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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
NEW JERSEY SPORTS &
EXPOSITION AUTHORITY

IN THE MATTER OF:
FILE No. SP-755
DRAFT HACKENSACK MEADOWLANDS
DISTRICT MASTER PLAN UPDATE 2020

PUBLIC HEARING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2019
One DeKorte Park Plaza
Lyndhurst, New Jersey

COMMENCING AT 10:00 AM

BEFORE:

SARA SUNDELL, Director of Land Use
Management and Chief Engineer

SHARON MASCARO, Deputy Chief
Engineer and Deputy Director of
Land Use Management

MIA PETROU, Principal Planner

CHERYL REZENDES, Principal Planner

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1 MS. SUNDELL: Good morning, everyone.
 2 My name is Sara Sundell. I am the Director of Land
 3 Use Management and the Chief Engineer of the New
 4 Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority. Seated with
 5 me this morning are Adam Levy, Vice President of
 6 Legal and Regulatory Affairs; Sharon Mascaro,
 7 Deputy Chief Engineer and Deputy Director of Land
 8 Use Management; Mia Petrou, Principal Planner; and
 9 Cheryl Rezendes, Principal Planner.

10 The NJSEA is the Authority of the State of
 11 New Jersey responsible for the regional planning
 12 and zoning of the Hackensack Meadowlands District,
 13 which is a 30.3 square mile area encompassing
 14 portions of 14 municipalities and two counties,
 15 including Carlstadt, East Rutherford, Little Ferry,
 16 Lyndhurst, Moonachie, North Arlington, Ridgefield,
 17 Rutherford, South Hackensack and Teterboro in
 18 Bergen County, and Jersey City, Kearny, North
 19 Bergen and Secaucus in Hudson County.

20 We're here today to obtain comment on the
 21 proposed Draft Hackensack Meadowlands District
 22 Master Plan Update 2020. A six-week public comment
 23 period which started on Monday, August 5, 2019 and
 24 ends on Monday, September 16, 2019, is being
 25 provided by the NJSEA to receive comments from the

3

1 public on the Draft Master Plan Update.
 2 Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 5:10A-7(b), the NJSEA
 3 introduced the Draft Master Plan Update on
 4 August 5, 2019. In addition to viewing at NJSEA
 5 offices, the draft plan and public notice of this
 6 hearing has been made available for download on the
 7 NJSEA website and was hand-delivered to the clerk
 8 of each constituent district municipality.

9 Notice of this public hearing appeared in
 10 the August 5, 2019 edition of the New Jersey
 11 Register. Public notices were also published in
 12 The Record, the Jersey Journal and Star-Ledger
 13 newspapers.

14 At this time NJSEA staff will be providing a
 15 brief presentation on the proposed Draft Master
 16 Plan Update. At the conclusion of the
 17 presentation, we will open the floor to receive
 18 public comment. If you have not already done so,
 19 please sign in at the front desk area outside of
 20 the auditorium if you would like to make a comment,
 21 and we will work down that list.

22 The presentation will start with Mia.
 23 MS. PETROU: Good morning, everyone.
 24 Thank you for coming. I'm Mia Petrou, Principal
 25 Planner in the Division of Land Use Management here

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1 at the NJSEA. I will be joined during the course
 2 of presentation by my colleague, Sharon Mascaro,
 3 Deputy Director of Land Use and Deputy Chief
 4 Engineer, and Cheryl Rezendes, Principal Planner.

5 We have a lot to get through. I will try to
 6 make it as brief as possible but there is a lot to
 7 get through.

8 So the New Jersey Sports & Exposition
 9 Authority, which is more commonly associated with
 10 managing sports and entertainment facilities in the
 11 state, is also responsible for the planning and
 12 zoning of the Meadowlands District, consisting of
 13 the 14 towns Sara mentioned. These land management
 14 responsibilities were assigned to the NJSEA upon
 15 its merger with the New Jersey Meadowlands
 16 Commission in 2015 pursuant to the Hackensack
 17 Meadowlands Agency Consolidation Act, where the
 18 NJSEA absorbed the operations of the NJMC.

19 The mandates for the stewardship of the
 20 Hackensack Meadowlands District, originally
 21 established in 1968, remained unchanged by the
 22 merger and the NJSEA is therefore charged with
 23 three main responsibilities: To protect the
 24 environment, to promote economic development, and
 25 to provide for the solid waste needs of the region.

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1 The Consolidation Act also requires the
 2 adoption of a new Master Plan for the Meadowlands
 3 District within five years of the merger date, by
 4 February 5, 2020. The Master Plan does not apply
 5 to the Meadowlands Sports Complex property per the
 6 Act, as it is a state-owned property not subject to
 7 district zoning regulations. However, the plan
 8 does recognize that the development of the Sports
 9 Complex site must be taken into consideration as an
 10 influence on surrounding areas.

11 The Master Plan itself serves as a policy
 12 guide by establishing a vision for the future of
 13 the Meadowlands District and crafts a pathway for
 14 realizing this vision through a recommended course
 15 of actions to further our founding mandates.

16 The year 2020 will mark the 50th anniversary
 17 of the original master plan for the Meadowlands
 18 District - the 1970 Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
 19 There is a copy of the plan here at the front if
 20 you would like to take a look during the break.
 21 This plan envisioned development of the Meadowlands
 22 within large specially planned area, which in many
 23 cases were located primarily on wetlands. Over the
 24 years increasing awareness and appreciation of
 25 wetlands and the valuable benefits they provide,

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1 not only for fish and wildlife, but for people too,
 2 resulted in a landmark change to the vision for the
 3 future of the Meadowlands.
 4 This new vision was set forth in the 2004
 5 NJMC Master Plan, which was the first new master
 6 plan adopted for the district in more than 30
 7 years. The 2004 plan eliminated Specially Planned
 8 Area designations and instead targeted the
 9 remaining wetlands for preservation. The plan also
 10 provided for additional development potential on
 11 upland areas, particularly through development.
 12 Although the 2004 Master Plan had
 13 established a 25-to-30-year vision, the
 14 Consolidation Act's requirement prompted a review
 15 of the 2004 plan. The NJSEA's Land Use Management
 16 staff, responsible for the day-to-day operations of
 17 land management, including zoning reviews,
 18 occupancy certifications and the preparation of
 19 zoning regulations and redevelopment plans worked
 20 in cooperation with other divisions of the NJSEA,
 21 instructing our Executive, Natural Resources, Solid
 22 Waste and Finance Divisions, with support from the
 23 Rutgers Meadowlands Environmental Research
 24 Institute, the Meadowlands Conservation Trust, and
 25 our demographics consultant, 4Ward Planning, to

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1 prepare the plan we are presenting and receiving
 2 comment on today.
 3 During staff research it became increasingly
 4 apparent that the principles of the 2004 Master
 5 Plan are, for the most part, still valid, and that
 6 its implementation has been largely effective.
 7 However, we recognize that updates certainly needed
 8 to occur to address current issues and challenges
 9 facing the district, and that more in-depth studies
 10 of certain sectors are required that, for timing
 11 resource reasons, are not included in this draft;
 12 issues such as flooding, transportation, housing,
 13 open space and the environment that require
 14 strategic planning. In many cases, as you will
 15 hear, planning efforts are already underway to
 16 address these important concerns, but in order to
 17 plan for the future, we first had to evaluate where
 18 we've been.
 19 The first six chapters of the draft plan,
 20 shown on the slide before you, contain the research
 21 and evaluation that went into the 2004 Master Plan
 22 and current conditions in the district. The final
 23 three chapters contain the Master Plan Update,
 24 which provides a policy perspective for the
 25 district for the next ten years, building on the

8

1 2004 plan.
 2 As part of the update, a new chapter on
 3 sustainability and resiliency is proposed and you
 4 will hear more about that later from Cheryl.
 5 We start with the goals and objectives of
 6 the draft plan, which establish the principals on
 7 which the plan is based, expanding on those of the
 8 2004 plan. They include: Safeguarding and
 9 restoring the district's natural and historic
 10 resources; promoting a suitable array of land uses
 11 that promotes the public health, safety and general
 12 welfare while supporting the Meadowlands economy;
 13 accommodating regional housing needs in suitable
 14 locations; promoting an effective regional
 15 transportation network; and increasing resiliency
 16 and promoting the use of sustainable energy in the
 17 District. One of the most common challenges we
 18 face here in the district is balancing these
 19 seemingly competing objectives.
 20 In terms of land use in the district, the
 21 map before you portrays the colorized patchwork of
 22 existing land uses on a parcel-by-parcel basis.
 23 The Hackensack River bisects the district in
 24 the middle. On either side the green colors
 25 represent our natural areas, composing

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1 approximately 40 percent of the district's land
 2 area, which is the largest presence in the
 3 district.
 4 The largest active land use is
 5 transportation, in dark gray, representing 20
 6 percent of the district land area, which is
 7 indicative of the extensive transportation network
 8 that traverses the district, followed by industrial
 9 uses, in light gray, which are established in the
 10 district due in large part to its transportation
 11 network.
 12 The plan update classifies properties as
 13 natural areas, developed areas and other areas,
 14 which prompted the creation of a new category for
 15 the Meadowlands Sports Complex site, formerly
 16 designated as recreational land, since the amount
 17 of impervious surfaces it contains did not fit into
 18 a natural area classification. This designation
 19 excludes Walden Swamp, which remains classified as
 20 a wetland land use.
 21 This plan also designates a new transitional
 22 land category, shown in orange, to account for
 23 sites under development that do not currently have
 24 an active land use. Transitional lands constitute
 25 almost 750 acres of the district, indicating a

10

1 strong Meadowlands economy.

2 The plan also reviews Meadowlands market

3 trends and analyzes the 2004 plan's build-out

4 estimates over a 25-year time frame in relation to

5 development that actually occurred through today,

6 with approximately ten years remaining on that

7 build-out estimate.

8 This build-out analysis includes only new

9 buildings and building footprint expansions that

10 have occurred since 2004 and have received

11 occupancy certification. It does not include

12 buildings under construction.

13 Approximately 3,895 housing units have been

14 developed in the district to date, surpassing the

15 2004 estimates, largely due to NJSEA affordable

16 housing policies that have facilitated housing

17 construction in the district.

18 About 1.2 million square feet of the new

19 commercial development has occurred, primarily

20 within two NJSEA redevelopment areas, including

21 Teterboro Landing and the Harrison Avenue Retail

22 Center in Kearny. American Dream development is

23 not included in this estimate.

24 The office market has remained stagnant,

25 which is not an issue isolated to the Meadowlands.

11

1 Approximately four million square feet of

2 development that was approved under the Allied

3 specially planned area approvals at Secaucus

4 Junction dating back to the 1990s is included in

5 this estimate, which has not materialized to date.

6 The vacancy rate for office in the district firmly

7 stands at approximately 18 percent in 2018 and has

8 actually been declining in recent years. However,

9 this is primarily due to less availability as

10 office space is being demolished to make way for

11 other uses, which in the district is largely

12 industrial development.

