



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
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MEMORANDUM

To: Plan Conformance Committee

From: James Humphries, Director of Planning, Science & GIS
Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Planning Manager

Subject: Committee Meeting Minutes – August 28, 2020

Date: September 8, 2020

A Plan Conformance Committee meeting was held on Friday, August 28, 2020 at 2:30pm via conference call, due to COVID-19.

Committee Members present via phone were: Committee Chair Dressler, Council Chair Richko, Committee Member Vohden and Committee Member Van Abs

Staff Members present via phone were: Lisa J. Plevin, Christine LaRocca, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Annette Tagliareni and Karen Castanhas.

Ms. Plevin opened the meeting at 2:35pm.

Ms. Plevin introduced Committee Member Daniel Van Abs and then left the call because she is recused from the matter under consideration by the Committee.

Committee Chair Dressler then took over the call and also welcomed Committee Member Daniel Van Abs.

Review of Parsippany-Troy Hills Petition for Plan Conformance

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler gave a presentation on Parsippany-Troy Hills' Petition for Plan Conformance. Parsippany-Troy Hills is a very large suburban community with residential and commercial development and 1/3 land of open space/recreation.

In 2010, Parsippany-Troy Hills began the Highlands Plan Conformance Petition process but stalled and eventually the Township rescinded their petition. Since that time, the Highlands Council has re-engaged with the Township and they submitted a new Petition resolution in December 2018. In January 2020, Parsippany-Troy Hills adopted a new Master Plan which largely aligns with the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The Township adopted a Planning Area Petition Ordinance in April 2020 and on July 7, 2020, the Highlands Council deemed the Parsippany-Troy Hills Petition complete. The Petition materials were posted on the Highlands Council website for a 30-day public comment period, which concluded on August 24, 2020.

The Highlands Council received numerous public comments. Some requests were submitted to amend the RMP Land Use Capability Zones, however, these requests for updates must come from the Township. The Highlands Council will process RMP Update requests should Parsippany-Troy Hills present supporting information.

One set of comments was received from Wildlife Preserves, LLC, a non-profit land conservation organization with large landholdings in the Township. The organization would like to develop an environmental educational center, maintenance garage and a ranger station and is concerned with potential limitations based on Highlands resources.

Committee Chair Dressler asked about the buffer size of the wetlands. Ms. Haddock-Weiler responded that a 300-foot buffer would apply to any Highlands Open Waters. The Highlands Council would assist Wildlife Preserves in determining where development may occur.

Chair Richko questioned the plans of Wildlife Preserves. Ms. Haddock-Weiler explained that the plans are just concepts at this time, but their intention is to construct all of the facilities on uplands, but these are adjacent to the wetlands.

Committee Chair Dressler asked about the building size of the ranger station. Ms. Haddock-Weiler replied that we do not have that information yet.

Committee Member Vohden mentioned Parsippany-Troy Hills has many areas subject to a 300-foot buffer as the Township has considerable lakefront property. He expressed concerns over the impact of the 300-foot buffer on homeowners. Ms. Haddock-Weiler explained that any single-family homes would be exempt from Highlands restrictions even if the Plan Conformance Petition is approved by the Council.

Committee Member Vohden also questioned the date that would be relevant to an exemption #1. Ms. Haddock-Weiler explained the date that applies for land in the Preservation Area is the date the Highlands Act was passed, but Highlands Council standards do not apply for single family houses in the Planning Area.

Committee Member Vohden asked about restrictions for unbuilt single-family lots and existing houses that a property owner would like to demolish and build new. Ms. Haddock-Weiler clarified that the Highlands Council has no involvement in the regulation of single and 2-family homes on a residential lot and regulation would just be subject to the local municipal standards.

Ms. Haddock-Weiler explained that the draft Implementation Plan and Schedule (IP&S) for Parsippany-Troy Hills is different from our typical IP&S due to the current spending freeze. The IP&S only has estimated costs of Plan Conformance implementation tasks because the Highlands Council cannot commit to new grant funding at this time. Once the spending freeze has been lifted, staff will return to the Council with a specific grant request.

Committee Chair Dressler questioned if this Petition is approved, will the Highlands Council approve with restrictions. Ms. Haddock-Weiler stated that staff is recommending that Council approve with conditions requiring the completion of implementation tasks.

Committee Member Van Abs questioned the dollar figure for historic preservation planning versus the amount for the Water Use and Conservation Management Plan, given a large water deficit. Ms. Haddock-Weiler explained that the historic preservation component includes an historic resource inventory which would cover the entire Township. Additionally, she explained that the dollar amount for the Water Use and Conservation Management Plan is based on the number of HUCs in the municipality. All the numbers are estimates at this time, but if necessary, additional funds could be allocated to complete the Water Use and Conservation Management Plan.

Committee Member Van Abs suggested that funding from Green Acres may be appropriate for the completion of an open space and trail system. Ms. Haddock-Weiler explained that the consultant responsible for overseeing the project has been in contact with Green Acres in regard to potential funding. The trail is the centerpiece, but the trail system is intended to connect to both the Town of Boonton and the Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills.

Committee Chair Dressler asked if any other questions.

There were no other questions.

Committee Chair Dressler asked for a motion to add Parsippany-Troy Hills Petition for Plan Conformance to the Council's September 17, 2020 Agenda.

Council Chair Richko made a motion and Committee Member Vobden seconded it. All were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10pm.