



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SMART GROWTH

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Executive Director & Secretary

**Hunterdon County Cross-acceptance III Public Hearing
New Jersey State Planning Commission
Minutes of the Meeting Held August 27, 2007
Hunterdon County Planning Department
Hunterdon County Library Meeting Room
314 State Highway 12
Building #3
Flemington, New Jersey 08822**

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Benjamin Spinelli, Executive Director in the Office of Smart Growth (OSG), called the August 27, 2007 meeting of the New Jersey State Planning Commission to order at 6:40 p.m. Mr. Spinelli proceeded to introduce the State Planning Commission (SPC) members in attendance. John Eskilson, Local Government Representative and Jim Lewis, State Agency Representative attended on behalf of the SPC. Mr. Spinelli then introduced Sue Dziamara, Hunterdon County Planning Director and Ken Bogen, Hunterdon County Supervising Planner who attended on behalf of the Hunterdon County Planning staff. The Honorable George D. Muller, Honorable Erik C. Peterson, Honorable Ronald Sworen and Honorable Matt Holt, Freeholders also attended on behalf of the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Mr. Spinelli then introduced Barry Ableman, Principal Planner and Lorissa Whitaker, Principal Planner, staff attending on behalf of the Office of Smart Growth (OSG). The following people were in attendance on behalf of OSG's State Agency partners: Sue Boyle, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Monique Purcell, New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA).

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mr. Spinelli announced that notice of the date, time and place of the meeting had been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Spinelli asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE HUNTERDON COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS

Freeholder Muller thanked Hunterdon County local elected officials in attendance including: Clinton Township Mayor Nick Corcodilos, Franklin Mayor Steven M. Tarshis, Alexandria Deputy Mayor Caroline Hoffman and Delaware Mayor Kristin McCarthy. He then thanked the County Planning Board and all past and present freeholders for their role in serving the County in the Cross-acceptance process. Freeholder Peterson thanked all those in attendance who came to the meeting, because of their concern for the future of the County. Freeholder Sworen spoke about the process and thanked OSG staff for tending to the details of Cross-acceptance. Freeholder Holt commented about the positive results of the staff-to-staff meeting.

OVERVIEW OF HUNTERDON COUNTY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE & THE STATE PLAN

Mr. Spinelli provided an overview of the third round of the Cross-acceptance process. Mr. Spinelli stated that Hunterdon County was the twentieth county to conduct a public hearing for the third round of the Cross-acceptance process. This dialogue included a breakdown of the issues that were discussed at the internal, interagency and staff-to-staff meetings, as it related to Hunterdon County. Mr. Spinelli also discussed the revisions to the State Development & Redevelopment Plan (State Plan). Mr. Spinelli stressed the importance of the policies and goals of the State Plan. The recent Plan Endorsement revisions were also discussed.

Mr. Spinelli also discussed issues specific to Hunterdon County. The following issues were discussed: affordable housing, center-based development, environmental constraints as they affect the Suburban Planning Area, agricultural retention, the Highlands Regional Master Plan and the proposed Special Resource Area (SRA) designation of the multi-county Sourlands Region.

HUNTERDON COUNTY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE REPORT PRESENTATION

Sue Dziamara, Hunterdon County Planning Director presented an overview of the County's Cross-acceptance report and the process taken to create it. Ms. Dziamara thanked the municipalities within Hunterdon, as well as Hunterdon County staff, for their efforts and commitment to the process. She described how municipalities were organized into regions to analyze and evaluate available data. She noted the positive benefits of municipalities working together on a regional basis to effectively coordinate and articulate their positions. She reiterated County and municipalities concerns regarding the need to clarify agricultural funding priorities and the confusion that arose during Cross-acceptance. There was also agreement about the need to designate the Sourlands Region as a Special Resource Area (SRA).

Ms. Dziamara thanked OSG for the opportunity to provide more input. Ms. Dziamara then introduced Ken Bogen, Hunterdon County Principal Planner. Mr. Bogen explained, in greater detail, the environmental constraints that were the basis for the staff-to-staff discussion regarding the elimination of PA2 along the Route 78/22 corridor, and how the municipalities agreed to seek Plan Endorsement to designate Centers that could accommodate growth. He continued to make the case regarding areas along the corridor that should be PA5 and not PA3.