13 Industrial development does continue to be

14 the predominant land use presence in the District,

15 benefitting from proximity to New York City and

16 surrounding regions. Approximately 4.7 million

17 square feet of new industrial development has been

18 occupied in the district since 2004, not including

19 mezzanines or other investment to upgrade

20 buildings, such as raising the roof to accommodate

21 higher storage. Another 5.5 million square feet of

22 new industrial development is currently under

23 review by this office, again primarily with

24 redevelopment areas. Therefore, we can expect to

25 make more progress on our development goals in the

12

1 next ten years.

2 Finally, hotel development has resulted in

3 436 new hotel rooms since 2004 with more under

4 development, particularly in Secaucus due to its

5 proximity to New York City, and along Paterson

6 Plank Road in Carlstadt and East Rutherford in

7 anticipation of the American Dream opening.

8 MS. MASCARO: Since the adoption of

9 the 2004 Master Plan, the NJSEA has taken a more

10 active role in affordable housing in the district.

11 In 2007 the courts affirmed that the NJMC, as

12 predecessor to the NJSEA, had a greater

13 responsibility to plan and zone for affordable

14 housing. To that end, in 2008 interim policies

15 governing affordable housing development in the

16 district were created by this agency and have been

17 utilized to determine the suitability of specific

18 properties for housing so as not to lose

19 opportunities for affordable housing.

20 These policies include a 20 percent

21 affordable set-aside for new residential projects

22 based on the requirements of the 2008 amendments to

23 the Fair Housing Act, commonly known as A500. The

24 interim policies will continue to remain in effect

25 until legislation or new regulations are enacted.

13

1 The Draft Master Plan Update also provides a

2 summary of housing plans prepared by our

3 constituent municipalities, including their current

4 obligations and their plans and strategies to

5 implement affordable housing requirements as well

6 as noting the potential affordable housing

7 development sites located within the district that

8 are referred to in the municipal plans.

9 MS. PETROU: Meanwhile there are

10 several environmental accomplishments achieved

11 since 2004. In 2004 the district had approximately

12 2,500 acres of wetland sites preserved, restored or

13 within mitigation banks. Since that time 1,050

14 acres of wetlands have been gained, within 44 total

15 sites, as shown on the map. This represents an

16 increase of more than 40 percent in the last 15

17 years alone and is one of the largest successes of

18 the 2004 Plan.

19 A major player in these accomplishments has

20 been the Meadowlands Conservation Trust, which was

21 established in 1999.

22 The hydrology of the district is not limited

23 to wetland areas. Approximately three quarters of

24 the district is located within a FEMA-designated

25 special flood hazard area, more commonly known as

14

1 the 100-year floodplain, which are the areas shown
 2 in blue on the map. Therefore, flooding, as many
 3 of you know, is one of the largest issues we face
 4 in the district.

5 Floodplain management is one of the core
 6 functions of the NJSEA. In addition to the
 7 preparation of a Floodplain Management Plan, the
 8 NJSEA administers regulations for floodplain
 9 development, just updated this past August. The
 10 NJSEA is currently working on an updated Floodplain
 11 Management Plan, scheduled to be adopted in 2021.

12 The NJSEA also participates in FEMA's
 13 Community Rating System. Because of the NJSEA's
 14 floodplain management activities, property owners
 15 within the district currently receive a 15 percent
 16 discount on their flood insurance premiums.

17 These activities include inspecting the
 18 functionality of all 29 tide gates and pump
 19 stations and 15 major drainage ditch systems in the
 20 Meadowlands on an annual basis, in association with
 21 municipal and county public works divisions.

22 We also work with the Meadowlands
 23 Environmental Research Institute to actively
 24 monitor water levels along waterways in the
 25 district and issue flood warning alerts so that

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1 emergency management personnel and residents in the
 2 district are prepared to address imminent flooding
 3 events.

4 In addition to structural measures, the
 5 NJSEA along with Meadowlands Conservation Trust,
 6 actively pursues opportunities to fund the
 7 acquisition, restoration and maintenance of
 8 wetlands in the district. According to the USEPA,
 9 an acre of wetlands can store between one and one
 10 and a half million gallons of floodwater, which
 11 reinforces the value of our natural areas for all,
 12 not only for wildlife.

13 Speaking of wildlife, the health of the
 14 district's ecosystem has been steadily improving
 15 over the years. Since the early 1990s sampling of
 16 district waterways have indicated significant
 17 improvement in water quality. The level of
 18 dissolved oxygen in the water has been steadily
 19 increasing and the presence of fecal coliforms has
 20 decreased by half.

21 These improvements in water quality have
 22 supported increased diversity of species in the
 23 district, including several threatened and
 24 endangered species, such as the bald eagle, photo
 25 taken by Ron Shields, and the diamondback terrapin,

16

1 photo taken by M.E. Raine. We thank them for that.

2 This increase in species diversity is
 3 supported by improvements at the bottom of the food
 4 chain due to better water quality. These charts on
 5 the left we see diversity of benthic organisms,
 6 which are those that live in the mud layer at the
 7 bottom of the district's waterways and wetlands,
 8 and on the right, fish.

9 These charts evidence a significant decrease
 10 in species that proliferate in more polluted
 11 environments, on the benthic chart, shown in red
 12 and orange, and on the fish chart, shown in black,
 13 with more recent samples showing organisms typical
 14 of balanced and less disturbed environments.

15 The topic of clean and renewable energy is
 16 currently at the forefront of planning concerns.
 17 Supported by NJSEA Green Building Regulations
 18 implemented in 2007 that incentivize sustainable
 19 development in the district as well as the agency's
 20 2008 Energy Master Plan, more than 50 megawatts of
 21 solar energy installations have been approved and
 22 over 42 megawatts installed through June 2019.
 23 This is more than double the NJSEA's 2008 goal of
 24 20 megawatts by 2020.

25 The collection of solar energy has become a

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1 more widespread use for portions of closed
 2 landfills, utilizing the top and/or south-facing
 3 sloped areas and allowing for wildlife habitat on
 4 the remainder. In 2012 the largest photovoltaic
 5 system in the district, totaling 3,000 kilowatts,
 6 was installed on the NJSEA's 1A landfill, as you
 7 can see in the photo.

8 Regarding our solid waste mandate, the
 9 Hackensack Meadowlands District is the state's 22nd
 10 Solid Waste Management District, in addition to
 11 each of the state's 21 counties, and operates
 12 pursuant to a separate Solid Waste Management Plan.

13 The proliferation of unregulated dumping and
 14 landfills in the region was the main impetus for
 15 the creation of the Hackensack Meadowlands District
 16 in 1968 as a public health mandate to provide for
 17 appropriate solid waste facilities. At the time
 18 the district was created 5,000 tons of garbage per
 19 day were being dumped in the Meadowlands.

20 Many landfills became orphan landfills after
 21 NJDEP required closure funding in 1982.
 22 Appropriate closure of landfills is important to
 23 collect gases and leachate that would otherwise
 24 impact the environment.

25 Former landfill areas include the A1

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1 landfill, now home to a photovoltaic system, the 1E
 2 landfill, which has become passive open space
 3 supporting a diverse uplands habitat and, as you
 4 can see in the picture, the before and after of our
 5 own DeKorte Park, built on a former landfill.
 6 MS. MASCARO: The extensive roadway
 7 system that traverses the district is among the
 8 most heavily traveled in the nation. So it is no
 9 surprise that transportation is the largest active
 10 land use in the Meadowlands District.
 11 The circulation chapter of the Master Plan
 12 reviews the different modes of transportation used
 13 by people in the district, not just roads, but mass
 14 transit, pedestrians, bicycle, and air
 15 transportation. The chapter also discusses the
 16 movement of goods through the district.
 17 Since 2004 there have been several
 18 significant transportation planning initiatives
 19 that are described in the draft plan. In 2005 the
 20 Hackensack Meadowlands Transportation Planning
 21 District Act was enacted by the legislature,
 22 establishing the NJSEA as a transportation planning
 23 district. The TPD Act allows for the assessment of
 24 fees on new developments that contribute to the
 25 travel demand burdens on the transportation system,

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1 and the utilization of those fees for
 2 transportation infrastructure projects that benefit
 3 the region. As a result of the TPD Act, the
 4 Meadowlands District Transportation Plan was
 5 prepared and adopted in 2007.
 6 One major achievement of the TPD Act is the
 7 installation of the Meadowlands Adaptive Signal
 8 System for Traffic Reduction, or MASSTR, which was
 9 deployed in five phases between 2012 and 2017.
 10 Funded by a \$10 million Tiger II grant from
 11 the USDOT and using 2.5 millions in TPD funds as
 12 the required NJSEA match, the project is an
 13 adaptive traffic control system installed on 124
 14 traffic signals in the region. It integrates
 15 adaptive traffic signal control software, vehicle
 16 image detection, and wireless and fiber
 17 communication technologies to operate the signals
 18 using real-time data.
 19 This network of self-adaptive traffic
 20 signals efficiently reduces roadway congestion,
 21 delay, travel time, fuel consumption and airborne
 22 emissions. The MASSTR system is expanded as new
 23 traffic signals are installed in the region.
 24 As noted in the Master Plan, the 2007
 25 District Transportation Plan is currently being

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1 updated and is expected to identify and address
 2 current transportation network challenges as well
 3 as future opportunities and improvements.
 4 MS. PETROU: So now we get into the
 5 plan sections of the document. The Systems Plan
 6 provides updated objectives for the various systems
 7 identified in the 2004 plan for each of the
 8 categories you see here on the slide.
 9 The Systems Plan provides a framework of
 10 strategic action items that serves as an
 11 implementation strategy for the goals and
 12 objectives established by this Master Plan; in some
 13 cases requiring additional study to formulate a
 14 comprehensive and effective response to the issues
 15 facing the district identified in this update.
 16 For example, our Natural Environment Systems
 17 Plan includes Strategic Action Plans to update the
 18 NJSEA Wetlands Program Plan, to prepare a new
 19 District Wildlife Management Plan, and a Natural
 20 Resources Strategic Plan to preserve, protect and
 21 restore the Meadowlands ecosystem. We also plan to
 22 update the District Green Map to highlight
 23 recreational activities in the district and enhance
 24 ecotourism.
 25 The Economic Development Systems Plan

21

1 includes the preparation of amendments to district
 2 zoning regulations to respond to current conditions
 3 in the district and evolving uses, as well as
 4 changes to the official zoning map to implement the
 5 2020 Land Use Plan.
 6 The NJSEA is also in the process of
 7 preparing updated an Floodplain Management Plan for
 8 the district as mentioned earlier, which is the
 9 basis for the Community Rating System. Resiliency
 10 strategies are evaluated within a new plan to
 11 enhance protection of properties for both residents
 12 and businesses.
 13 The Transportation Systems Plan provides for
 14 an update to the Meadowlands Transportation Plan to
 15 identify and address current transportation network
 16 issues, challenges, opportunities and improvements
 17 that are needed. Staff is finalizing an RFP for
 18 the preparation of this plan, which we expect will
 19 be released imminently.
 20 One of the more significant challenges we
 21 face relate to our Housing Systems Plan, due to the
 22 lack of availability of Meadowlands-specific
 23 housing data, as census tracts are not contiguous
 24 to district boundaries. In many cases our
 25 demographics are skewed by the large population of

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1 Jersey City, the majority of which is located
 2 outside the district's borders. The plan
 3 recommends the creation of a district-specific
 4 demographic and housing market study, which will
 5 result in a Meadowlands Housing Plan to identify
 6 and recommend an implementation pathway to
 7 accommodate housing needs in the district.

