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# Minutes of Meeting

**By:** Darlene A. Jay

**Meeting Date:** May 27, 2009

**Place:** Bergen County Administration Building

**Re:** Bergen County Master Plan  
Steering Committee Meeting #1  
MC PROJECT NO. 08000528G

**Attendees:** Organizations represented:  
MedCo  
NJTPA  
NJT  
Burgis Associates  
Hackensack River Keeper  
United Water  
TD Bank  
Stryker Orthopedics  
Boswell Engineering  
NJ Meadowlands  
County Planning Department Staff  
Maser Team  
RPA Team  
See sign-in sheet for details

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The meeting opened with Dennis Mc Nerney, County Executive, thanking the steering committee members for their participation in the process. Then Farouk Ahmad, Director of Department of Planning and Economic Development, said a few words about the process and informed the steering committee members that we would like meet with them approximately every three months. Mr. Ahmad then introduced the project team and turned the meeting over to Joseph Layton.

Mr. Layton walked the steering committee through a PowerPoint presentation that explained the project leadership structure between the County, consultants, steering committee and municipalities. He briefly outlined both Master and RPA's planning experience. Mr. Layton explained what a County Master Plan is and how it differs from a municipal Master Plan. Various elements that link a county and its municipalities were outlined, such as economy,



transportation and open space. Mr. Layton then explained that the County has been tentatively divided into three sections for the visioning process.

The presentation was then turned over to Carlos Rodrigues, from RPA, who discussed what visioning is, how it engages the stakeholders and the public and the need to focus on certain issues to make visioning productive. Carlos then gave Chris Jones from RPA the floor to discuss the economy in Bergen County, unemployment comparisons, and the economy that will likely emerge after the recession ends. Mr. Jones believes that education and research and development will be priorities after the recession. Finally, Mr. Jones talked about home values in Bergen County and how they are 6.1 times the median income of Bergen County residents, which is a very high ratio.

Mr. Rodrigues then discussed the next steps in the process, which he said should include various “round tables” with transit providers, employers and environmentalists to hone in on the issues. There are planned to be three public visioning sessions, one for each of the three sub-regions. Before the visioning sessions RPA will compile a “briefing book”, which makes the issues comprehensive to the average non-technical person and also helps outside facilitators to easily learn about the project. Each visioning session will be a day-long Saturday that includes break out groups to foster interaction between participants.

## Q&A

- **Bill Sheehan the Hackensack River Keeper**, wouldn't it be better to divide regions on a watershed basis since everyone has to abide by stormwater regulations and C-1 waters, etc.? The County could be divided into three regions (Hackensack, Hudson and Passaic watersheds). His vision is that this process is a partnership between the County and the 70 municipalities.
- **MedCo**, are there other Master Plans that this process could build upon? How do you start with what the issues are?
  - o **JJL** – Marin County, California has a Master Plan that focused on sustainability.
- **MedCo**, how do you get agreement between the County and the municipalities?
  - o **FA** – the Master Plan is a regional issue, municipalities get concerned when you specifically dictate to them.
- **United Water**, agrees that East-West connectivity is a problem, traffic is not only an issue, but so is emergency response especially when Pascack Valley Hospital was closed.
- **Joseph Burgis**, look at what COAH is doing to County, if we build all of the housing COAH says that all the municipalities owe, the County will gain 80,000 people, which will create or exacerbate existing issues.
  - o **FA** – we need to look at that issue.
- **Debbie Lawlor from NJ Meadowlands Commission**, they have completed Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan using GIS information, her office will make it available to us. They mapped community facilities, etc. for all 70 municipalities. There are over 2,000



pages of information to draw from. Also have GIS data for entire area of all 14 municipalities under Meadowlands jurisdiction.

- **NJTPA**, a lot of information is available on our website; we can call them for information.
- **NJTPA**, freight mobility should be an issue because it is an indicator of the economy, noise issues, etc. We have to move people and goods. The Transportation Management Association should be tapped for information. Also, make sure that the outreach materials aren't only in English.
- **Bill Sheehan the Hackensack River Keeper**, much of our garbage is moved by freight, where are the by-products going to end up? Pennsylvania won't accept our solid waste forever. We also have to think about where our growing population will get its water from. This is really more of a redevelopment plan because the County is almost fully developed.
- **DO**, redevelopment doesn't mean more development, open space could be added during redevelopment. The County doesn't have zoning powers, but could include example ordinances, designs, etc. to give municipalities ideas and allow them to keep ratable while increasing the quality of life. The Master Plan should be a living document.
- **JLL**, as redevelopment occurs it can be at a higher density than existing, leading to more open space on balance of property. The Master Plan should be a guidance document for municipalities.
- **Rich Roberts from NJT**, NJT would be pleased to participate in our process, they have a number of activities that they are currently engaged in, just give them a heads up in advance.
- **John from Boswell**, has served as mayor at one point and not once during his term did his community look at the County Master Plan during reviews.
- **Joseph Burgis**, municipalities are only required to notice when doing a Master Plan. The County may want to recommend to the MLUL drafting committee that municipal Master Plans should be reconciled with County Master Plans.
  - o **FA** – the County is working to incentivize municipalities to work with them, one example is Oradell and Kinderkamack Road.
- \_\_\_\_\_, what is the County's role with bringing jobs into Bergen County?
  - o **FA** – Bergen County Economic Development Corporation handles that, they should be at the table.
  - o **DO** – Master Plan should say what our advantages are and use that to market to specific industries and capitalize on that.
- **Bill Sheehan the Hackensack River Keeper**, energy companies should be included as steering committee members because growth will increase consumption. The power companies should be at the table.



## **Next Steps**

Mr. Rodrigues explained that we would conduct “round table” sessions and participants should expect to hear from us in about a month. Once we finish the round tables we will move to visioning that will likely occur later in the year. Mr. Ahmad added that a website will be available where the public can share their thoughts, etc. The NJTPA representative stated that they would add a link to our project website on their webpage.

**Cc:** Farouk Ahmad, Bergen County  
Donna Orbach, Bergen County  
Christopher Helms, Bergen County  
Carlos Rodrigues, RPA  
Corey Piasecki, RPA  
Joseph J. Layton, Maser