

New Jersey Association of Planning and Zoning Administrators
Strategic Plan for 2015

Prepared: October 2014

Adopted: November 19, 2014

Introduction

2014 has been a significant year for NJAPZA. It marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the organization's founding. It also is a year of firsts—the position of executive director was created, and the first paid staff person was hired. The opinions of the membership were sought for the first time through an on-line survey. In order to take advantage of the momentum created by these events, the NJAPZA leadership felt the time was right to prepare the organization's first strategic plan. They wanted to create a document that would guide and focus the group's activities and initiatives in 2015. This plan is the result of that decision.

Organizational History

In 1989 several municipal planning board and zoning board of adjustment secretaries met in Morristown to discuss the need for a professional membership organization. From that informal gathering, the New Jersey Association of Planning and Zoning Administrators evolved into an incorporated, statewide organization with over 240 members who work in municipal and county land use offices. Today the membership is almost evenly split between those responsible for the administrative activities associated with the land development process and those who enforce land use regulations and zoning ordinances.

NJAPZA's Mission

The mission statement adopted when NJAPZA was first incorporated is still in place and describes the purpose of the Association as follows:

- To educate its members to the legal requirements of planning and zoning administration and public employment and thereby promote a better understanding of the official duties and obligations of its members.
- To establish uniform procedures and practices in planning and zoning administration, insofar as possible or practical.
- To establish resources for membership assistance.
- To enhance the standing of the members in their respective communities.

- To promote the cause of competent and efficient municipal and county governments.

One potential change to the mission statement was identified during the strategic planning process and will be discussed later in this document.

NJAPZA's Organizational Structure

The NJAPZA Constitution establishes an organizational structure with an executive committee composed of five officers elected by the membership as well as the immediate past president and (any) regional directors. These positions comprise a board of directors along with a general counsel, (any) county directors and standing committee chairs. Standing committees are identified as budget, nominations, annual convention, membership, education, law and legislative, newsletter, public relations, records retention (historian) and by-laws. The By-Laws spell out the function of each committee and who may serve as committee chairs.

Current Partners and Stakeholders

Since its founding, NJAPZA has partnered with Rutgers University and the Center for Government Services. Together the two organizations have developed certificate programs for municipal planning board/zoning board of adjustment secretaries, land use administrators and zoning officials. NJAPZA does not have affiliate status with the NJ State League of Municipalities but has developed a working relationship with New Jersey Planning Officials and is an affiliate of NJPO. Other entities that have a significant impact on the membership include all levels of New Jersey government—municipal, county and state.

The Planning Process

The Board of Directors met on October 21, 2014, in a workshop format. They reviewed financial, membership and activity data for the years 2011 through 2014 along with the results of the recent membership survey. They also participated in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the organization. The discussion generated by the analysis led to

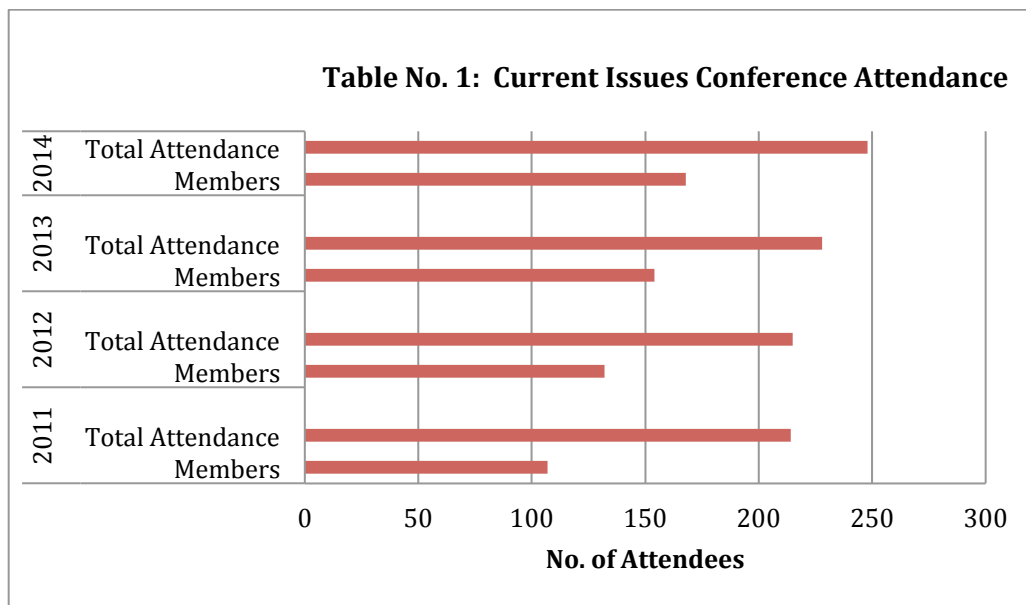
the development of a set of strategic objectives for 2015, which are presented in Part II of this document.