8 Upon completion of the Meadowlands Housing
 9 Plan, we will work with stakeholders to codify
 10 affordable housing requirements in the district.

11 In the interim period we will continue to utilize
 12 our interim policies to ensure no opportunities are
 13 lost for the provision of affordable housing in
 14 suitable locations, and we will work with our
 15 constituent municipalities to address properties in
 16 the district appearing in their municipal housing
 17 plans.

18 Our Community Facilities Systems Plan
 19 recommends formulating an updated comprehensive
 20 emergency response plan to ensure adequate response
 21 to natural and other hazards.

22 And, finally, we would like to highlight our
 23 historic sites in the district through interactive
 24 mapping of past and present historically
 25 significant sites.

23

1 Area Plans of the Master Plan Update
 2 constitute the Land Use Plan for the Hackensack
 3 Meadowlands District. Whereas the existing Land
 4 Use Plan, presented earlier in the presentation,
 5 contains detailed site-specific information, the
 6 Land Use Plan is much broader in scope and
 7 classifies properties into various categories based
 8 on existing or planned conditions. Area Plans also
 9 provide area-specific planning objectives.

10 The Land Use Plan map is not a zoning map
 11 and does not change the zoning on any property.
 12 However, the Land Use Plan does form the basis for
 13 future regulatory processes that may include
 14 changes to zones or the official zoning map to
 15 implement the Land Use Plan. In most cases the
 16 Area Plans continue the 2004 categories, although
 17 the map may have changed where some of those areas
 18 are designated.

19 For example, the Commercial Center Area Plan
 20 has expanded to include new retail centers since
 21 developed in Teterboro and Kearny.

22 The plan also proposes a new area plan
 23 category termed Sustainable Uplands Reserve. This
 24 classification applies to former landfill areas,
 25 many of which were previously located in the

24

1 Preserve Planning Area applicable to wetlands.
 2 This Area Plan envisions that some of these former
 3 landfills could be used for environmentally sound
 4 development, such as sustainable energy parks like
 5 the 1A landfill photovoltaic installation, or being
 6 reserved as passive open space to provide for
 7 scarce uplands habitat in proximity to wetlands
 8 areas. As opposed to the Preserve Planning Area
 9 designation, which corresponds to the environmental
 10 conservation zone, the proposed Reserve Area would
 11 allow some use of properties for which vertical
 12 development is limited or unlikely, in order to
 13 promote landfill closure.

14 Overall, the plan does provide for an
 15 expanded Preserve classification over the 2004
 16 Plan. The 2004 Master Plan includes almost 7,130
 17 acres, and the 2020 plan includes 7,563 acres in
 18 the Preserve category, an increase of approximately
 19 434 acres.

20 The Area Plan also addresses consistency
 21 with plans from our stakeholders, including
 22 municipal and county master plans and the
 23 Meadowlands Regional Chamber Vision Plan.

24 MS. REZENDES: Good morning.
 25 The concept of resiliency has come to the

25

1 forefront in the wake of flood damage resulting
 2 from Hurricane Irene in 2011 and Superstorm Sandy
 3 in 2012. However, the NJSEA has long made the
 4 region more resilient through the enforcement of
 5 its regulations, which effectuate provisions of the
 6 master plan and its work over the past five
 7 decades.

8 The agency has a long history of adapting to
 9 changing circumstances and will continue to do so
 10 as climate change and sea level rise threaten both
 11 the natural and built environment of the district.

12 Highlights of the NJSEA's ongoing resiliency
 13 and environmental stewardship efforts include,
 14 among others, finished floor elevation requirements
 15 for structures, FEMA CRS participation resulting in
 16 flood insurance rate discounts, floodplain
 17 management activities and wetlands acquisition and
 18 management.

19 Superstorm Sandy came ashore on October 29,
 20 2012. Sandy wreaked havoc on Bergen and Hudson
 21 Counties with surges that registered approximately
 22 four, five feet above average high tide. The map
 23 on the screen shows water elevation levels and
 24 storm surge depths as recorded by the MERI sensor
 25 at the Barge Club Marina in the Hackensack River in

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1 Carlstadt. Widespread damage and destruction
 2 resulted from the storm.

3 The Rebuild By Design competition was
 4 launched in 2013 to develop ideas to improve
 5 resilience in regions affected by Superstorm Sandy.
 6 In 2004 a design for the Meadowlands region was
 7 selected as the winner of the competition.
 8 Construction of the storm water improvements as a
 9 result of the planning process is scheduled to
 10 begin in spring 2020.

11 The NJDEP is also developing an operations
 12 and maintenance toolkit for managing regional storm
 13 water infrastructure with grant funding from the
 14 National Disaster Resilience Grant competition.

15 The resulting construction of this new storm
 16 water infrastructure in the project area will
 17 require a multi-jurisdictional approach to
 18 operations and maintenance.

19 New Jersey's climate is changing. Over the
 20 last century New Jersey has experienced rising
 21 temperatures, increased rainfall, more frequent
 22 extreme weather events and rising sea levels.
 23 Increases in local sea level result from a
 24 combination of global, regional and local changes,
 25 which are a consequence of increasing greenhouse

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1 gases in the atmosphere due to human activities,
 2 such as the burning of fossil fuels, agriculture
 3 and land clearing.

4 In 2014 Rutgers University on behalf of the
 5 New Jersey Climate Adaption Alliance convened a
 6 Science and Technology Advisory Panel (STAP) to
 7 help identify alternatives for practitioners to
 8 enhance New Jersey's resilience to regional sea
 9 level rise, coastal storms and flood risk.

10 The 2016 STAP report presented a range of
 11 estimates of sea level rise magnitude for
 12 New Jersey, as well as the probability of those
 13 estimates occurring. The table on the screen
 14 summarizes two of these estimates measured in feet.

15 The central estimate equates to 50 percent
 16 probability and the likely range to a 67 percent
 17 probability. Two greenhouse gas emission scenarios
 18 are presented in this table as well. A high
 19 emissions scenario is anticipated to accelerate
 20 climate change and thus speed the rate of sea level
 21 rise.

22 The maps on the screen detail the projected
 23 inundation footprints in the district in 2050 and
 24 2100, at a potential sea level rise of two feet and
 25 three feet, respectively, which roughly correspond

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1 to the projections at the upper end of the likely
 2 scenario in the previous table. The color gradient
 3 reflects the level of projected inundation and is
 4 based on land elevation.

5 The STAP report SLR estimates are being used
 6 by New Jersey DEP to develop its climate change and
 7 resiliency regulatory programs.

8 The Master Plan provides a review of the
 9 potential strategies available to address sea level
 10 rise. Strategies that are deemed to have potential
 11 utility in the district will be recommended for
 12 future in-depth study.

13 The potential strategies include the
 14 following: This is just a sample of them.
 15 Comprehensive planning, overlay zones, floodplain
 16 regulations, change to construction codes, setbacks
 17 and buffers.

18 The NJSEA recognizes the importance of
 19 planning for resiliency in the face of sea level
 20 rise. It is recognized that not every strategy
 21 will be feasible for implementation by the NJSEA,
 22 but it is important to explore all strategies that
 23 may be applicable.

24 Planning for resiliency cannot be conducted
 25 in a vacuum, and it is essential that the NJSEA

29

1 coordinate with its public and private partners to
 2 best prepare the district for the climate-related
 3 challenges ahead.

4 MS. PETROU: Just a quick summary.
 5 In summary, this plan serves as an update to the
 6 2004 Master Plan for the district, which has been
 7 implemented with great success. Development has
 8 been occurring as planned on upland areas,
 9 primarily through redevelopment, and more wetlands
 10 have been preserved, restored and mitigated than
 11 before. Improvements in water quality have
 12 promoted an ever increasing diversity of fish and
 13 wildlife in the district. We have been able to
 14 balance clean energy objectives with wildlife
 15 habitat creation on former landfills. We have
 16 facilitated the creation of affordable housing
 17 within our district boundaries and have increased
 18 the efficiency of our regional transportation
 19 network through our MASSTR adaptive signal program.

20 Overall, we feel the master plan
 21 accomplishes the balancing act inherent in
 22 fulfilling our varied objectives and sets a path
 23 for the future.

24 As the plan recognizes, we know there is a
 25 lot of work left to do to ensure that the district

30

1 is well positioned to thrive environmentally,
 2 economically and socially in the coming years,
 3 particularly in light of challenges we are facing
 4 in relation to climate change. We look forward to
 5 continue working with our stakeholders as we take
 6 the next step in the process and continue to work
 7 on our strategic planning initiatives to implement
 8 the goals and objectives of our 2020 Master Plan
 9 Update.

10 MS. SUNDELL: So as far as our
 11 schedule goes, we're still within our six-week
 12 public comment period which extends through
 13 September 16th. After the public comment period
 14 closes, the NJSEA will evaluate all of the public
 15 comments that are received and incorporate
 16 resulting modifications into the plan. The final
 17 plan will then be forwarded to the HMMC, which is
 18 the Hackensack Meadowlands Municipal Committee, who
 19 will have 120 days to convey its position.

20 Thereafter, the final plan will be placed on
 21 the agenda of the Board of Commissioners meeting,
 22 the NJSEA Board of Commissioners meeting for
 23 adoption sometime around January 2020 in order to
 24 meet the statutory adoption deadline of February 5,
 25 2020.

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1 So at this time we would like to invite the
 2 public and give them an opportunity to make a
 3 public comment. Staff is here to receive your
 4 comments on the draft plan. However, we will not
 5 be answering questions as the format for this
 6 hearing is not a Q and A session. We ask that oral
 7 comment be limited to no more than five minutes to
 8 ensure that everyone here who would like to make a
 9 comment is heard. Comments may also be submitted
 10 in writing through September 16, 2019.

11 As a side note, at noon we will be taking a
 12 20-minute break for our court reporter, and a
 13 second public hearing on this matter will be held
 14 this evening at six o'clock p.m. in this room, at
 15 which time we will be following a similar procedure
 16 to this morning's hearing.

17 We're going to be working down the list and
 18 calling people but we have to get the list. Hold
 19 on one minute.

20 Whoever wants to make a public comment, you
 21 can go to the microphone that's right there at the
 22 aisle. When you do come up, please state your name
 23 and address for the record. The first person who
 24 has signed is Greg Allen.