Mr. Spinelli then opened the hearing to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commenter 1: Mr. Steve Eisdorty, consultant for Pulte Homes, owner of a 292-acre property along the Route 78/22 corridor that they have been trying to develop for 12 years... He stated that there was a gap between the cost of housing and where jobs are located, particularly entry level jobs. He explained that the site has been in a growth area and is located near 3 commuter rail stations and in the Route 78/22 corridor. He further stated that the DEP could regulate on at the site specific level, but the State Plan should not.

Commenter 2: The Honorable Steven Mazza, Mayor of Union Township asked where projects like Milligan Farms and the Township's other COAH sites stood as they seek developers to build affordable housing.

Mr. Spinelli responded that Plan Endorsement affords municipalities the opportunity to examine on a site by site basis sites throughout their community that can accommodate growth. During the process communities receive feedback about these proposed sites from different state agencies including DEP.

Mr. Eskilson, Local Government Representative to the State Planning Commission also added that Plan Endorsement was the appropriate place to address issues of this kind.

Commenter 3: Ms. Renu Shevadc, an attorney with Day Pitney, LLP represents two property owners, Exxon/Mobil and Merck along Routes 78/22. Merck owns approximately 1,000 acres in Readington where its corporate headquarters is located. They have plans to develop Block 201, Lot 9 (99 acres) and Lot 7 (195 acres), also called Potterstown Road. She spoke about their longtime plans to develop these properties along the Route 78/22 corridor. They are zoned for office use Merck has already spent over a \$2 million, has local sewer capacity and intends to use one of their properties for future expansion of their research and development facility. They have discussed potential mitigation of environmental concerns with the township over the years. Exxon/Mobil owns a property in Clinton Township at Routes 78 & 31. They too have spent money and are prepared to work with Clinton Township to protect portions of the property that are environmentally sensitive to and intend to develop the property. There is existing infrastructure to accommodate this proposed project.

Commenter 4: The Honorable Nick Corcodilos, Mayor of Clinton Township spoke about the need to respect the public process that they participated in. There are environmental constraints that exist and the State Planning Commission should not wait for Plan Endorsement to correct the State Plan map. He does not support Planning Area 3 or Fringe in Clinton Township along Route 78/22. There are category 1 streams, HUC 14 wells and the current Wastewater Management Plan is a joke. They are committed to working to resolve the issues of the Wastewater Management Plan.

Commenter 5: Mr. Norman Tskelson from Stockton spoke about the Delaware River, its historic importance, view shed and its role as a critical resource for the region. The area has been home to the Lenape Indians for more than 5,000 years. Although there is more consensus today than in past years, the area should be designated a Special Resource Area (SRA).

Commenter 6: Ms. Wilma Frey from the New Jersey Conservation Foundation agreed that the Route 78 corridor should not be a Suburban Planning Area (PA 2). Most of that area is in the Highlands and the water resource needs to be protected. There should be maps depicting the proposed changes and the recommendations being made. The Map Amendment Worksheets do not provide enough information to explain the situation. She stated that one can designate centers, but also should make environmentally constrained areas, Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA 5). She also commented that OSG's responses to the County's justifications for changing some areas to PA5 did not seem sufficient.

Commenter 7: Ms. Julie Allen, a Readington Township Committee woman spoke about the fact that decisions about the area around Routes 78/22 should not be made based on sewer service areas that were designated long ago. She stated her concerns that Route 78 is already a parking lot and that if more growth is allowed along the corridor, the highway will break which is not what the citizens of Readington, State or Federal government want.

Commenter 8: Mr. Dick Francavilla a resident of Clinton deferred his comments.

Commenter 9: Mr. Sim Hitzel who co-chair's AeroBlue.org, an aviation advocacy organization, spoke about that the need for State Plan to address airport growth. He stated there is a lack of adequate planning around airports on the local level and that the State Plan is being misused to prevent private airports from operating and it is adversely affecting safety. He cited Solberg Airport where a school was built at the end of the runway. There, eminent domain is being used to prevent any further growth at the airport. He wanted to know how airport capacity will grow.

Commenter 10: Ms. Susan Lockwood from Delaware Township spoke about agricultural preservation in the Township. Although a great deal of agriculture has been preserved in the Township, there is need to clarify the PA 4 and PA 4B confusion for farmland preservation. Adding more PA 5 may be appropriate to protect stream corridors.

Commenter 11: Ms. Roberta Hopkins appreciated the open discussion of the meeting.

Mr. Spinelli then asked if there was anyone else who wished to comment at this time.

STATE PLANNING COMMISSION (SPC) COMMENTS

The SPC members in attendance did not provide any comments.

ADJOURN

Mr. Spinelli adjourned the hearing at approximately 8:30p.m.