. Ms. Mallm stated that the Division of Planning will be

welcoming a new AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassador this year. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic the ambassador's education and outreach work will likely be primarily virtual.

D. **Legislation-** none.

OLD BUSINESS

A. **Webinar Planning-** The Council discussed potential topics for a webinar or webinar series. Ms. Mallm shared a document outlining several potential topics and speakers. She indicated that work was already completed to hold a roundtable focused on invasive species prior to the event being canceled in April due to COVID-19. The Council recommended Ms. Mallm pursue organizing this roundtable. Ms. Morrissey told the Council members to refer to the various lists of webinar ideas if they would like to pursue webinars with their municipal environmental councils. The Council also discussed smart traffic light technology that sense vehicles' presence and turn green quicker if there is no other traffic, therefore reducing idling emissions. The Council also spoke about other ways energy is used on roads, like jug handles that might require the driver to stop at two red lights. The Council asked if a future speaker could address the development of smart traffic lights in NJ.

B. **JLUS III-** Ms. Brennen informed the Council that the Division of Planning officially received a grant from the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment to complete a Joint Land Use Study, Phase III. This study will include two separate projects, one to complete further design for resilience projects outlined in JLUS II and the other to advance zoning goals from JLUS I.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. **NJ Offshore Wind Strategic Plan-** Ms. Mallm reported a summary of the NJ Offshore Wind Strategic plan. Offshore wind production is part of multiple state initiatives to address climate change and generate renewable energy. Executive Order No. 92 set a goal to generate 7,500 megawatts of offshore wind energy by 2035. The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) was directed to prepare an Offshore Wind Strategic Plan and released the Draft Plan in July. The Plan addresses the complex needs of a future offshore wind industry by considering natural resource protection, commercial and recreational fisheries, supply chain and workforce development, ports and harbors, wholesale energy markets, and transmission.

B. **NJ Scientific Report on Climate Change-** Ms. Mallm reported that the NJDEP released the NJ Scientific Report on Climate Change. The Report is a guidance document with data and the anticipated impacts from climate change. It is not intended to offer specific policy or mitigation recommendations, but rather to provide the best available data. The report discusses potential future low, moderate and high greenhouse gas (GHG) emission scenarios. It provides data and facts on anticipated climate change impacts to areas like temperature, precipitation, sea level rise. Ms. Mallm explained that the report holds a large number of interesting statistics. Next NJDEP is supposed to release the Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy & Coastal Resilience Plan. Ms. Karras stated she reviewed the Report.

6. MEMBER REPORTS:

- Mr. Johnson described his work creating bird houses for wrens. Mr. Johnson shared his knowledge about wren's nesting behaviors in which the male makes a nest to attract a mate, once they couple, the male will pull the nest apart and the two will make a new nest together. He said he builds the houses and shares them others. He is particularly happy to see children gain an interest in the birds because he sees it as a way to spark their interest in the environment.
 - Ms. Karras reported healthy water quality at the Bayshore due to reduced boat traffic during COVID-19. She said there were large quantities of striped bass in the Atlantic Highlands municipal harbor. The Council discussed other unique stories about wildlife during COVID-19 such as seeing deer on Manasquan beach in the spring.
 - Mr. Vig stated that Mr. Kostka is working on Colts Neck's Sustainable Jersey registration.
 - Ms. Morrissey said Wall Township built a new roller hockey rink.
7. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Ms. Morrissey opened for public comment, upon seeing no members of the public, it was closed.
8. **ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Vig made the motion to adjourn and Ms. Karras seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

High-Speed Rail's True Barrier Isn't Money. It's Space.

Private investors want to build bullet trains across America, but in too many cases they're having trouble finding right-of-way. There's a lot that state and local governments could do to help them along.

SCOTT BEYER, URBAN ISSUES COLUMNIST | AUGUST 3, 2020 | OPINION

America is way behind on building high-speed rail. While nations like China and Spain have thousands of miles of high-speed rail in operation — and are building thousands more — all we've got is Amtrak's D.C.-to-Boston Acela Express, with its average operating speed of 70 mph.

Money is not the biggest problem, nor is lack of consumer demand. There have been federal allocations, and increasingly commitments by private investors, that aim to connect America's major cities by high-speed rail. The issue is space: The lines cannot be built because there's no designated right-of-way for them.

I have four recent examples, all with varying degrees of right-of-way trouble. California is the noted public one. Parts of its \$98.5 billion project are under construction, but the full line connecting Los Angeles and San Francisco won't be completed in the foreseeable future due to political haggling, contracting cost overruns and, you guessed it, right-of-way issues. The state has had difficulty buying and assembling land, which [doubled the project's real-estate costs](#) along its San Joaquin Valley portion.

In Texas, a company called Texas Central Partners LLC wants to build a high-speed rail line connecting Dallas and Houston. Dubbed [the Texas Central Project](#), some of it would run along existing highway and freight rail lines, but a portion of the route will have to be acquired through eminent domain. Because the rail line would be privately run, this would mean condemnations of private property for the gain of private interests. This has caused the project to face legal battles; first planned in 2013, it won't be completed until 2026, if at all.

A third example is more promising: [Florida's Brightline train](#). Virgin Group and Fortress Investment Group have already built a passenger line, maxing out at 79 mph and mostly using existing, upgraded track, that connects Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. The investors have built residential towers along the route, imitating a common "value capture" city-building strategy that occurs abroad. Virgin wants to expand Brightline with higher-speed lines to Orlando, Disney World, Tampa and eventually Jacksonville, and is negotiating with the Florida Department of Transportation and the Central Florida Expressway Authority about leasing space along Interstate 4.