25 MR. ALLEN: Good morning. My name is

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1 Greg Allen. I am with the firm Secaucus Brownfield
 2 Redevelopment, LLC. Our firm has been the owner of
 3 property in the Meadowlands District since 1999,
 4 most specifically a 65-acre former landfill, two
 5 former landfills known as Malanka and the Mall
 6 landfill. The 65 acres is located immediately
 7 adjacent to the Lautenberg Train Station, which is
 8 in the transportation center zone.

9 The comments that I am going to provide
 10 today are really two-step approach comments. I
 11 want to give you a little history of the site.
 12 When we acquired the site, it was in a research
 13 office park zone. In 2004 the property zone was
 14 amended under the 2004 Master Plan to environmental
 15 preservation or conservation I should say. Since
 16 that time the property has gone very far along with
 17 respect to entitlements. Being a former landfill,
 18 it is an orphaned landfill as NJSEA called it;
 19 however, it is not really orphaned.

20 The site has received numerous approvals not
 21 only from the NJDEP, Tidelands Resource Council,
 22 Land Use Division within the NJDEP, it's also
 23 received a jurisdictional determination that there
 24 are no wetlands present on the landfill but yet it
 25 is in the environmental conservation zone. The

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1 property has also received several redevelopment
 2 approvals from the Town of Secaucus Redevelopment
 3 Agreement, Hudson County Improvement Authority,
 4 also a memorandum of understanding from the Hudson
 5 County Board of Chosen Freeholders, a memorandum of
 6 understanding from New Jersey Transit and a
 7 memorandum of understanding from the New Jersey
 8 Turnpike Authority, all with the specific goal of
 9 redeveloping the property.

10 Since the property is a former municipal
 11 solid waste landfill, it ceased operations in 1978.
 12 As such, it is exempt from the Solid Waste
 13 Management Act on land that is proposed for
 14 redevelopment on the site. So we are proposing
 15 redevelopment on the site. There has been several
 16 applications before the NJSEA board and its
 17 predecessor. No official action has been taken.
 18 We are in the process of amending that application
 19 with municipal support to request that the property
 20 in the interim be placed in the transportation
 21 center zone.

22 We have completed a significant amount of
 23 engineering studies, traffic studies, parking
 24 demand analysis. It's presently not a very good
 25 ratable for the Town of Secaucus and it's not a

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1 really good thing for the environment that the
 2 landfill remains unclosed. The only way this
 3 landfill gets closed is if the zoning is amended to
 4 reflect the proper use.

5 The three goals that I heard today from the
 6 Master Plan, the 2020 Draft Master Plan Update:
 7 Number one, protect the environment; number two,
 8 provide for economic development within the region
 9 and, number three, to provide a solid waste
 10 management plan. Our plan, which will be submitted
 11 today to request a transportation center zone,
 12 achieves all of those goals in a sustainable effort
 13 that promotes proper closure of the landfill and
 14 redevelopment of the site.

15 In addition, we commissioned a study from
 16 the Bloustein School of Planning down in Rutgers.
 17 I heard Rutgers was mentioned. I know Rutgers is a
 18 partner of this agency. So I think some of the
 19 things that are important to highlight that Rutgers
 20 found significant with our specific property. Our
 21 property is so unique because it is a former
 22 landfill but it is privately owned. The \$20 to \$30
 23 million required to close the landfill is not going
 24 to happen if it remains in the zone that it is
 25 presently in and if it remains in the zone that it

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1 is envisioned by the 2020 Draft Master Plan. So
 2 basically when Rutgers did their study, they said
 3 that this property is so unique that it should not
 4 only be considered for a transportation center zone
 5 but for a tourism zone.

6 It is probably one of the most significantly
 7 positioned properties not only in New Jersey or the
 8 East Coast but probably the whole country. You
 9 have over a billion dollars of transportation
 10 infrastructure that exists at our doorstep. So it
 11 is incumbent upon the NJSEA through its staff to
 12 properly review this site. Not only could it
 13 support a convention center but a variety of uses
 14 and uses that are consistent with the goals of your
 15 master plan.

16 So as I mentioned, we're submitting two
 17 things. We're submitting a request to amend the
 18 zone presently under the 2004 Master Plan to a
 19 transportation center. We're also submitting a
 20 request through our comments to amend the draft
 21 2020 Master Plan that we would request that the
 22 property be not only put in the transportation
 23 center zone but that the planning area -- that the
 24 property should be reclassified to be included
 25 within the Secaucus Transit Center.

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1 And we're also proposing one step further,
 2 for this commission to look at renaming the
 3 Secaucus Transit Center as a Meadowlands Tourism
 4 and Transit Center. This property should be a
 5 destination, not only because of the value of the
 6 infrastructure that exists there but what is
 7 happening in 45 days when American Dream opens.
 8 This property could serve as a unique location as a
 9 traffic congestion mitigation measure, where people
 10 can get off at Interchange 15X, park here and take
 11 public transportation to American Dream, to and
 12 from American Dream.

13 I think it's important that these things be
 14 looked at at this point in time because, as I said,
 15 it has been 15 years, as you know, that the Master
 16 Plan has been reexamined. The municipality has
 17 also requested that the transportation center zone
 18 be amended and include this property.

19 So in closing, I think it's important that
 20 the Meadowlands Commission through its staff really
 21 understand the value of this property in terms of
 22 meeting your goals and objectives, and I encourage
 23 the commission to really look closely at this.

24 We'll be submitting a report by George
 25 Cascino, which is a significant report, 20 pages

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1 with exhibits, that analyzes the incorporation of
 2 the comments I just provided today, a general
 3 overview. I know I am limited to five minutes. So
 4 it will be a written report submitted in advance of
 5 September 16th, and it will be a written report
 6 submitted with respect to the 155 acres that we
 7 control in Secaucus, that being the Mori property.
 8 Thank you for your time.

9 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you, Mr. Allen.

10 The next person signed up is Bill Sheehan.

11 MR. SHEEHAN: Good morning. I am
 12 Captain Bill Sheehan. I am the Hackensack
 13 Riverkeeper. I found the Hackensack Riverkeeper in
 14 1997 with the primary mission of protecting,
 15 preserving and restoring the natural living and
 16 recreational resources of the entire Hackensack
 17 Watershed. For the record I am also the Chairman
 18 of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust which is in
 19 but not of the New Jersey SEA.

20 I am here this morning to first commend the
 21 NJSEA for the way that, even though the legislature
 22 threw a real curve ball at all of us when they
 23 combined the Meadowlands Commission with the SEA,
 24 the transition was smooth and the 2004 Master Plan
 25 has been carried out the way we envisioned it, the

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1 way everyone envisioned it back then when it was
2 passed by the commissioners, and I still stand
3 behind my words of those days. It's a new dawn in
4 the Meadowlands. Well, continuing that, it's late
5 morning time in the Meadowlands considering the
6 fact that the master plan is 15 years old now.
7 There is a few issues that need to be
8 addressed and I don't see them in the plan, and it
9 may be that it is just not within your purview as a
10 regional planning agency, but one of the major
11 drawbacks that we have in the lower Hackensack
12 River to this day are the fact that there are
13 several combined sewer overflow towns within the
14 Hackensack Watershed: North Bergen, Jersey City,
15 specifically within the district, and just up the
16 river in Hackensack and Ridgefield Park. All
17 together there are 29 outfalls that every time it
18 rains you have the ability to shunt raw sewage,
19 untreated raw sewage directly into the Hackensack
20 River, which then the tide moves around within the
21 river system up and down the creeks and in and out
22 of the wetlands. In order for us to really be able
23 to put a feather in our caps about how we maintain
24 and restore the Hackensack River Watershed, we have
25 to do something about those CSOs.

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1 And we're working with New Jersey DEP, the
2 USEPA and the Clean Water Act. I am sure there is
3 a place at the table for the SEA to come in with
4 their planning to get those towns that do still
5 have combined sewer systems to start addressing the
6 problems in a real and meaningful way, a way that
7 will allow for the recovery of the river.
8 The numbers, I can attest to the number of
9 species that you listed up there on the board a
10 little while ago when you were talking about the
11 natural resources of the district. Those natural
12 resources have improved enormously. In the past
13 week alone I have done several boat tours on the
14 Meadowlands, and on every single one of those tours
15 I have seen either mature eagles or immature eagles
16 that are roosting in the trees. This is a species
17 that if we were lucky back in the '60s and '70s we
18 might see one flying about 2,000 feet in the air as
19 they rapidly beat their wings to get past the
20 Meadowlands, but today they are coming here, they
21 are raising their families and people are really
22 enjoying the fact that we have this iconic species
23 back into our species list and it is really --
24 again some of that credit has to go to the NJSEA
25 for managing the empty space areas and wetlands

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1 area as you do.
2 As far as some of the other problems that I
3 see that need to be addressed, and they need to be
4 addressed in a real way, are the energy needs of
5 the district and how that conflicts with some of
6 the plans that are currently circulating within the
7 State of New Jersey.
8 For instance, in North Bergen there is a
9 plan by the Diamond Generating Company to build a
10 gas-fired fossil fuel power plant which will
11 continue us on the road and on the addiction of
12 fossil fuels for another 60 or 70 years. The
13 district has to take every step they can to prevent
14 that from happening. Otherwise, we're never going
15 to achieve Governor Murphy's goals of renewable
16 energy by 2050. Just do the math and you can see
17 the life cycle of the fossil fuel power plant is
18 much longer than the 30 years we have to 2050. And
19 even though some of us may not be around by then,
20 our children and our children's childrens will be
21 and what kind of a world do we want to leave for
22 those children. That's a question that needs to be
23 asked and needs to be answered, and it should be
24 ingrained in the Master Plan so it becomes -- has
25 some force of law to prevent other speculators from

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1 coming into the Meadowlands and thinking this is
2 the dirty backyard to New York City, that they can
3 get away with doing things here they can't get away
4 with doing in other markets and other areas.
5 The wetlands are doing well. You have
6 Francisco sitting in the back of the room that can
7 attest to this. I can attest to it on a grassroots
8 basis. I am out there all summer long starting in
9 May right through October. We're on the water.
10 We're out on the river. We see everything going
11 on, and we're very, very pleased with the condition
12 of the natural resources except on those days after
13 a big rainstorm, when we know that the water is
14 unswimmable, unfishable, and some day we hope to be
15 able to hold a fishing tournament where everybody
16 doesn't have to throw the fish back, where we can
17 possibly have a fish fry. And the way to do that
18 is to make sure that we continue cleaning up the
19 Meadowlands, cleaning up the river and cleaning up
20 these towns that surround the river and think that
21 the river is nothing more than a disposal site.
22 Well, those days are over and it should be over
23 forever.
24 I can probably spend a lot more time talking
25 about the Meadowlands. I've devoted a big part of