PART I: THE STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Recent Trends

NJAPZA derives its income almost exclusively from membership dues, so the size of its membership is crucial to the health of the organization. While its membership base has not grown, it has remained relatively stable since 2011. The size of the organization has ranged from a high of 283 members in 2011 to a low of 218 in 2013. However, in 2014 the decline was halted, and by October the membership had increased to 245.

Stability is a good thing, but the Board of Directors recognizes the importance of growth and expansion. Attendance figures for the annual June Rutgers conference, as shown in Table No. 1, show that every year over thirty percent of the attendees do not belong to NJAPZA. This gap indicates that there is immediate growth potential among Rutgers certificate-holders, and closing the gap is one of the Board's objectives for 2015.



Since 2011 NJAPZA's finances also have been stable. Over the last several years the total organizational budget has actually been shrinking (see Table No. 2). However, this year additional convention and web maintenance costs along with the hiring of an executive director have increased the current budget over that of 2013 by 155%. NJAPZA has consistently been able to maintain a savings account of approximately \$21,000, and the Board understands the prudence of maintaining such a reserve

Table No. 2: NJAPZA Finances

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total Budget	\$16,971.07	\$11,738.60	\$12,978.25	\$33,105.00
Admin	\$2,485.83	\$2,815.53	\$2,646.32	\$14,625.00
League Luncheon	\$9,123.49	\$3,263.07	\$4,051.93	\$11,680.00
Newsletter				
Education	\$5,185.75	\$5,660.00	\$6,280.00	\$6,800.00
Membership	\$176.00			
Assets				
Checking	\$7,369.75	\$5,663.63	\$7,280.48	
Savings	\$21,144.12	\$21,156.62	\$ 21,156.62*	
Total	\$28,513.87	\$26,820.25	\$7,280.48	

*Plus interest

Note: The 2011 checking/savings figures are from November 2011. The 2012 and 2013 figures are as of Dec. 31.

Membership Feedback

In September of 2014 the Board of Directors sought the opinions of the membership through an on-line survey that was posted on the NJAPZA website. Members were invited to share their opinions about the organization's past performance, to suggest ways in which NJAPZA could improve, and to react to possible new activities. The response rate for the survey was extremely high—45%, and the results are detailed in Appendix 1.

The survey asked whether members would be interested in receiving periodic emails, participating in on-line educational sessions (webinars) and attending local, informal networking events. Strong support for all of these activities helped guide the board's deliberations during the SWOT analysis and will be discussed in more detail in Part II.

On two open-ended questions, respondents offered a wide variety of their own ideas about how membership benefits could be improved and expanded. More educational opportunities, better and more frequent communication with the members, a more robust website, and more opportunities for member involvement were repeatedly suggested.

In addition, 79.6% of the membership would like NJAPZA to seek passage of a state law mandating certification for the positions of board secretary and zoning official. This desire was also expressed in response to the open-ended questions.

PART II: THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

As a first step toward the future, the Board revisited NJAPZA's mission statement in light of recent trends and membership feedback. It came to the conclusion that in 2015 more emphasis should be placed on professionalism and the pursuit of excellence. Consequently, the Board recommends that the mission statement as it appears in Article I, Section 2 of its Constitution be amended to read:

The purposes of the Association are:

- A. To educate its members to the legal requirements of planning and zoning administration and public employment and thereby promote a better understanding of the official duties and obligations of its members;
- B. To encourage members to develop knowledge and expertise that enable them to excel in land use administration and enforcement;*
- C. To establish resources for membership assistance;
- D. To enhance the standing of the members in their respective communities;

E. To promote the cause of competent and efficient municipal and county governments.

*new language

SWOT Analysis

Both internal and external factors impact the health, vitality and growth potential of every organization. A SWOT analysis involves identifying an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. By understanding how these factors interrelate, the organization is able to develop operational strategies that take advantage of its strengths and reduce its threats.

