



**DRAFT AGENCY MEETING MINUTES
August 13, 2026**

Agency Members, Designees, and Executive Staff Present:

Jose Almanzar	Member (Remote due to extraordinary circumstances)
Mark Hall	Chair
Art Lussi	Member
Steve Hunt	Empire State Development
Benita Law-Diao	Member
Ken Lynch	Member
Rush Holt	Member
Zoë Smith	Member
Matt Tebo	Department of State
Dan Wilt	Member
Joe Zalewski	Department of Environmental Conservation
Barbara Rice	Executive Director
Matt Robinson-Loffler	Counsel

Absent and Excused

Local Government Review Board Present

Gerald Delaney, Sr., Executive Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum of board members being present in person, the meeting was called to order at approximately 9:30 AM by Mark Hall, Chair.

2. WELCOMING REMARKS

Chairperson Mark Hall welcomed the public, presenters, staff, and board members, and made welcoming remarks.

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3. PUBLIC COMMENT

- The chair recognized Dave Gibson, Adirondack Wild, who expressed concerns regarding Finch Paper's decision to discontinue sourcing pulp from the Adirondacks, which he felt reduces the opportunity to practice good forestry.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

On motion of Matt Tebo, seconded by Dan Wilt, June 11, 2026, meeting minutes. Steve Hunt was not present for this vote, Zoe Smith abstained, otherwise the minutes were approved unanimously.

5. RECUSALS

None

6. MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Barb Rice, gave Director's report, highlights of which included:

- Meeting with Peter Paine last month alongside Keith McKeever and Matt Robinson-Loffler, where he shared some early history of the Agency. He also volunteered to come to the Agency and speak with our legal staff which we hope to coordinate in the next couple of months.
- Recent attendance with Mary Newman Fox at the Governor's event at the Pendragon Theater in Saranac Lake. Like many other projects, it had faced setbacks during the pandemic, but with Governor Hochul's assistance closing the remaining funding gap, the project was able to cross the finish line.
- Executive Director Rice thanked PEF for hosting the Agency's annual summer picnic at Wilmington Beach. It was great to see everyone having fun.
- The Agency hosted a public information session at the Harrietstown Hall to allow the community an opportunity to see the updated plans and renderings for the APA Headquarters. Over 50 people attended the session, and it was exciting to see so many people engaged in the project.
- The Common Ground Alliance is concluding its work after 18 years. CGA had been created to provide a level playing field where stakeholders could

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come together for important discussions, build consensus and shape decisions effecting the Park.

- New staff was introduced including Joline Dembik Hall who joined the Regulatory Programs team as an Environmental Program Specialist 1 Trainee, and Emily Eaton who joined the Research and Scientific Services team as an Assistant Engineer Trainee.
- Congratulations were given to Communications Director, Keith McKeever, on his last Agency Board meeting. Keith is retiring this week after 23 years of service to the Agency and 30 years of service to the State of NY. He will be missed.

8. MOTION TO ADJOURN INTO COMMITTEES

On motion of Dan Wilt, seconded by Matt Tebo, the Agency Board voted unanimously to adjourn to committees at approximately 9:51 AM.

9. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

9.1. Park Policy and Planning

The committee convened at approximately 9:51 AM.

Committee Members Present: Benita Law-Diao (Committee Chair), Rush Holt, Steve Hunt (ESD), Matt Tebo (DOS)

Other Members and Designees Present: Jose Almanzar, Mark Hall, Art Lussi, Ken Lynch, Zoë Smith, Dan Wilt, Joe Zalewski (DEC)

Local Government Review Board: Gerald Delaney

Agency Staff Present: Barbara Rice, Matt Robinson-Loffler, Megan Phillips

9.1.1. Planning Division Report

Megan Phillips, Deputy Director for Planning provided the planning division report, highlights of which included:

- GIS staff have developed a new and improved publicly shared platform for the sharing of geospatial data using ESRI's ArcGIS Hub Site.
- A map amendment application from a landowner in the Town of Bolton has been determined to be complete by planning staff. Staff will proceed to review the requested area to determine if it must be expanded to follow regional boundaries consistent with regional scale and approach of the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map. The project team intends to conduct a

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site visit and windshield survey to gather information to inform analysis in the coming weeks.