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1 my life to making sense of what is going on here,
 2 and you people have been doing a really good job of
 3 following a lot of those cues that we have given
 4 you over the years.
 5 Thank you very much for your work and on to
 6 2020, and we'll get going with the new reiteration
 7 of the Master Plan and keep those wetlands going
 8 and keep the river going and keep everything going.
 9 It's bringing a lot of people to the region. Thank
 10 you.
 11 MS. SUNDELL: Next person that signed
 12 up is James Tedesco, Bergen County Executive.
 13 MR. TEDESCO: Thank you and good
 14 morning. It's an honor to follow my friend the
 15 Hackensack Riverkeeper this morning. My name is
 16 Jim Tedesco, or James J. Tedesco III officially.
 17 I'm the County Executive of Bergen. The largest
 18 county in the State of New Jersey with a population
 19 of just under a million people, larger than six
 20 states in the nation and the District of Columbia.
 21 Just so you have a bit of a reference.
 22 I'd like to thank you, the New Jersey Sports
 23 & Exposition Authority, for the opportunity - you
 24 have to excuse me a second - to allow Bergen County
 25 to make comments on the updated Master Plan. We

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1 applaud the efforts of the NJSEA in updating the
 2 Master Plan of 2004. Since 2004 significant
 3 changes have occurred in many aspects of
 4 governance, policy making, land use, environment,
 5 climate, the economy, finance and infrastructure
 6 implementation and transportation. Bergen County
 7 hopes that the plan will describe new approaches,
 8 goals and objectives that will be innovative and
 9 creative and serve as a cornerstone of the
 10 document.
 11 The county believes that many studies and
 12 regulations will need to be undertaken after this
 13 document is adopted. We believe that sound
 14 planning and the implementation will occur if land
 15 use, circulation, environmental protection,
 16 preservation and resiliency initiatives are
 17 considered and adapted in tandem.
 18 My comments today are focused on the
 19 flooding problems in the district. The NJSEA
 20 continues to do an excellent job with the flood
 21 insurance rate maps and making sure developments
 22 meet the finished floor elevation of one foot above
 23 the firmly established base flood elevation. The
 24 county is pleased that this information is included
 25 in the plan. We must also acknowledge the

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1 continuing participation in the FEMA Community
 2 Rating System, saving property owners 15 percent on
 3 the flood insurance.
 4 In the summary of activities implemented to
 5 mitigate flood impacts in Section 5, pages five
 6 through nine, A through J, we are pleased the NJSEA
 7 will continue to collect and assess flooding
 8 incidents and monitoring the water levels
 9 throughout the district. We also believe that the
 10 Rutgers University Meadowlands Environment Research
 11 Institute Flood Warning System should be given more
 12 significant emphasis.
 13 Climate change is real. We hope that it is
 14 not too late to reverse course. We can no longer
 15 deny that we have met a critical crossroads.
 16 Studies monitoring and capturing data are needed to
 17 solve the problematic flooding situation faced by
 18 the municipalities, businesses and the county.
 19 The county believes that the NJSEA should
 20 take full responsibility for planning, construction
 21 and maintenance for all aspects of flooding.
 22 Controlling flooding is an economic development
 23 issue dealing with jobs, property values and
 24 transportation. The NJMC, the Meadowlands
 25 Conservation Trust, Riverkeeper and other

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1 environmental organizations have done an excellent
 2 job in showing us how green infrastructure is an
 3 excellent approach to store floodwater. We should
 4 continue to expand our efforts in the increased
 5 wetlands acreage. For the hard infrastructure that
 6 has been in place for decades, we need to address
 7 what works and how we will maintain what we have
 8 and how we make it better and more functional.
 9 The NJMC did replace the West Riser Tide
 10 Gate. The county entered into a memorandum of
 11 agreement with the NJMC. In that MOA Bergen County
 12 was to maintain the tide gate and keep the trash
 13 racks clear of debris. Bergen County Department of
 14 Public Works and the county's Mosquito Commission
 15 are in the forefront to address critical
 16 maintenance to Bergen County areas. Considering we
 17 have 70 municipalities in Bergen County with miles
 18 and miles of waterways, tide gates and pumps, we
 19 can only do so much.
 20 The Hackensack Meadowlands Floodplain
 21 Management Plan was adopted on October 26, 2005,
 22 creating a new mechanism for addressing,
 23 identifying and addressing flood hazards in the
 24 district. The plan included a series of measures
 25 to mitigate flood impacts within the district,

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1 including flood incident and water level
2 monitoring, drainage system management and
3 improvements in flood warning systems. The NJSEA
4 is currently developing a new comprehensive FMP to
5 be finalized by October 2022. The consolidation
6 law that joined New Jersey Meadowlands Commission
7 and NJSEA is clear, and I quote, to undertake all
8 necessary steps to develop plans and undertake
9 flood control projects and to maintain and
10 construct necessary flood structures and ditches.

11 The law further allows the agency to, one,
12 identify all drainage basins in the district and
13 any drainage areas that impact the district and,
14 two, develop strategies to address the major causes
15 of flooding. The commission may, one, use special
16 assessment powers to fund flood control projects in
17 or near the drainage areas that impact the
18 Hackensack Meadowlands and, two, maintain flood
19 control infrastructure that is constructed.

20 We ask that this problem be addressed by
21 developing a new flood management plan and by
22 giving priority to the obligations in your
23 legislation. I want to take this opportunity to
24 make you understand how much the County of Bergen
25 wants to work with the NJSEA. We want to be a

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1 partner with you. Much of that map that you put up
2 there is in the County of Bergen. We implore you
3 to work closer with our planning people so that we
4 can come up with a beautiful and comprehensive plan
5 that works for all the people, not only Bergen
6 County but Hudson County and Passaic County, so the
7 people of this state can enjoy the beauty, the
8 splendor and the clean air they so rightly deserve.

9 I thank you for giving me the time to
10 address you this morning. Thank you.

11 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you, County
12 Executive. The next person on our list is George
13 Cascino.

14 MR. CASCINO: I'm sorry, Sara, I'm
15 not scheduled to speak today.

16 MS. SUNDELL: No problem. We'll go
17 to the next person. Thank you. The next
18 individual signed up is Dr. Thomas Brennan.

19 MR. PHILLIPS: Good morning. I'm not
20 Thomas Brennan. I am David Phillips from Sills,
21 Cummis & Gross. We have four people here to speak
22 on the Towers Associates property on Paterson Plank
23 Road in Secaucus. We will be brief but we would
24 like to go in our particular order, if you don't
25 mind. If you want us to move a little bit back in

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1 the proceeding and let other people go first, that
2 would be fine. It will be myself, Tom Brennan,
3 Steve Lydon and Leonard Gero.

4 MS. SUNDELL: Okay. Everyone has
5 five minutes.

6 MR. PHILLIPS: Do you want us to jump
7 in right now or do you want us to wait?

8 MS. SUNDELL: You can go in the order
9 that you said because you are pretty much lined up
10 here. So go in the order that you choose.

11 MR. PHILLIPS: We submitted written
12 materials yesterday. I have copies if you'd like
13 to have copies in front of you.

14 MS. SUNDELL: I think we have copies.
15 Thank you.

16 MR. PHILLIPS: As I said, my name is
17 David Phillips from Sills, Cummis & Gross. We
18 represent Towers Associates Limited. Towers
19 Associates owns the property on Paterson Plank Road
20 which has the Home Depot in it in between the exit
21 from the New Jersey Turnpike and the entrance to
22 Route 3.

23 Behind us is a property which is proposed to
24 be moved from one zone into the new employment
25 center zone. This would accommodate a high-volume

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1 warehouse distribution building to be built in the
2 back there. That would put a tremendous amount of
3 truck traffic on the road into the Home Depot and
4 back on Paterson Plank Road.

5 While I won't repeat what we put into our
6 written submissions, I want to emphasize one point.
7 That point is that Towers Associates submitted to
8 the NJSEA several OPRA requests looking for
9 documentation supporting the decision to change
10 this particular property to an employment center.

11 The response was there are no documents, and to me
12 and to Towers that indicates there was no basis for
13 making this employment center and allowing the
14 high-volume high-cube warehouse distribution center
15 to go in the back with the truck traffic and van
16 traffic which will clog up the Home Depot access.
17 It will diminish the value of the property both for
18 the Home Depot and for our building, potential
19 building in the back. It will impact on the Hilton
20 Hotel next to it and on the traffic on Paterson
21 Plank Road.

22 Following me is Tom Brennan, who is our
23 traffic expert, and then we will have Steve Lydon,
24 our planning expert, and then Len Gero, a member of
25 Towers Associates. Thank you.

50

1 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you.

2 Dr BRENNAN: Hello. I am Dr. Thomas

3 Brennan. So I am speaking basically about the

4 draft master plan. I'm not here to attack anybody.

5 I think everybody has done a pretty good job with

6 the master plan. It was a very difficult task to

7 put forth. However, I am just pointing out a

8 logical flaw. I am speaking as a traffic engineer,

9 Ph.D. in traffic engineering. I'm a licensed

10 professional engineer in State of New Jersey.

11 But just taking a look at the plan itself,

12 there is one glaring thing in the property that was

13 just mentioned. It stands out as noncompatible

14 with the back end of the shared driveway. So

15 overall the Draft 2020 Master Plan is a very good

16 objective. I thought everything was very, very

17 sound. Everything made sense. It looked good for

18 a bright future. But it brings attention to that

19 location.

20 Noncompatible uses on a shared driveway will

21 cause issues. And very simply, put it this way, I

22 am pretty sure a planner or engineer is not going

23 to put an industrial use in a residential area.

24 Why would you do that? I know these are rhetorical

25 questions you can't answer. But let me point out

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1 the fact that it is the same issues that you have

2 placing an industrial use in a commercial area,

3 increased traffic, more trucks, increased

4 congestion. That congestion could potentially and

5 will back up onto the New Jersey Turnpike with the

6 increased truck traffic.

7 Forced interaction between different vehicle

8 types. People taking their children to school.

9 People taking their children to retail centers,

10 going to commercial retail centers are not used to

11 large amounts of trucks especially on a shared

12 driveway. If you are entering Home Depot or

13 entering a restaurant or a hotel, you don't want a

14 lot of truck traffic coming in. It is going to

15 cause crash incidents. It is going to increase

16 interactions with different types of vehicles. The

17 same residents use those commercial retail that use

18 the residential area. So placing an industrial in

19 a commercial retail area has the same impact.

20 The comprehensive plan, the Draft Master

21 Plan had a number of items regarding complete

22 streets and multimodal. Logically again the

23 industrial uses are not going to achieve any of

24 those objectives, especially in the very small

25 commercial retail area. An industrial use shares

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1 no trips. An industrial use only draws trips for

2 an industrial use. And to that point if somebody

3 is going to Home Depot, they could also go to a

4 restaurant. They could also go to a movie theater.

5 What they are not going to do is go to the

6 industrial use. The plan opened up that use not

7 just for a warehouse, as was previously spoken

8 about, but it opens up the use for the next 20, 30

9 years potentially, and you don't want an industrial

10 use in a commercial retail area. This is the

11 opportunity to bring people in. This is the

12 opportunity to bring pedestrians to walk into the

13 commercial retail. Industrial use accomplishes

14 none of that. Opening up an industrial use will be

15 a detriment to the commercial retail in the area.

