



State of New Jersey

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BENJAMIN L. SPINELLI, ESQ.
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Affordable Housing Committee

FROM: Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director

SUBJECT: Committee Meeting Minutes – April 3, 2024

DATE: April 8, 2024

An Affordable Housing Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, April 3, 9:30am via Zoom.

Committee members present: Committee Chair Visioli, Council Chair Richko, Committee Members Francis, James, and Van Abs.

Staff members present: Benjamin Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, Neda Hartman, James Humphries, Carole Diction, Roberta Burkhart, Annette Tagliareni, and Linda Acker.

Consultants: Darlene Green, Colliers Engineering and Design, and Mike Edwards, Surenian, Edwards, Buzak & Nolan LLC.

Governor's Authority Unit (GAU): Alexis Franklin, Associate Counsel.

Committee Chair Visioli began the meeting at 9:31am

A roll call was taken.

Affordable Housing Bill A4/S50

Ben Spinelli, Executive Director, gave an overview of Bill A4/S50, signed by Governor Murphy on March 20, 2024, which set forth new requirements for municipalities related to the provision of affordable housing.

Director Spinelli outlined the actions to be taken by the Highlands Council with respect to the legislation:

1. The Regional Master Plan (RMP) must be amended to align with Bill A4/S50;
2. Guidelines will be developed for Highlands municipalities to ensure affordable housing plans are consistent with the RMP and Bill A4/S50; and
3. Highlands Council will make grant funding available to assist municipalities in developing affordable housing plans.

Director Spinelli advised the committee that Director of Planning, Science and GIS James Humphries has prepared a draft RMP Amendment for Highlands Affordable Housing (“proposed Amendment.”).

Committee Member James asked what the timeline is for the affordable housing obligation.

James Humphries outlined DCA schedule and steps for implementation of Affordable Housing Bill A4/S50:

- December 1, 2024: DCA issues to each municipality their affordable housing obligation based on jobs, income, and land capacity.
- January 31, 2025: Municipality must adopt by resolution their obligation.
- June 2025: Municipality adopts their Housing Element and Fair Share Housing Plan.
- March 2026: Deadline for a municipality to amend its Housing Element and Fair Share Housing Plan.

James Humphries then outlined the Highland Council’s schedule for the proposed Amendment:

- April 15: A public RMP Amendment Committee meeting will be held to introduce the proposed RMP Amendment and recommend that it be forwarded to the full Council to be released for public comment.
- April 18: At its regular public meeting, the Highlands Council will consider a resolution to release the proposed Amendment to the public for a 60-day comment period and six public hearings.
- September 2024: Highlands Council will consider adoption of the amendment at a regular public meeting. If the Amendment is adopted, the Highlands Council will issue the following documents to aid municipalities in preparing their affordable housing plans.
 - Adopted Highlands Affordable Housing RMP Amendment
 - Highlands Affordable Housing Implementation Guidelines
 - Highlands Affordable Housing Grant Program and Build Out Instructions

It was noted that the Highlands Council staff provided a list of all conforming Highlands municipalities to DCA and that this list will be updated prior to DCA issuing the obligations.

Director Spinelli emphasized that there is a true need for affordable housing in the region and the proposed Amendment will identify suitable housing locations.

Committee Member Francis asked if the proposed Amendment will provide protections for the municipalities against Builder’s Remedy lawsuits. Director Spinelli stated that the Highlands Council will assist in identifying all suitable opportunities in each municipality for affordable housing, including potential development/redevelopment areas.

Committee Member Francis also asked about values for tax valuation. Director Spinelli noted that the League of Municipalities issued a guidance document (NJLM News Flash) on Bill A4/S50 which addresses this and other issues.

Highlands Affordable Housing Guidelines – Proposed RMP Amendment

James Humphries stated that the proposed RMP Amendment for Highlands Affordable Housing would be used by conforming municipalities to identify suitable affordable housing locations.

Committee Chair Visioli asked if the proposed Amendment for the Highlands Affordable Housing is open for revisions.

Director Spinelli stated that revisions suggested by Council Member Van Abs will be incorporated into the current version of the draft prior to the RMP Amendment Committee meeting and additional changes could be made following the 60-day public comment period, based on comments received.

There was discussion about scheduling a meeting between DCA and Highlands Council staff.

Committee Member Richko asked how the municipalities will be notified of the Highlands Council assistance for their affordable housing obligation. Ms. Dicton responded that she is currently working on a communication to send to municipalities.

In conclusion, it was noted that the goal of the Highlands Council and this RMP amendment is to promote good planning in the Highlands region to ensure that the region can continue to provide water to the rest of the State.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 am