In a wide-ranging discussion the Board felt that NJAPZA has the following internal strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- A strong core of experienced leadership
- A large statewide membership, most of whom are long-time members
- Members who work in a broad array of job functions
- A majority of members who have worked in municipal government for many years

Weaknesses

- A lack of new blood among the organizational leadership
- A lack of avenues to involve members
- Few fully functional committees

The Board also identified the following external opportunities and threats:

Opportunities

- It may be the right time to elevate the perception of the organization and seek mandated certification
- A statewide membership that could assist in making legislative contacts

- A large, easily identifiable population of potential new members
- A strong working relationship with Rutgers University
- Many other groups that could be potential partners in a variety of activities

Threats

- Potentially negative fallout from a failure to move forward on mandated certification
- Lack of support from the New Jersey Planning Officials and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities
- Tight municipal budgets and continued downsizing
- A general lack of acceptance and visibility

Moving Forward

How can NJAPZA use the results of the SWOT analysis to plot a course for the future? The critical step is to identify the strategies and activities during 2015 that:

1. Are a good fit with its strengths
2. Enable it to overcome weaknesses and pursue opportunities
3. Use its strengths to reduce its vulnerability to external threats
4. Prevent weaknesses from making it susceptible to external threats

In NJAPZA's case these decisions were made in the context of the membership survey results.

In broad terms, the nine goals that the Board intends to pursue encompass:

- Outreach efforts to strengthen relations with current partners and stakeholders
- Outreach efforts to potential new members currently employed in municipal and county government
- Public relations efforts that will enhance the visibility and recognition of the organization and its members throughout the State
- Improved communication with the membership

- Increased educational programming
- Development of a grass roots lobbying effort that will lead to mandatory certification
- Development of member networking opportunities
- Increased member involvement in organizational governance
- Pursuit of relationships with other planning and affordable housing organizations

If these goals are to be met, they must be translated into operational terms with strategies that have measurable objectives, time frames for their completion and responsibilities assigned for their accomplishment. The matrices that follow are an attempt to operationalize their implementation.

PART III: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Goal No. 1: Undertake outreach efforts to strengthen relations with current partners and stakeholders

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Invite NJPO to co-sponsor an event or workshop	Summer 2015	Ex. Director/President
Develop and offer a webinar in cooperation with NJSLOM	Spring 2015	Ex. Director/Education Chair
Develop at least one new educational opportunity in cooperation with CGS	Fall 2015	Education Committee

Goal No. 2: Undertake outreach efforts to potential new members currently working in municipal and county government

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Contact June 2014 conference attendees who were not members of NJAPZA and invite them to join	On-going throughout the year	Membership Chair and Committee

Goal No. 3: Undertake public relations efforts that will enhance the visibility and recognition of the organization and its members throughout the state

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Routinely send out press releases about major programs and events	As events occur	Public Relations Chair
Develop an NJAPZA brochure to that explains the organization to potential members, municipal mayors and administrators, and members of the NJ State Legislature	Fall 2015	Ex. Director

Goal No. 4: Improve communication with the membership

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Send frequent email blasts to membership about upcoming events, educational opportunities, planning and zoning news	Ongoing	Ex. Director
Post an NJAPZA newsletter on the website	Three times per year	Newsletter Editor
Overhaul the NJAPZA website	Spring 2015	Ex. Director, NJAPZA volunteers, webmaster/consultant

Goal No. 5: Increase educational programming

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Develop and offer at least 2 webinars	Spring and Fall 2015	Ex. Director, Education Chair and Committee
Develop and offer at least 2 free ½ day seminars in various locations around the state	Summer and Fall 2015	Ex. Director, Education Chair and Committee

Goal No. 6: Develop a grass roots lobbying effort that will lead to mandatory certification

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Form a special Ad Hoc Certification Committee charged with developing an action plan in pursuit of mandatory certification	Winter 2015	President and Board of Directors
Prepare a list of legislators from districts where NJAPZA members reside	Winter 2015	Ex. Director

Goal No. 7: Develop networking opportunities for members

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Develop and offer at least 2 regional networking events	Summer 2015	Membership Chair and Membership Committee

Goal No. 8: Increase member involvement in organizational governance

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Solicit volunteers from among the membership to serve on the Membership and Ad Hoc Certification committees	November 2014	President
Appoint members to a Membership Committee	Winter 2015	President and BOD

Goal No. 9: Pursue partnerships with other planning and affordable housing organizations

Strategy	Time Frame	Responsibility
Contact NJ Chapter of APA to discuss collaborative possibilities	Winter 2015	Ex. Director
Invite other NJ planning and affordable housing organizations, such as Affordable Housing Professionals of NJ and PlanSmartNJ to share information about education and seek RU CE credit for them. Advertise them on the NJAPZA website.	Winter 2015 and ongoing	Ex. Director

Appendix !
Membership Survey Results

Membership Survey Results

As of 10/10/14

105 members completed the survey

Question 1: How long have you been in your position?