16 I found no comprehensive study that showed

17 the logic being applied here. I found no data from

18 the master plan, which is put in, and I believe it

19 was 127 traffic signals that are supposed to

20 improve the traffic in the area. I saw nothing

21 that stated support from this master plan. It was

22 a \$12.5 million adaptive traffic signal control

23 system put in place, but nothing was in the plan

24 that said we used this to support this change.

25 I will be pretty brief. In short, the one

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1 glaring omission could overshadow the hard work

2 that these planners put together to put this whole

3 2020 Master Plan together. So that's pretty much

4 all I had to say.

5 Lots of congestion is going to be caused by

6 putting the industrial use. It's going to back up

7 on Paterson Plank Road. It is going to make those

8 traffic signals not operate optimally, and it is

9 going to push traffic onto the New Jersey Turnpike.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you, Dr. Brennan.

12 Next, Mr. Lydon.

13 MR. LYDON: Good morning, friends.

14 For the record, Steve Lydon. And my focus on my

15 brief comments today are going to be the proposed

16 Land Use Plan and, in fact, a small portion of the

17 Land Use Plan. It's a portion of the Land Use Plan

18 that is corralled, if you will, by Paterson Plank

19 Road, Route 3 and Route 495. For short I call it

20 the study area. And that study area I am kind of

21 addressing for a number of reasons.

22 First of all, it's in two municipalities.

23 It's in the Township of North Bergen and it's in

24 the Town of Secaucus. The proposed Land Use Plan

25 puts it in two different land use classifications.

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1 One is the employment center and the other one is a
 2 commercial center. After reviewing the master plan
 3 in context with the Land Use Plan, I've come to
 4 some findings.

5 First, the Land Use Plan as applied to the
 6 study area, and only the study area, turns back the
 7 clock to 1970. I say 1970 because that is when the
 8 earlier master plan put this area, the entire area,
 9 into a light industrial and warehouse A zone. I
 10 know we're not talking about zones, we are talking
 11 about land use classifications, but zoning
 12 classifications follow land use classifications.
 13 We are trying to turn the clock back for a portion
 14 of the study area to 1970.

15 The overall master plan themes in my
 16 estimation include two, mobility and smart growth,
 17 application of smart growth planning principles.
 18 Placing the study area in the commercial center
 19 furthers and is consistent with those master plan
 20 themes. However, placing a portion of the study
 21 area in a land use classification that encourages
 22 the development of a distribution center and other
 23 industrial type uses is contrary to achieving these
 24 master plan themes and works against the
 25 implementation of the master plan.

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1 Placing a portion of the study area in an
 2 employment center is internally consistent with
 3 several master plan goals and objectives, and these
 4 would include to promote a suitable array of land
 5 uses that encourage economic vitality with job
 6 creation, to foster the Meadowlands economy in a
 7 manner that stimulates job growth and prosperity
 8 and, third, to promote a regional transportation
 9 network that improves the mobility of people and
 10 freight, fuels economic development and minimizes
 11 the negative impacts on the environment.

12 And one of the findings that I have come to
 13 or one of the reasons I come to these findings is
 14 that retail development takes a huge chunk of its
 15 traffic from drivers already on the road, bypass
 16 traffic. Industrial development, as Dr. Brennan
 17 mentioned before me, is sole use traffic. The
 18 nature of that traffic is different. It is cars
 19 versus trucks. We're not talking necessarily small
 20 trucks. We are talking large trucks as well as
 21 small trucks.

22 And then, in addition, the boundary between
 23 the two land use classifications was established by
 24 following the municipal boundary line separating
 25 Secaucus from North Bergen. I believe use of

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1 municipal boundary lines to separate incompatible
 2 land use classifications makes little planning
 3 sense. However, I do think overall the master plan
 4 is a good document and I applaud you for your
 5 efforts and thank you for this opportunity to speak
 6 this morning. Thank you.

7 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you, Mr. Lydon.
 8 Mr. Gero.

9 MR. GERO: Good morning. I am
 10 Leonard Gero, one of the principals of Towers
 11 Associates. I'd like to compliment the board on
 12 their concentration of improving transportation and
 13 environmental conditions in the Meadowlands, which
 14 is part of your presentation.

15 However, I think in our particular case
 16 where we own the Home Depot, and we have given
 17 massive information to the panel of the terrible
 18 congestion in that location over the years, which
 19 is continuing to get worse prior to the opening of
 20 the American Dream mall, I don't understand if that
 21 is the basis for this master plan, why they would
 22 increase traffic at this 40-acre island which sits
 23 at the first intersection of all the major roads in
 24 New Jersey and where it is already at a failure
 25 rate during all the peak hours. You have been

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1 presented with that information. So I don't know
 2 the explanation for that but it certainly contrary
 3 to what you're saying in your proposal there.

4 To give you a little background, we
 5 purchased about five properties that were dirty
 6 industrial properties in the '80s, put together a
 7 clean site and a Home Depot servicing the public,
 8 and designed all roads to handle vehicular
 9 automobile traffic. There was a proposed shopping
 10 center for the rear part of the site. All the
 11 roadwork, all the design is for automobiles. This
 12 is not an industrial site. We cannot have an
 13 industrial use sharing the driveway which is an
 14 automobile designed driveway with heavy trucking in
 15 the back, and we have had indications from Home
 16 Depot they will vacate the site because of this as
 17 soon as their lease is up.

18 Home Depot provides Secaucus with about
 19 250,000 -- \$350,000 a year in taxes. Since they
 20 have been there they have paid the town \$7 million
 21 just in real estate taxes. In addition to all the
 22 sales taxes collected by the state. So I'm not too
 23 sure what's going on here. Because if you are
 24 going to eradicate something like this, they also
 25 have 200 jobs that people are working for the

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1 community at the store. It's a clean use. It's in
2 conjunction with the zoning and it is beneficial to
3 the community because it has shopping.
4 Now, as our traffic gentleman said, the
5 reason any community and planner has a site -- this
6 is an island of 40 acres with four owners. Our
7 driveway is shared by the 20-acre site behind us
8 and our 11-acre site, which incorporates Home Depot
9 and a proposed hotel site, which would bring more
10 revenue to the area. But in planning anywhere that
11 I have been involved, in different states, the idea
12 is when you have an area that is confirmed that
13 basically you can't get off of the area other than
14 one driveway, you want to keep the vehicles in the
15 area. So you have compatible things. You have a
16 hotel, retail, fast food. You don't put other uses
17 in there that aren't compatible because you
18 generate more trips and you create a climate where
19 a woman with a child coming to Home Depot is facing
20 a 70-foot truck, one after another, going through
21 the aisles. Something has to go. Something is
22 incorrect here, and it is a serious problem and
23 will diminish the environmental conditions which
24 you are trying to improve.
25 And knowing where it is at that juncture

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1 right now, it's holding up Route 3, it's holding up
2 New Jersey Turnpike, and the buses that service the
3 community running on Paterson Plank Road will be
4 stopped. So I don't understand. Maybe somebody
5 could explain it to me. But anyway I rest my
6 case.
7 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you, Mr. Gero.
8 Next individual that we have signed up to speak is
9 Gary Jeffas.
10 MR. JEFFAS: Thank you. Good
11 morning. First and foremost, thanks for putting
12 the effort that you have into the master plan. We
13 see based on the binder all the work. Obviously,
14 it was an overwhelming task to say the least. But
15 I am going try to keep my comments to the town
16 generally and some either concerns or points we
17 want to make.
18 First off, the Malanka, I will call it the
19 Malanka landfill, which has already been spoken
20 about by Mr. Allen. Currently under the new plan
21 that would fall under the Sustainable Upland
22 Reserve and Preserve category. I trust that you
23 guys are aware that it's right next to the
24 Lautenberg Train Station. Secaucus has supported
25 development of a parking facility there because it

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1 is a much needed facility in that area. There were
2 discussions, submissions they were going to have
3 about the transportation center zone for that
4 location, I would believe for your better
5 evaluations, because the greater plans evolving
6 there would obviously be a concern of Secaucus and
7 how that would impact it, what would happen with
8 convention centers, etc., etc. But the town has
9 supported a parking plan at that facility. And so
10 we do feel that the current zone that you have
11 there is kind of not supportive of the direction
12 that the town was going for for the use of that
13 land.
14 Second site which has just been spoken to by
15 a number of people, which I call the Daffy site, I
16 think we all know that's the Towers Associates
17 site. The majority of this site is in North
18 Bergen. However, the outlet of this site as
19 indicated is on Paterson Plank Road in Secaucus.
20 It's currently in the industrial zone seeking to
21 change to an employment zone.
22 Our main concern is what essentially has
23 been discussed. Paterson Plank Road right now is a
24 failure. It's a failure in the morning and a
25 failure in the evening rush. So depending on the

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1 zoning there and the ability to have a high-volume
2 trucking going in and out does create concerns for
3 Secaucus from a traffic perspective. So really our
4 concern relates to the ingress and egress. So all
5 of the impact will be in Secaucus.
6 We're not worried about obviously the
7 ratables, not ours, but Home Depot is there and we
8 have had a personal visit by the owner of the
9 Hilton Gardens, which abuts it, also with some
10 similar concerns. So we just ask you to please
11 take those into consideration when making the final
12 determination on that site and the impact that
13 traffic would have to the town, specifically the
14 truck traffic in that area.
15 Just on a simple note, The Harper. The
16 Harper is a residential community and I am sure I
17 can probably -- your final designation is there.
18 It seems to be indicated on your map as a
19 commercial center but it is a neighborhood center,
20 just a sliver, The Harper, and the industrial area.
21 The floodplain management, Secaucus has
22 great concern on floodplains. We have been doing a
23 whole lot on flood protection. In the master plan
24 you indicate that Floodplain Management Plan is
25 expected to completed in October 2022. Our main

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1 concern is that would it make more sense to try to
 2 complete that plan in conjunction with this. It's
 3 probably not possible at this point in time, but
 4 just so all the land use designations are being
 5 most properly set to minimize -- or to maximize all
 6 flood protection.

7 Transportation. Secaucus lives and dies on
 8 transportation. We trust you're aware how Route 3
 9 is impacted, specifically our main arteries in and
 10 out of town. People from Secaucus morning and
 11 afternoon rush cannot get out of town. With the
 12 opening of American Dream we certainly are
 13 concerned about the worsening of these conditions,
 14 and we just want to ensure that master plan is
 15 thoroughly looking at all the issues related to
 16 this, integrated rail, integrated bus, and the time
 17 frames on updating the transportation plan. A good
 18 example of this would be American Dream.

19 In 2004 when the master plan was done,
 20 American Dream was almost here and we had millions
 21 of dollars in upgrades to systems and rail
 22 transportation. Secaucus is very disappointed, not
 23 that it has to do with you, that now New Jersey
 24 Transit can't run a train to American Dream or is
 25 not willing to or, if they are, it would be done

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1 very sporadically because the rail system seems to
 2 not be able to accommodate a continuous train going
 3 back and forth. So another 40 million people not
 4 being able to use mass transit as we had hoped is
 5 concerning to us.

