



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SMART GROWTH

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**Passaic County Cross-acceptance III Public Hearing
New Jersey State Planning Commission
Minutes of the Meeting Held March 7, 2007
Passaic County Administration Building
Freeholder Meeting Room
401 Grand Street
Paterson, New Jersey 07505**

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Benjamin Spinelli, Chief Counsel in the Office of Smart Growth (OSG), called the March 7, 2007 meeting of the New Jersey State Planning Commission to order at 5:10 p.m. Mr. Spinelli proceeded to introduce the State Planning Commission (SPC) members in attendance. Brent Barnes, State Agency Representative and Kenneth Albert, Local Government Representative (public member) attended on behalf of the SPC. Mr. Spinelli then introduced Passaic County Planning Department staff in attendance. Thomas Davis, Passaic County Planner attended on behalf of the Passaic County Planning staff. Mr. Spinelli then introduced staff attending on behalf of the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) and OSG's State Agency partners. The following people were in attendance on behalf of OSG: Corey Piasecki, Area Planner and Lorissa Whitaker, Area Planner. The following people were in attendance on behalf of OSG's State Agency partners: Mary Jude Haddock-Weiler, New Jersey Highlands Council.

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.

OVERVIEW OF PASSAIC COUNTY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE & THE STATE PLAN

Mr. Spinelli provided an overview of the third round of the Cross-acceptance process. Mr. Spinelli provided that Passaic County was the fifth 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 relates to Passaic 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.

PASSAIC COUNTY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE REPORT PRESENTATION

Around 5:20 p.m., Mr. Michael La Place, Planning Director for the Passaic County Planning Department, joined the hearing. Mr. La Place welcomed OSG and the public for attending the hearing. He then turned the microphone over to Mr. Thomas Davis.

Mr. Davis provided that Passaic County supports the proposed restructure of the State Plan to mirror the master planning process. Passaic County also supports the proposed restructure of the Cross-acceptance process to mirror the 10 year census cycle. Mr. Davis continued to provide the all Cross-acceptance materials, as they relate to Passaic County.

Mr. Davis articulated that each of the 16 municipalities encompassing Passaic County are quite unique. He went on to speak about the five Designated Centers within the County (Bloomingdale Town Center; Haledon Town Center; Paterson Urban Center; Totowa Town Center; and Wanaque Town Center).

Mr. Davis then provided an overview of the Cross-acceptance process for Passaic County. When the preliminary plan was released, municipalities provided Passaic County Planning Department with comments on the preliminary plan which was then compiled and sent to OSG. OSG then prepared a set of responses (negotiation worksheets) so that the County and OSG could negotiate those issues raised by the Passaic County municipalities. Mr. Davis expressed that the purpose is to produce a unified approach to planning.

Mr. Spinelli then proceeded to speak on the original 8 urban centers which were designated in 1992 in order to direct municipal aid and funding to the distressed areas. Mr. Spinelli also provided that the hearing was being held in one of the original 8 – Paterson City. Mr. Spinelli also spoke about all Designated Centers and that most of them will be expiring in January of 2008. These Centers will have to come through the Plan Endorsement process in order to extend the life of these centers and to retain the benefits and funding associated with that designation. Mr. Spinelli also expressed the purpose of the centers – which is to direct growth while preserving the environs and relieving pressure from these environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Spinelli then opened the hearing to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commenter 1: Mr. Edward Simoni of the Bloomingdale Planning Board expressed his thanks to OSG and the Passaic County Planning Department for conducting the hearing. Mr. Simoni is also looking forward to moving the Bloomingdale-Pompton Lakes-Wanaque Regional Center through the Plan Endorsement process. Mr. Simoni than asked how the State Plan will treat the Highlands Planning Areas?

Mr. Spinelli responded in stating that any municipality within the Highlands Planning Area has the option to either opt-in to the Highlands Plan or seek Plan Endorsement through the SPC.

Commenter 2: Mr. Edward Meekums, Councilman for Pompton Lakes Borough, provided comments about the mapping procedures. Mr. Meekums mentioned the boundaries of the Highlands Preservation Area across the Ramapo River. He contends that the Dupont Property in Pompton Lakes Borough should have been included in the Highlands Preservation Area however was negotiated out of the area during the writing of the legislation. He mentions that it is a highly environmentally sensitive area with extensive wildlife such as bobcats. Mr. Meekums also mentioned the Critical Environmental Sites (CESs) within Pompton Lakes. He mentions that Passaic County Planning Department did not take into consideration Pompton Lakes' 1999 Master Plan Reexamination Report. Mr. Meekums also mentioned that Pompton Lakes' Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA) reports that the Borough is operating at a 1.2 maximum daily load (MDL) and that when it rains the Borough is at 3 MDL. How can the Borough take in additional density? Mr. Meekums also raised issues relating to recharge areas, steep slopes and flood plain mitigation. He also raised an issue relating to the comment period for the Passaic County Cross-acceptance Report. Mr. Meekums maintains that there was inadequate time to comment on the report.

Mr. Spinelli replied in stating that Pompton Lakes has submitted a dissenting municipal Cross-acceptance Report and will have an opportunity to meeting with the staff of the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) to discuss issues raised by Mr. Meekums. Mr. Spinelli also responded stating that the Highlands' boundaries were set forth by legislation and falls outside of the jurisdiction of OSG.

Commenter 3: Ms. Robin O'Hearn, Director of Skylands CLEAN, raised concerns relating to the proposed Transit Village and Regional Center designations. She contends that these are problematic for the municipalities involved. For instance, Wanaque Borough has sewer capacity issues. She is also concerned with Federal Hill in Bloomindale Borough, as it is environmentally sensitive. Ms. O'Hearn also stated that the projections placed in the February 2005 Passaic County Cross-acceptance Report were scary in that they project a huge spike in population.

Commenter 4: Mr. Peter Gonzales from Bloomingdale Borough spoke on issues such as Regional Centers and the Federal Hill property. Mr. Gonzales strongly upholds that growth should be directed into Centers, particularly downtown Bloomingdale, as to release development pressure away from the Environs, such as Federal Hill.

STATE PLANNING COMMISSION (SPC) COMMENTS

The SPC members in attendance did not provide any comments.

ADJOURN

Mr. Spinelli adjourned the hearing at 6:00 p.m.