- The Local Government Services team responded to 81 variance referrals so far this year. The team has also provided feedback on comprehensive plans for the Towns of Essex, Black Brook, and Colton, as well as provided input for the Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board's housing guide.
- State Land staff are in various stages of review for unit management plans and have most recently received a team draft for the John Brown Farm Historic Area, which is a joint planning effort with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and DEC.
- State Land staff have also reviewed several project consultations including: a proposal by the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program and its partners to control Eurasian watermilfoil in Weller Pond and Osgood Pond via diver assisted hand harvesting; installation of a temporary bridge as part of the restoration of the historic Honeymoon Bridge at the Camp Santanoni historic area; replacement of bog bridging on the trail to the Middle Saranac Lake Beach in the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest; replacement of a communications building at the summit of Gore Mountain; and rehabilitation of existing state owned utility infrastructure in the Blue Mountain Wild Forest including poles and overhead lines. Staff have responded to 20 state land consultations so far this year.
- With respect to DEC's draft statewide policy concerning the use of other power-driven mobility devices (OPDMDs), Deputy Director Phillips shared that the DEC is in the process of analyzing public comments and developing the final commissioner policy. The current draft of the policy includes an avenue for future APA board engagement through the review of unit management plans for conformance with the state land master plan. The evaluation and design of additional approved routes for use by OPDMDs will rely on a review of the federal assessment factors.

9.1.2. 30 x 30 – Charles Cochran (DEC)

Charles Cochran, DEC, provided an overview of the recently released strategies and methodology to enable NYS to reach its goal of conserving 30% of its lands and waters by the year 2030. The final document reflects extensive collaboration with State agencies, local governments, Tribal Nations, landowners, conservation organizations, and community stakeholders.

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9.1.3. Conservation Easements – Kramer Kwaczala (DEC)

Kramer Kwaczala, DEC, provided an overview of and history of the DEC's conservation easement program which aims to provide long term sustainable forest management, prohibit subdivision and provide for public recreational opportunities, while keeping lands in private ownership.

9.1.4. Old Business

None

9.1.5. New Business

None

Committee adjourned at approximately 11:37 AM

THE BOARD BROKE FOR LUNCH AT 11:37 PM

Upon return from lunch, Executive Director Rice announced that Matthew Robinson-Loffler, has been appointed as Counsel for the Adirondack Park Agency. Agency Counsel, M. Robinson-Loffler expressed his gratitude for being entrusted with the position and noted he looks forward to continuing serving the Board. He recognized the great staff that he works with directly and indirectly and is grateful for their professionalism and dedication.

9.2. Regulatory Programs Committee

The committee convened at approximately 12:53 PM.

Committee Members Present: Dan Wilt, Jose Almanzar, Art Lussi, Ken Lynch

Other Members and Designees Present: Mark Hall, Matt Tebo (DOS), Rush Holt, Steve Hunt (ESD), Benita Law-Diao, Zoë Smith, Joe Zalewski (DEC)

Local Government Review Board: Gerald Delaney

Agency Staff Present: Barbara Rice, Matt Robinson-Loffler, John Burth, Benjiman Amos, Aaron Ziemann

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9.2.1. Regulatory Programs Division Report

Deputy Director of Regulatory Programs, John Burth provided a division report, highlights of which included:

- Staff have received 199 applications through the end of July, fewer than 223 at this time last year. They issued 145 permits as compared to 144 at this time last year. 76 pre-applications have been received versus the 80 received at this time last year. 38 major projects have been completed so far this year as compared to the 47 at this time last year, and 3 emergency authorizations were issued so far this year compared to 5 at this time last year.
- The enforcement team has opened 121 cases so far this year as compared to 100 at this point last year. 22 cases have been closed with no violation versus the 38 closed by the end of July last year. 7 cases have been closed with voluntary compliance, the same as had been closed with voluntary compliance last year at this time. 20 settlement agreements have been signed versus the 10 signed at this point last year.
- Deputy Director Burth noted that over the past few years we had been making file materials available on our website for projects being presented to the Board for a decision. Starting last month, they have expanded this initiative to include all major projects available for public comment. There is now a link in the public comments section of the website to view these file materials as well. In many cases, this should eliminate the need to submit a FOIL request for information related to an application prior to submitting a public comment. He thanked Grace Sullivan and Mary Newman Fox for their work in making this possible.
- Deputy Director Burth introduced the projects being presented including information about the project plans, and the reasons they are being brought forward for Board review today.

9.2.2. P2026-0048 – Village of Saranac Lake – Essex County

Benjiman Amos, APA presented the application received for a permit and variance to facilitate the construction of a doc involving wetlands to provide ADA-accessible canoe and kayak access to Lake Flower.