6 Just as a matter of note, the town promotes
 7 electric vehicle usage. We encourage our business
 8 owners during zoning review to consider EV usage,
 9 how they can do that. We think it may be -- in
 10 fact, our Environmental Director, Amanda Nesheiwat,
 11 worked with the NJTPA and mapped out the town, the
 12 high demand area for EVs. We just think maybe
 13 something in the master plan could put in to
 14 promote EV use that may be in zoning reviews and
 15 stuff like that. We push, we push for that to
 16 happen.

17 On a final note, I am trying to stick to my
 18 five minutes and hit quick. The Sports and
 19 Entertainment District, what we call the American
 20 Dream, that's essentially removed not from the
 21 district but from the NJSEA as far as oversight.
 22 This project is going to have a significant impact
 23 on our district, everybody in the Meadowlands
 24 District, including Secaucus significantly.
 25 It is our opinion in Secaucus that the mayor

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1 should have some say in control over the complex.
 2 What is developed there impacts on the community.
 3 We think there should be some language in the
 4 master plan laying out that if there is further
 5 development within the American Dream complex or
 6 the Sports and Entertainment District, that the
 7 mayors of the communities will have a direct say in
 8 that. We would love to have that control to have
 9 remained fully with the NJSEA so that the Mayors'
 10 Committee and whatnot would be able to protect
 11 their communities really from the impacts. So if
 12 there is any way to put in the master plan that if
 13 there is to be further development and what the
 14 developments are, that there would be significant
 15 involvement from all the area mayors so they can
 16 control the greatest impacts on their communities.

17 Thank you for your time and again thanks for
 18 all work on the plan.

19 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you Mr. Jeffas.
 20 I think the last person that we have signed up is
 21 Jim Kirkos.

22 MR. KIRKOS: Good morning. Jim
 23 Kirkos, president/CEO of Meadowlands Regional
 24 Chamber of Commerce. So before I address and read
 25 some comments, I think what I'd like to do is offer

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1 a little bit of prelude to my comments.
 2 I have been at this podium or microphone a
 3 number of times over the last 17 years, as I have
 4 led this organization, and I come here today as
 5 both an individual that built a business and raised
 6 a family right here in the Meadowlands, in
 7 Lyndhurst, and I still live in Lyndhurst, someone
 8 that runs an organization who is responsible for
 9 almost 1,200 company members within the region, and
 10 my comments have been crafted by a Master Plan
 11 Committee that you were gracious to allow us to
 12 participate as a stakeholder. One of the proud
 13 moments for me is that while that Master Plan
 14 Committee was made up of a very diverse group of
 15 land use attorneys and property owners and other
 16 business stakeholders that had long experience and
 17 investment in the region, I asked them to check all
 18 their own self-interests at the door and to come
 19 and help me evaluate and review the Master Plan
 20 Update from a subjective experience and they did
 21 just that. And I think -- I hope you feel the same
 22 way that our conversations during the process were
 23 pointed and meant to be helpful for both parties
 24 concerned.
 25 So the Meadowlands Regional Chamber since

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1 the '70s has acknowledged the special significant
 2 importance of a comprehensive master plan in the
 3 Meadowlands District. Over the five decades that
 4 the chamber has worked in collaborative partnership
 5 with the HMDC, the New Jersey Meadowlands
 6 Commission and now the NJSEA, that open and candid
 7 dialogue has, we are certain, fostered and
 8 furthered the interests of not only the citizens of
 9 New Jersey but most importantly the interests of
 10 the New Jerseyans that reside in the 14 constituent
 11 municipalities that apprise the district. Those
 12 municipalities are also home to many hundreds, if
 13 not thousands, of businesses ranging in size from
 14 small local mom-and-pop businesses to very large
 15 internationally based ventures.

16 The initial Master Plan, a product that was
 17 born of rigorous academic and practical planning
 18 experience, resulted in a well-deserved national
 19 recognition of the high quality of the planning
 20 effort. The results throughout the decades
 21 following the '70s confirmed that the initial
 22 accolades of that plan itself, functioning under
 23 the leadership of committed commissioners and
 24 dedicated staff, furthered the planning objectives
 25 of a true regional planning entity. Regulatory

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1 changes in the '70s and '80s as well as economic,
 2 political occurrences did not compel an immediate
 3 reworking of the 1970 plan.

4 As we know, the plan was revised in a
 5 comprehensive manner for the first time in 2004.
 6 The current draft plan, as staff has stated, is
 7 really a review update of the 2004 Master Plan.
 8 And as such, it reiterates much of the initial
 9 planning perspective.

10 The focus of the Chamber's comments,
 11 therefore, recognize the shared history of the
 12 district, the Meadowlands Commission, now the
 13 NJSEA, and the Chamber. Over last decade the
 14 Chamber has continually and consistently advocated
 15 for a reexamination, updating of the master plan,
 16 so we can leverage every single opportunity to grow
 17 the economy and improve the quality of life in the
 18 greater Meadowlands. As such, the Chamber greatly
 19 acknowledges the commission's response and the
 20 efforts of the staff in presenting the Hackensack
 21 Meadowlands District Master Plan Update 2020.

22 The comprehensive nature of the master plan
 23 review presents much to think about. There is a
 24 great deal to discuss and a substantial challenge
 25 as we address the issues identified in the

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1 document. The Chamber believes it is essential the
 2 NJSEA enjoy the full support of the current
 3 administration in Trenton now and in the coming
 4 years. Of course, full support of both houses of
 5 the legislature is also critical in providing the
 6 financial commitment and resources necessary to
 7 empower the NJSEA and the staff to accomplish the
 8 full implementation of the plan.

9 The plan in our opinion requires and calls
 10 for the continued collaboration from the Chamber
 11 leadership and business stakeholders. The
 12 Chamber's 1,200 members afford all the interested
 13 parties both a practical and political reality of a
 14 large membership base with many tens of thousands
 15 of employees who work and in many instances reside
 16 in the constituent municipalities and the immediate
 17 surrounding area. We are convinced that the
 18 interests of those employees, wherever they reside,
 19 are coincident with the goals and objectives of the
 20 Chamber and its members.

21 In recent years the Chamber's affiliate, the
 22 Meadowlands Regional 2040 Foundation, an economic
 23 development based foundation, advanced a 2040
 24 Vision Plan. Over 12 months of engaging public and
 25 private entities to formulate a broad vision, whose

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1 goals and objectives were very similar to that of
 2 the original master plan. The 2040 Vision Plan was
 3 endorsed by over a dozen local mayors and public
 4 officials as well as the leadership of both the
 5 2040 Foundation trustees and the Chamber's Board of
 6 Advisors.

7 Of the top three priorities outlined in that
 8 Vision Plan we call for a repurpose of the NJSEA
 9 into a next generation regional planning authority.
 10 We recognize that the merger of the NJMC into the
 11 NJSEA presented challenges but it also presented
 12 opportunities. We are at a moment in time when the
 13 confluence of investments in projects like American
 14 Dream, Kingsland redevelopment, among others, can
 15 be leveraged to maximize positive regional impact
 16 but only if we carefully plan out the
 17 implementation and only if we have the authority
 18 and a road map that can lead us into the next 25
 19 years of sustained economic growth.

20 The Draft Master Plan updates a wealth of
 21 data and examines changes since the 2004 Master
 22 Plan. Given the constraints of the statutory
 23 deadline for this review, it appears that detailed
 24 plans to address the challenges facing the district
 25 will need to be developed through future studies.

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1 It is urgent that there is a commitment to
 2 undertake these studies in a timely manner, and the
 3 focus of those studies should encompass the
 4 following:
 5 Number one priority for the Chamber is
 6 transportation. The Draft Master Plan indicates an
 7 updated transportation plan is underway. This
 8 effort is essential especially with the advent of
 9 American Dream. As a regional planning entity the
 10 NJSEA has a critically important role. The plan
 11 should be comprehensive, going beyond the potential
 12 expansion of the MASSTR system and include the
 13 following: One, how the district affects and is
 14 affected by regional transportation system and
 15 connection to New York and continued improvement
 16 plans and investments.
 17 Two, how to support and effect an Amtrak
 18 stop at Secaucus Junction and implementation of the
 19 Bergen BRT.
 20 Three, the role of major transit hubs in the
 21 district and improving access to and from them.
 22 Four, strengthening the Secaucus Junction as
 23 a regional multimodal transit center, including bus
 24 routes and the phase two loop.
 25 Five, improving mobility intra-district for

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1 destination patrons, employees, employment centers
 2 and the surrounding communities and identifying
 3 potential strategies including shuttle routes and
 4 mini BRTs.
 5 Six, identification of funding alternatives
 6 for MASSTR to free up fees for other projects.
 7 Seven, identification of strategies for last
 8 mile access to employment centers.
 9 And, eight, a reexamination of the
 10 development fee formula.
 11 The Meadowlands Transportation Planning
 12 District Board should be reconstituted and used as
 13 a resource for transportation solutions and
 14 interagency coordination.
 15 Housing. A housing study that results in a
 16 long-term policy should be advanced. Again
 17 American Dream and other significant developments
 18 exacerbate the need for this. Given the projected
 19 level of employees and the desirability of
 20 minimizing commuter travel and traffic congestion,
 21 the study should, one, examine the provision of
 22 affordable housing and the obligations and
 23 settlements that have been achieved by district
 24 municipalities, including the location of proposed
 25 affordable housing and planning implications. A

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1 new look at current data will allow for better
 2 planning.
 3 Review options for legislative action that
 4 can encourage housing production by reducing the
 5 mandated 20 percent set-aside that is being
 6 achieved in district municipal settlements.
 7 Consistent requirements on both sides of the
 8 boundary.
 9 Three, examine zoning regulations for
 10 amendments that can foster a range of housing types
 11 and densities.
 12 Four, replace the interim policy on
 13 affordable housing with a permanent policy and
 14 review whether site suitability analysis is still
 15 necessary for zoning compliant nonresidential
 16 applications.
 17 Five, review how new residential
 18 developments can be supported and integrated with
 19 existing communities.
 20 Flood controls and resiliency. The draft
 21 cites updates to the Hackensack Meadowlands
 22 Floodplain Maintenance Plan, which was developed in
 23 2005, and is a requirement for participation in the
 24 flood insurance program ratings. An updated plan
 25 to be truly comprehensive may need to go beyond the

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1 scope of the CRS requirements. The potential for
 2 continued sea level rise and flooding from weather
 3 events are a major concern for existing property
 4 owners as well as a disincentive for new
 5 investment.
 6 One, we should clarify and strengthen the
 7 statutory authority as may be necessary for the
 8 NJSEA to manage flood control in the district.
 9 Two, develop a plan for protection of
 10 existing developed areas and critical facilities,
 11 recognizing the need to plan on a drainage basin
 12 basis.
 13 Three, develop an institutional strategy for
 14 ongoing repair and maintenance of flood control
 15 structures.
 16 And, four, identify the potential for
 17 effective coordination with Rebuild By Design
 18 projects and the Bergen County Parks master plan
 19 study for locating structural and nonstructural
 20 flood control and mitigation measures.
 21 Economic development and tourism
 22 development. The draft does not contemplate a
 23 substantial role in overall economic development.
 24 A comprehensive economic development strategic plan
 25 should be prepared and a detailed review of the

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1 role tourism will play as a component of an overall
 2 economic development must take place. Elements to
 3 be addressed could include: Identify strategies to
 4 attract and retain business investments and
 5 relocations.

