

Highlands Regional Master Plan
January 31, 2007
Special Planning Board meeting

7:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Jim Adams, Dave Barretto, Elaine Emiliani, Ken Hoser, Bill Kanyuck, Doris Rayna, Tom Bolger. Charles Stillman arrived at 7:20 p.m, Tim Gale arrived at 8:00 and Roy North arrived at 8:15 p.m. Also present was David Banisch, Planner and Matt Mulhall, Hydrologist.

The purpose of the special meeting was to discuss the Highlands Regional Master Plan and to provide the Highlands Council with the board's comments. Comments are due by March 2, 2007. The board will review their comments at the February 14, 2007 meeting.

On November 30, 2006, the New Jersey Highlands Council released the draft version of the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP). The draft plan consists of text maps, charges and photographs and are available on the Council's website.

The Highlands Law divided the region into two parts – the preservation area and the planning area and set very specific planning goals for both. The preservation area objectives included protecting water resource quality and quantity, preserving land in its natural state and protecting the region's natural, scenic and other resources. The planning area goals were also environmentally protective, but orderly development consistent with the State Plan and smart growth principles was to be encouraged.

The Highlands Land Use Capability Map consists of three overlay zones; a protection zone in which development will be severely limited; a conservation zone consisting of agricultural lands where growth will be constrained by inadequate infrastructure or the need to protect important agricultural resources; and a planned community zone comprised of lands that have sufficient infrastructure capacity and land use characteristics to support growth.

A power point presentation was made and the planning board offers the following comments on the Highlands Draft Regional Master Plan:

1. The Highlands Land Use Capability Map and the policies identified for each of the overlay zone designations are generally consistent with Greenwich Township's Master Plan.

2. The map entitled Soil Suitability for Septic Systems mischaracterizes Greenwich Township's Septic Suitability as primarily "not limited". The Evaluation of Groundwater Resources of Greenwich Township includes a list of all of the soils in Greenwich Township, all of which are rated by the NRCS as "very limited" for septic limitations. The soil suitability for septic systems in the Resource Assessment is mischaracterized and should be changed.
3. The map entitled Watershed Values identifies the Township as primarily a "moderate" watershed value. The "moderate" characterization does not appear to be an appropriate watershed value rating for Greenwich Township. The planning board believes that the HUC 14 watershed values for the township should be "high".
4. Riparian Protection Areas. The resource assessment assigns a Riparian Integrity rating of "high" to what appears to be the Merrill Creek HUC 14. The "moderate" Riparian Integrity rating is assigned to the Pohatcong Creek and its tributaries, which appears to be a mischaracterization. The HUC14's including the Pohatcong Creek and its tributaries should be rated "High". Plan policies should call for mandatory stream/riparian corridor restoration and mitigation in all non-growth areas. Plan policies should seek to restore riparian integrity and encourage riparian ecological diversity.
5. The Critical Habitat Resource Area designation should be more expansive in the southerly tier of Greenwich Township, particularly south of Route 78. This area of the township includes rank 2 Forest and Grassland areas.
6. The conservation Priority Area map does not appear to be reflecting the critical habitat designations. This map should be revised to include conservation priority areas for grassland and forested critical habitat. The Merrill Creek, the Pohatcong Creek and the Musconetcong Creek HUC14's should all be designated Conservation Priority Areas.
7. The entirety of the Township is included in the Agricultural Resource Area. Areas in the Highlands under the highest pressure for development should receive priority funding for farmland preservation.

The above draft comments, items one (1) thru seven (7), in detail, were taken from a memorandum, dated February 8, 2007, from David Banisch, Planner, but were discussed at the January 31, 2007 special meeting.

Elaine Emiliani stated that the township has a proposed development called Mansions at Allamuchy. They are not identified on the map. Elaine stated that all the other development in the township was identified except this one. Mr. Banisch stated that the town is relying on this development for the COAH third round plan and Mr. Mulhall stated that this should be addressed and identified on the map. Mr. Banisch stated that in his report, he will state that there is an affordable housing component in that development and should be identified.

David Banisch stated that the Highlands Council has made their representatives available and they will come out to a meeting to discuss the plan and Doris Rayna stated that she feels that would be a good idea. Mr. Banisch is in agreement with Ms. Rayna and stated that the highlands representative would answer every question that they can and if it would help the township, Ms. Rayna is in favor of having a special meeting for that purpose. Chairman Bolger stated that when they show up, we can show them our interest with our comments and how much work we have done on this. Elaine Emiliani stated that she feels the Highlands representatives are pretty receptive to coming to Greenwich and to ask Greenwich to host an event with other municipalities. Ms. Rayna feels that she would just want Greenwich there so we can put forth our ideas to the representatives. Also present would be the Environmental Commission and Township Committee. David Banisch will make an inquiry as to their availability.

Open Space. Doris Rayna stated that she attended an open space meeting and it was discussed that the township has to have a Farmland Preservation Element into the township's Master Plan if the township wants any more funding. This was prepared by John Madden and was never adopted. David Banisch stated that should be done this year. At the present time, on the State level, there is no money, but upon preparing a plan, the township is positioning themselves for the State money when it becomes available.

Chairman Bolger stated that he will send out the e-mails with the maps and let the Environmental Commission and Township Committee know what the planning board is doing. We are looking to discuss this at the February 14, 2007 meeting, but since we have a full agenda, a special meeting will have to be scheduled at the end of February.

Status Report – COAH. A report, dated January 31, 2007, was prepared by David Banisch, Planner and the purpose of the memorandum was to provide an update on the

Special Meeting
January 31, 2007
Highlands Draft Master Plan
Page 4

status of Greenwich Township's petition for third round substantive certification from the NJ Council on Affordable Housing.

Correspondence. On Tuesday, February 6, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. in the Warren County Technical School Auditorium, the County of Warren will be hosting a meeting concerning the Highlands Draft Master Plan. Jim Adams and Elaine Emiliani will attend.

Elaine Emiliani made a motion, seconded by Charles Stillman, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Elva N. Pomroy
Planning Board Secretary

Tom Bolger
Chairman