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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 17, 2013

Highlands Council Moves TDR Program Forward with Feasibility Grant to Vernon Township and Contract for Fiscal Analysis Services

CHESTER, N.J. — At its October meeting the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council advanced its Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program on two fronts. The Council voted to approve a Receiving Zone Feasibility Grant to Vernon Township in Sussex County and, in a separate matter, voted to approve a contract designating qualified vendors to conduct municipal fiscal analysis studies related to TDR Receiving Zones.

“There are a number of benefits for municipalities that choose to establish voluntary Highlands Receiving Zones, but ultimately it needs to make financial sense,” explains Jim Rilee, Highlands Council Chairman. “Council staff thoroughly evaluated proposals and qualifications from firms that responded to an RFP seeking vendors that could provide fiscal analysis services to Highlands municipalities interested in establishing TDR Receiving Zones. Staff then recommended that the Council enter into a contract with multiple vendors to provide municipalities with the flexibility to select the most appropriate choice for their communities.”

The firms specified in the award are Clarke Caton Hintz, Mercer Planning Associates, and Urban Partners. Municipalities that are awarded Receiving Zone Feasibility Grants will select one of those vendors to complete a fiscal analysis, which is just one component of an approved Feasibility Grant scope of work. The fiscal analysis will include a real estate market analysis and fiscal impact analysis among other elements.

The resolution passed by the Council at this evening’s meeting also specifies that these vendors are qualified to perform fiscal analyses related to Highlands Center Designations and Redevelopment

Area Designations. In addition, the firms will provide direct technical assistance to the Highland Council in designing a Highlands Development Credit Transfer Program that will manage the movement of Highlands Development Credits between developers, municipalities, and property owners, once Receiving Zones are established.

Vernon Township in Sussex County is the third municipality to be approved by Council for a TDR Receiving Zone Feasibility Grant this year. Similar grants were previously awarded to the City of Passaic and Clifton, both in Passaic County, earlier in 2013. The award, not to exceed \$40,000, will be used to execute an approved scope of work that will include a capacity and site evaluation along with the fiscal analysis described above. Highlands TDR Receiving Zones are voluntary and can be anywhere in the state. More information about the Highlands TDR program is available on the Highlands Council website.

“Vernon Township came to us with a very strong, well-thought-out proposal for appropriate development and redevelopment planning within the Planning Area of the municipality,” says Gene Feyl, Highlands Council Executive Director. “We are already working with Vernon on their conformance efforts in their Preservation Area lands so we were happy to support this effort.”

In other business, the Council also voted to approve its FY 2014 budgets and a 2014 meeting schedule. Meeting materials, including resolutions, presentations, audio and minutes will be posted at: <http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/about/calend/> (click on October 17 meeting).

Actions taken by the Council today will take effect following the Governor’s review and consideration of the meeting minutes, up to 10 business days from receipt of the minutes.

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