On motion of Art Lussi, seconded by Ken Lynch, the Regulatory Programs Committee recommended the approval of the project with the recommended conditions to the full board.

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9.2.3. P2026-0108 – Lyme Timber – Town of Colton, St. Lawrence County

Aaron Ziemann, APA presented the application for a proposed regenerative timber harvest of 680 acres accessed by Mink Brook Road in the Town of Colton in St. Lawrence County.

On motion of Ken Lynch, seconded by Art Lussi, the Regulatory Programs Committee recommended the approval of the project with the recommended conditions to the full board.

9.2.4. Old Business

None

9.2.5. New Business

None

Committee adjourned at approximately 3:16 PM

THE BOARD RETURNED TO FULL AGENCY AT APPROXIMATELY 3:16 PM.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

10.1. Park Policy and Planning (Benita Law-Diao)

The committee heard a Planning Division report from Megan Phillips and received informational presentations from DEC staff member Charles Cochran, regarding the 30 x 30 strategies and methodologies recently released by NYS, and DEC staff member Kramer Kwaczala, who provided an overview and history of the use of Conservation Easements and how they can also be utilized toward the state's conservation goals.

10.2. Regulatory Programs (Dan Wilt)

The committee received a Regulatory Programs Division update from John Burth, and heard a presentation regarding project P2026-0048, from the Village of Saranac Lake for the construction of an ADA-accessible dock involving wetlands in the Town of Saranac Lake in Essex County.

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On motion of Art Lussi, seconded by Dan Wilt, the board unanimously approved the application as presented with recommended conditions.

The committee also received a presentation regarding project P2026-0108 from Lyme Timber for the regenerative timber harvest of approximately 680 acres in the Town of Colton in St. Lawrence County.

On motion of Matt Tebo, seconded by Ken Lynch, the board voted to approve the application as presented with recommended conditions in a vote of 9-2 with members Benita Law-Diao and Rush Holt opposing.

11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW BOARD

G. Delaney expressed his appreciation for the work of Keith McKeever and noted that he will be missed.

12. MEMBER COMMENT

- M. Hall noted that Keith McKeever is as dedicated as anyone he has ever met, and expressed his appreciation for the work he has done for the Agency and with the State.
- Z. Smith also expressed appreciation for Keith McKeever and noted he will be missed.
- A. Lussi noted that Keith McKeever modeled the ability work hard at their job to be able to play hard outside of work.
- M. Tebo expressed thanks for all of the work and grace under pressure that Keith McKeever has shown over time.
- J. Almanzar thanked Keith McKeever for the privilege of getting to know him and spending time together during his commutes to and from the Agency. He will be missed.
- R. Holt noted that the best news to come out of this Agency lately is the large number of people tuning in to watch our meetings and that is in large part due to the openness that Keith McKeever brought to the job. He hopes that the Agency will use this larger audience to build knowledge of the historic significance of this Agency, and the public will see that the authority of this Agency is something they should welcome.

13. OLD BUSINESS

None

14. NEW BUSINESS

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None

15. PUBLIC COMMENT

- The chair recognized Claudia Braymer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks who noted that in 2023 Protect did a report on 30 x 30 which she compared to the 2024 and 2025 reports issued by the DEC, as well as acquisitions made during that same time period. She indicated that these numbers were possibly inflated by the expansion of the Freshwater Wetlands Act. She also expressed concern regarding the clustering of houses on subdivisions and appreciation for Keith McKeever's professionalism over the years.
- The chair recognized Sean Ryan, a Trustee for the Village of Saranac Lake. On behalf of the Village of Saranac Lake, Homeward Bound Adirondacks and the Tri-Lakes Center for Independent Living he expressed thanks for the approval of the accessible boat launch. He shared examples of the tax on those needing accessibility accommodations while trying to take advantage of the healing power of nature. It proves that living with a disability in the Adirondacks does not mean being left behind. He ended by asking that when we say the Adirondacks belong to everyone, we truly mean everyone and continue to push forward with ways to make that possible. He also thanked the team from the APA who participated in the public information session held in Saranac Lake last week.

[Link to video and audio recordings of this meeting available on website:
www.apa.ny.gov]

Chair Mark Hall noted that the next meeting will be September 10-11, 2026.

On motion of Art Lussi, and seconded by Rush Holt, the meeting was adjourned without objection at approximately 3:38 PM.

Mark Hall, Chairperson