6 Target surplus revenues from hotel
 7 surcharges over the needed requirements for tax
 8 sharing to be allocated to promote and market the
 9 Meadowlands region as a primary destination. This
 10 element will have a great impact on local main
 11 street businesses throughout the district.

12 Outline the role of the NJSEA in
 13 collaborating with area groups to identify
 14 development sites. Inventory underutilized assets
 15 and brownfields and develop strategies and
 16 incentives to encourage that development.

17 Examine economic trends and identify
 18 industry targets for attraction. Example, how to
 19 use entertainment and sports as a generator to
 20 foster related business activities and leverage the
 21 investment that's taking place already in the
 22 district.

23 Communicate with businesses to identify
 24 needs and obstacles on an ongoing basis.

25 Regulatory modernization. This is a study

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1 of action that most immediately affects the
 2 constituents closest to land use and development in
 3 the district. The draft identifies trends in the
 4 data. For example, the growth of e-commerce and
 5 the role of logistics and distribution in
 6 generating jobs, but the plan does not propose how
 7 the regulations will address evolving physical
 8 designs and technology. Similarly, the objective
 9 of efficiency and customer services are noted but
 10 actions to further those goals need to be
 11 identified and implemented into the daily process.

12 We should examine and revise zoning
 13 regulations to reflect evolving business needs as
 14 evidenced by similar zoning variance and waiver
 15 requests to determine new zoning district
 16 designations.

17 Where needed, address support uses for new
 18 residential communities.

19 Incorporate flexibility in use and reuse of
 20 buildings to address innovative business concepts.

21 Determine if amendments are needed to
 22 support flood control measures on individual
 23 properties.

24 Review parking and bulk standards in
 25 connection with the recent use and reuse requests.

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1 Revise redevelopment regulations for more
 2 consistency with state, local redevelopment and
 3 housing law. And review procedural changes to
 4 improve efficiency of minor applications without
 5 the need for full zoning certificate applications
 6 and utilize LSRP-style elements that have been very
 7 successful where implemented.

8 In closing, while this Master Plan Update
 9 offers an excellent summary of existing conditions
 10 and attempts to build in the flexibility needed to
 11 advance plan initiatives, while taking a deeper
 12 dive into specific studies, it is clear
 13 collaborative work must be continued.

14 The Chamber stands ready to work with and
 15 support the NJSEA on these initiatives to help
 16 achieve a vibrant and prosperous future and great
 17 quality of life in the Meadowlands, and I thank you
 18 for allowing me this time.

19 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you.

20 Are there any other members of the public
 21 who wish to provide a comment today?

22 MR. FREUDENBERG: Good morning,
 23 everyone. My name is Rob Freudenberg. I am the
 24 Vice President of Energy & Environment at Regional
 25 Plan Association. Thank you for the opportunity to

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1 provide our comments on this important plan.

2 RPA is America's oldest urban research and
 3 advocacy organization working to improve the
 4 health, equity, sustainable and prosperity of the
 5 New Jersey-New York-Connecticut metropolitan
 6 region. We pursue these goals by conducting
 7 independent research, planning, advocacy and
 8 vigorous public engagement efforts.

9 In our 2017 4th Regional Plan we highlighted
 10 a portion of the Meadowlands as an environmental
 11 treasure worthy of continued protection,
 12 restoration and remediation, a network of
 13 communities where hundreds of thousands of
 14 residents live, a major industrial and commercial
 15 employment center and tourist attraction and a
 16 critical convergence of transportation, energy and
 17 water infrastructure that literally keeps the
 18 region moving, powered and thriving.

19 So it is with great respect that we provide
 20 our comments on the Draft 2019 Hackensack
 21 Meadowlands District Master Plan Update:

22 Respect for those who worked for decades to
 23 make this place the success it is today, and
 24 respect for those who continue to work to ensure a
 25 strong resilient future ahead. These are certainly

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1 not mutually exclusive parties.

2 So we stand before you today in

3 unfortunately uncertain times. In decades past we

4 could have some reasonable assurance that the

5 goings-on of everyday life today would be similar

6 to the goings-on of everyday life in the future.

7 But because of a very tenuous and toxic political

8 atmosphere and a climate crisis that threatens

9 every aspect of our communities, environment and

10 economy, we cannot plan for the future today the

11 way we have planned for the future in the past.

12 We have entered uncharted territory.

13 So after a thorough review of the draft 2019

14 plan we commend the Sports & Exposition Authority

15 for advancing the planning process after many years

16 of not advancing. The draft 2019 plan is

17 comprehensive and effective in covering all of the

18 relevant elements and the addition of a section on

19 resiliency was a necessary and welcome decision.

20 RPA offers the following comments largely

21 focused on threats that climate change presents to

22 the Meadowlands and the need for more proactive

23 planning and policies.

24 In general we need to face the climate

25 crisis today. We commend the inclusion of this

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1 section on the draft 2019 plan focused on the

2 threats posed by climate change, including the

3 permanent flooding from sea level rise. We feel

4 that it falls far short of what is needed at this

5 time. The right time to start comprehensively

6 planning for climate impact has already passed but

7 the next best time to start is now, and this plan

8 offers the best mechanism to do that in addition to

9 the upcoming Floodplain Management Plan.

10 Adaption is difficult because it is

11 literally changing what we are currently doing.

12 State and local leaders have a critical

13 responsibility to advance these challenging

14 conversations, take action, and find a better

15 future than the path we're currently on.

16 So we think that climate resilience should

17 be better integrated through the plan and beyond.

18 The impacts of climate change in particular from

19 flooding precipitation, storm surge and sea level

20 rise present an existential threat to many

21 Meadowlands communities, businesses, infrastructure

22 and ecology. Rather than single out resilience and

23 adaption as a separate section of the plan, we

24 recommend that the Sports & Exposition Authority

25 should integrate climate resilience into all the

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1 other sections of the plan. Future land use,

2 development, housing, environmental and economic

3 and circulation decisions must factor in the

4 threats from climate change and the final master

5 plan should address that.

6 Studying the exact approaches to resiliency

7 and adaption can be done in the future, but a

8 master plan's purpose is to set the framework for

9 decision making, and the decisions made today, from

10 where additional development is encouraged to which

11 wetlands are at risk and should be protected, will

12 certainly be influenced by climate change.

13 We also urge the New Jersey Sports &

14 Exposition Authority to consider the creation of a

15 climate resilient park. RPA's 4th Regional Plan

16 advanced the idea of the park that expands its

17 boundaries as sea levels rise. The park would also

18 serve to educate about climate change and its

19 impacts. Given the importance of the Meadowlands

20 and the degree of climate impacts that it will

21 face, we recommend that this concept be pursued

22 more broadly. With its unique governance

23 structure, strong communities, thriving businesses

24 and protected wetlands ecosystems, the Meadowlands

25 has the opportunity to showcase itself as an

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1 innovative leader in climate resilience. The final

2 master should highlight that opportunity and take

3 steps in that direction.

4 We also think that the Sports & Exposition

5 Authority should work with the Port Authority to

6 phase out Teterboro Airport. Our 4th Regional Plan

7 also calls for the closure of Teterboro Airport due

8 to the strong vulnerability to permanent flooding

9 from sea level rise. While this is the

10 jurisdiction of the Port Authority itself, we think

11 that NJSEA should factor in the potential of the

12 airport's closure in what it does in the master

13 plan and work closely with the Port Authority to

14 develop a phased approach.

15 RPA also strongly recommends that the Army

16 Corps of Engineers reject permits to fill in

17 wetlands to allow for the expansion of the airport.

18 Not only does the airport have a limited shelf life

19 that would make taxpayer investments into the

20 expansion wasteful, removing critical wetland areas

21 would likely exacerbate flooding in surrounding

22 neighborhoods. The limited benefits of expansion

23 are not worth the cost.

24 We also think there is an opportunity to

25 expand the intermunicipal tax sharing to develop an

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1 adaption fund. The tax-sharing approach in the
 2 Meadowlands District has been an innovative and
 3 effective way of balancing out benefits and costs.
 4 In order to adapt the district's communities,
 5 businesses, infrastructure and environment to
 6 current and future climate impacts, a significant
 7 amount of funding will be required, which currently
 8 doesn't exist. The final master plan should
 9 address this to consider expanding the current
 10 tax-sharing structure to raise additional funds to
 11 be spent on adaption. NJSEA should work closely
 12 with the DEP and municipal leaders to determine the
 13 criteria for which projects should be funded.

14 In conclusion, we're thrilled that the
 15 Sports & Exposition Authority is advancing this
 16 update to the master plan. Given the crisis of
 17 climate change, we think an integrated and more
 18 certain approach around climate adaption is
 19 necessary. Climate change threatens the viability
 20 of this critical part of our region. Planning that
 21 finds the right approach to growth, and in some
 22 cases retreat, is necessary, and it is critical
 23 that this plan lay out that approach. With the
 24 right approach, further investment and growth in
 25 the Meadowlands can be achieved, while ensuring the

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1 continued protection and expansion of the important
 2 wetlands habitat.

3 Thanks again for the opportunity to submit
 4 these comments. We look forward to working closely
 5 with the NJSEA to consider any of the approaches
 6 we've described above. Thank you.

7 MS. SUNDELL: Thank you,
 8 Mr. Freudenberg.

9 Are there any other members of the public
 10 who wish to provide a comment at this time? We'll
 11 close the public comment period. At this time we
 12 will close the morning session of the public
 13 hearing.

14 I thank everyone for attending this
 15 morning's public hearing and providing us with your
 16 insightful comments.

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 18 (The meeting adjourns at 11:50 a.m.)
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 4 I, MARY BAUMANN, License Number XIO1271, a
 5 Certified Court Reporter, a Registered Professional
 6 Reporter and Notary Public of the State of New
 7 Jersey, certify that the foregoing is a true and
 8 accurate transcript of the proceedings at the place
 9 and on the date hereinbefore set forth.

10 I further certify that I am neither attorney
 11 nor counsel for, nor related to or employed by, any
 12 of the parties to the action in which this
 13 deposition was taken, and further that I am not a
 14 relative or employee of any attorney or counsel
 15 employed in this case, nor am I financially
 16 interested in the action.

17
 18
 19
 20 _____
 21 A Notary of the State of New Jersey
 22 Notary No. 3782
 23 My Commission Expires 3/7/24
 24
 25

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