Less than 3 years	2.8%
3-5 years	14.3%
>5 but <10 years	28.6%
10+ years	54.3%

Question 2: Have you completed the Rutgers program?

Yes	97.2%
No	2.8%

Question 3: How long have you been an NJAPZA member?

Less than 3 years	11.5%
3-5 years	15.4%
>5 but <10 years	28.9%
10+ years	44.2%

Question 4: Why did you join NJAPZA?

Education credits	16.6%
Networking	16.6%
Keeping current	20.0%
Job advancement	5.7%
All of the above	37.7%
Other	3.4%

Question 5: How satisfied are you with NJAPZA member benefits?

Extremely satisfied	36.9%
Moderately satisfied	35.9%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.5%
Moderately dissatisfied	5.8%
Extremely dissatisfied	4.9%

Question 8: Should NJAPZA seek passage of a state law mandating certification?

Yes	79.6%
No	20.4%

Question 9: Would you like to receive periodic emails?

Yes	93.1%
No	6.9%

Question 11: Would you be interested in informal networking?

Yes	90.1%
No	9.9%

Question 12: Would you be interested in webinars?

Yes	84.8%
No	15.2%

Question No. 6: How could NJAPZA improve the membership benefits it currently offers?

Total Responses: 57

Education

- 25 Offer more classes, CE workshops, educational programs around the state
- 2 Offer webinars
- 1 Provide more scheduled updates regarding new laws, etc.
- 1 More meetings in northern NJ accessible by public transportation

Communication

- 1 Provide email notification on events and other related information
- 1 Host and maintain a members blog
- 1 Weekly or monthly emails
- 1 Printed membership directory every few years
- 1 More communication
- 2 Try informal networking; more networking opportunities...I am unable to go to the ann'l convention
- 1 Do a better job of publicizing the mentoring program

Website

- 1 I have contacted the website administrators many times to get a password...and never heard back from anyone
- 1 A more active job listing
- 1 A listing of seminars/classes offered throughout the year to maintain certificate
- 1 Online system to access my credit hours

Mandatory Certification

- 1 Seek to get the zoning officer position tenured
- 1 Support a state law requiring certification for board secretaries and zoning officials
- 1 Good to have zoning officials educated and certified but don't believe this should be a requirement for board secretaries
- 1 I would like to have the same recognition a clerk, tax assessor and cfo receive from the State and mun govt

Research/Advocacy

- 1 Support our position(s) with the State, our salaries
- 1 I would like NJAPZA to get some hard data on the subject of administrators statewide (Part-time vs. full-time, salaries, etc.)

Member Involvement

- 1 There should be monthly or bi-monthly meetings
- 1 Each yr. I express interest in doing some work...NEVER had anyone contact me
- 1 Inviting more subcommittees to form on new matters/topics of interest
- 1 Have quarterly in-county meeting to facilitate real growth of the organization

Don't Know/Just Joined

5

Question No. 7: What new membership service(s) would you like to see NJAPZA offer?

Total Responses: 38

Education

Web based education sessions and forums

Webinars

Webinars for credit

More free educational opportunities

Classes in south Jersey

More regional education and updates on legal decisions

Classes pertaining to records retention

On-line CEU classes

More classes

More educational information and classes

More seminars throughout the year, including web sessions

Webinars would be great

Seminars north and south—it seems so crowded in just one area now

Communication

Additional email notifications

A welcome packet with information about the association and classes offered

Professional Advancement

More interaction with the state government to certify and tenure the position of zoning officer

Secure a much stronger respect and recognition for the position...state law mandating certification, in-depth salary analysis

Networking

Social gatherings

Have lunch meeting at least every quarter to discuss current issues with a guest speaker

Offer quarterly luncheons in south Jersey

Provide a mechanism for members to ask a work-related question and get responses from other members

Mentors

List of members for networking
 Monthly meetings for networking
 A networking luncheon 6 months after members receive their certifications
 In-county administrative training/networking opportunities. We need
 "rainmakers."
 Offer speakers or educational ideas to county networking groups
 Possibly have small associations established for their regions
 Anything that could provide time for networking would be fabulous

Online Information

A link for members to ask land use questions and get responses from other members
 A way to view particular sample ordinances
 Establish a phone or on-line help service by qualified P/Z consultant
 Like the NJSLOM, a listing & commentary on applicable proposed & recently approved legislation
 Outcomes of appropriate legislation
 Create a database that would keep track of members' credits for re-certification that could be accessed by members
 Discount on zoning and planning books or on-line viewing of these books
 Have blog that members could bounce problems or ideas off other members

Other

I am pleased with the level of membership services