



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SMART GROWTH

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BENJAMIN L. SPINELLI
Acting Executive Director & Secretary

**Somerset County Cross-acceptance III Public Hearing
New Jersey State Planning Commission
Minutes of the Meeting Held May 30, 2007
Somerset County Administration Building
Freeholder Meeting Room
20 Grove Street
Somerville, New Jersey 08876**

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Benjamin Spinelli, Acting Executive Director in the Office of Smart Growth (OSG), called the May 30, 2007 meeting of the New Jersey State Planning Commission to order at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Spinelli proceeded to introduce the State Planning Commission (SPC) members in attendance. John Eskilson, Local Government Representative and Thomas S. Michnewicz, Public Member attended on behalf of the SPC. Mr. Spinelli then introduced the Somerset County Freeholder Chair, Mr. Peter Palmer and the Somerset County Planning Board Chair, Mr. Bernard Navatto, Jr. Mr. Spinelli then introduced Somerset County Planning Department staff in attendance. Robert Bzik, Somerset County Planning Director and Laurette Kratina, Somerset County Planner attended on behalf of the Somerset 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: Barry Ableman, Principal Planner and Lorissa Whitaker, Area Planner. The following people were in attendance on behalf of OSG's State Agency partners: Jim Lewis, New Jersey Department of Transportation; Nick Angerone, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Monique Purcell, New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

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 SOMERSET COUNTY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE & THE STATE PLAN

Mr. Spinelli provided an overview of the third round of the Cross-acceptance process. Mr. Spinelli provided that Somerset County was the fourteenth 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 Somerset 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 the issues specifically pertaining to Somerset County, such as COAH, redevelopment, center-based development, Routes 22/78/206, mass transit, future infrastructure, school facility costs, property taxes and the Highlands.

SOMERSET COUNTY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE REPORT PRESENTATION

The Honorable Peter Palmer, Freeholder Chairman of the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders introduced several local elected officials in attendance. Freeholder Palmer discussed how Somerset County has been actively involved in the Cross-acceptance process for the past four years. Freeholder Palmer also discussed several initiatives that Somerset County has been actively pursuing. They are as follows: Somerset Regional Center, Intermodal Goods Movement, Water Quality Management (WQM) planning, Open Space and Greenways, Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) and the Somerville Landfill. Freeholder Palmer then introduced Bernard Navatto, Jr., Somerset County Planning Board Chairman.

Mr. Navatto spoke about how Cross-acceptance is a bottoms-up process that involves community and municipal input, an aspect that is very important to Somerset County. Somerset County had 100% participation by municipalities for the Cross-acceptance process. Mr. Navatto then thanked Robert Bzik and Laurette Kratina for their hard work.

Robert Bzik then made a presentation on Somerset County's role in the third round of Cross-acceptance. Mr. Bzik discussed the following items: the purpose of Cross-acceptance, Somerset County's historical role in the process, Somerset County pre-Cross-acceptance III initiatives and the Somerset County process, as it relates to Cross-acceptance. Mr. Bzik identified 5 tasks used to coordinate and organize the process. Task 1 included a consistency review phase of local, county and state planning documents. Task 2 included feedback on economic and demographic projections. Task 3 included the implementation status of the County's designated centers. Task 4 included a public participation program. Finally, Task 5 was the completion and submission of the Somerset County Cross-acceptance Report.

Laurette Kratina then concluded the final portion of Somerset County's Cross-acceptance overview presentation. Ms. Kratina discussed the post-comparison phase of the Cross-acceptance process, as it relates to the feedback on the mapping amendments and the inclusion of the July 19, 2006 Preliminary Plan update. Ms. Kratina then provided an overview of the negotiation phase between Somerset County and OSG, particularly the results from the Staff-to-Staff negotiations. Ms. Kratina then identified some outstanding Statewide Policy issue decisions that must be addressed by the SPC.

Mr. Spinelli then opened the hearing to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commenter 1: Mr. Theodore Chase, Franklin Township Planning Board Chairman, discussed Franklin Township's aggressive acquisition of open space and parkland and would like to provide the County and the State with up-to-date GIS. Mr. Chase requests that Six Mile Run be designated as a Special Resource Area (SRA). If the State disagrees with that request, then Six Mile Run should be designated as parkland.

Commenter 2: Mr. Raymond C. Liotta of Maser Consulting stated that he no longer wished to comment.

Commenter 3: Mr. Keith Krause stated that he no longer wished to comment.

Commenter 4: Mr. Art Bernard of Bernard & Nedenzahl provided information on Block 20B, Lot 32 in Hillsborough Township. He noted that OSG re-designated this parcel to PA-4B from PA-5 on the 2006 Preliminary State Plan Map and PA-2 from the 2001 State Plan Map. Mr. Bernard is requesting that the parcel be changed back to PA-2. Mr. Bernard also provided information depicting that the property is suited for a PA-2, as it is sewered with surrounding land-uses appropriate for a PA-2 classification. It also has public water, an adjacent rail line and is located along a State highway. The Route 206 bypass is also scheduled to intersect the property. This parcel has also been rezoned from public office use to retail/residential and high density uses. Mr. Bernard maintains that this property is not viable for agriculture and it was not identified as farmland in the Somerset County Agricultural Development Plan. Mr. Bernard stated that a letter of interpretation (LOI) was issued for the wetlands delineation, however it is expired and there is no Threatened and Endangered (T+E) species in the area.

Commenter 5: Ms. Scarlett Doyle of Bridgewater Township discussed the flaws in identifying T+E species throughout the State. She stated that the NJDEP relies on phone calls from the public to identify the locations of T+E species. Ms. Doyle maintains that this is not sufficient or accurate for identifying habitat. The State needs checks and balances, as it relates to the identification of T+E species.

Commenter 6: Ms. Linda Brnicievic (sp?) of Bound Brook Borough wanted to know if the State was involved in Bound Brook's redevelopment initiatives, as they are considering the use of eminent domain.

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 8:38 p.m.