A fourth — and potentially successful — example is [the XpressWest train](#) that would connect Victorville in Southern California with Las Vegas. Also managed by Virgin
Adopted 10/1/2020

Group, the high-speed rail project will run along the median of I-15 in California, thanks to a lease the firm recently entered into with the California Department of Transportation. Stuck in planning and financing hurdles since 2005, XpressWest's anticipated completion date is in 2023.

The public-private negotiations of right-of-way found in the latter two examples could be replicated nationwide. In fact, this is how America used to operate. Early railroads — including the first transcontinental one — were built with the help of [federal land grants](#) that provided contiguous right-of-way. Private companies then built and operated the lines, creating explosive service growth and making America a world leader in the industry.

When automobiles replaced railroads as the favorite passenger-transport option, the federal government facilitated this by funding interstate highways. The right-of-way clearance measures were often extreme — whole neighborhoods were destroyed — but while this episode is a stain on America's urban planning history, it did produce an efficient transport network that helped the country grow.

For high-speed rail, there could be just as much effort to provide right-of-way, and it wouldn't be nearly as disruptive. In fact, much of the right-of-way has already been cleared for the aforementioned roads and freight rail, and new passenger bullet trains could be built along these routes. It's just a matter of having private and public bureaucracies recognize this adjacent space and issue RFPs for it to be leased.

Brightline and XpressWest are early examples of how this could look, but they're just the start. Private investors have expressed interest in building high-speed rail between [Baltimore and Washington](#), [Portland, Ore., and Seattle](#), and [D.C. and New York City](#). These projects could, theoretically, happen along highways that are already connecting the cities. It's time to make room for them.

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Scott Beyer *Columnist*

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Navajo Nation: A Trip to the Top of Gray Mountain

Phillip Yellow makes the treacherous drive every day, carrying 500 gallons of water up the mountain to a plot of land that's been in the family for years. "We've been here quite a while."

DAVID KIDD, PHOTOJOURNALIST AND STORYTELLER | AUGUST 4, 2020 | FEATURES

On one side of Canyon View Drive, the Little Colorado River flows out of sight, at the bottom of a deep canyon. On the other side of the road, the terrain rises steeply, rough and rocky. Glenn Peaches steers his silver truck off the highway onto the remains of an old road, barely visible. He and his partner, Arizona state Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai, are heading to the top of Gray Mountain to see if their neighbor, Phillip Yellow, is tending to his herd of cattle.

The two-and-one-half mile trip is slow and harrowing. With the two of them bouncing in their seats, Glenn picks his way around ruts and rocks, inching along at a walking pace. As they climb higher, they can see trucks trailing dust in the distance. The East entrance to the Grand Canyon is closed to visitors today, due to COVID-related restrictions on the reservation, but some people are determined to get there, using roads much like the one Glenn is navigating now. Still rising, Glenn keeps close to a rock face as he rounds another hairpin turn. Someone has sawed off the wooden guardrails.

Reaching the top, the road flattens out and Phillip's gray pickup comes into view. With his window down, he is behind the wheel, wearing a heavy green mask and blue baseball cap. A lone bull slowly approaches the visitors and Phillip suggests they stay in their vehicle. His herd is roaming out of site, presumably foraging for whatever they can find to eat on this parched mountaintop. **Phillip makes the treacherous trip every day, carrying 500 gallons of water up the mountain to this plot of land that's been in the family for years.** "We've been here quite a while," he says. "My wife's mom lived up here."

Despite his remote life, Phillip has not escaped the pandemic. A brother recently died of COVID-19. "We didn't get a chance to see him," he says. "He was doing OK until all of a sudden, he was gone. I never did see him again." Phillip watches his bull saunter off into a thicket of scrub. "There he goes," he says, and points his truck back down the mountain.

[David Kidd](#) Photojournalist / Storyteller
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New Hampshire Opens its Roads to Flying Cars

Gov. Chris Sununu has signed a bill making the Granite State the first in the U.S. to allow flying cars onto its public roads. Pilots will be allowed to drive from airports to their final terrestrial destination.

CARL SMITH, SENIOR STAFF WRITER | JULY 28, 2020 | NEWS

Taking a step toward a dream over a century in the making, New Hampshire became the first state in the nation to open its public highways to flying cars when Gov. Chris Sununu signed a transportation bill, [HB 1182](#), into law.

Worried New Hampshire motorists, take note: The cars won't be flying above your lane. Instead, the new law makes it possible for them to drive on public roads, taking pilots from airports to their final terrestrial destination.

"This is a landmark event, and early adopters of this type of state legislation will be the leaders of a new transportation technology," said Sam Bousfield, CEO of Samson Sky, one of three companies currently manufacturing flying cars. "This is something the public has been yearning for decades to see."



Samson Sky's Switchblade in flying mode. (Image courtesy of Samson Sky.)

Aviator Glen Curtiss, one of the founders of the American aviation industry, designed the first flying car prototype, the [Autoplane](#), in 1917. With its wings removed, it was capable of reaching speeds of 45 mph on the road, but was never able to achieve sustained flight.

Today, early adopters in the U.S. can obtain vehicles from American manufacturers [Samson Sky](#) and [Terrafugia](#) as well as [Pal-V](#), a Dutch company. Operators are required to have a pilot's license as well as a driver's license.

HB 1182 establishes procedures through which “roadable aircraft” can be registered and inspected, enabling them to utilize the infrastructure available to other motorized vehicles. They are prohibited from landing or taking off on public roads, however.

“We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters,” venture capitalist Peter Thiel once lamented. Even so, we’re still more than 40 years away from the era of best-known flying car culture, the 2062 world of *The Jetsons*. Given the speed at which other technology has spread once a door was opened, New Hampshire may have pushed things forward.