

**Warren County Cross Acceptance Public Meeting  
June 17, 2004**

**State agency and county representatives in attendance:** John Eskilson and Curtis Fisher, State Planning Commission; Rich Gardner, Freeholder Director; John DiMaio and Everett Chamberlain, Freeholders; Maura McManimon and Bill Harrison, OSG; Tim Brill, Department of Agriculture; Jim Lewis, DOT; Bill Purdie, DEP; Wendy Molner and Kathy Vossough, NJ Transit; David Dech, Planner for Warren County; Richard Miller, Bernie Rooney, Greg Sipple and Albert Krouse, Warren County.

**OSG and County Comments**

**Rich Gardner**, Warren County Freeholder Director, opens the meeting and welcomes everyone. Glad to see a wide variety of municipal officials present. A number of people from the state office of the Planning Commission have spoken with us before. Now, they will offer some incite on the Cross-Acceptance process and how that will dovetail with the county and our municipal officials

**M. McManimon** delivered a presentation on the Cross-Acceptance process. Main points included:

- The purpose of Cross-Acceptance is to maximize consistency among municipal, county, regional and state agency plans and the State Plan, and to maximize public participation in updating the State Plan.
- Changes to the State Plan policy document focus on implementing the State Plan, through Plan Endorsement and coordinated State agency investments. The changes also focus on current policy initiatives including community school programs; the movement of goods through and within the state; and the public benefits of smart growth community design. We have also proposed definitions of Smart Growth and Smart Growth Area (Planning Areas 1 and 2 and Designated Centers).
- Changes to the State Plan Map include the incorporation of new data layers for public parks, wetlands, Category 1 streams and sewer service areas.
- The role of counties in Cross-Acceptance is to serve as negotiating entities, to meet with municipalities and the public on the proposed changes to the State Plan, and to prepare a Cross-acceptance Report that reflects public input. The Cross-acceptance reports should include county and municipal projections for population and employment growth, as well as any available data on local infrastructure needs.
- The end goal of Cross-Acceptance is to create a strong linkage between state investments and local planning.

**John Eskilson:** I am eager to find out what everyone thinks and helping to bring the process forward. Hopefully this will be a productive process and collaborative, representing the public and county and municipal governments so that we can continue moving through and create stronger communities. Thank you all for coming out and hopefully we'll have a good dialogue tonight.

**David Dech** reviewed the county's plans for participating in Cross-Acceptance.

This year, we will try to keep Cross-Acceptance as simple and brief as we can. Most of you have received a questionnaire that we want you to look at; compare with the State Development Plan based on the questionnaire. We will rely mostly on your responses, you know your plans intimately. The full county Cross-Acceptance will be organized by municipality, as was done the first two times. We are also conducting a county Cross-Acceptance that will be based on our review of our county plan and the county strategic growth plan, that is almost completed. We will ascertain what the major issues are and develop the negotiation agenda for the next round.

Some of the key issues include: look at key goals of the State Plan and how they apply in your community; how successful do you think the state agencies have been in implementing the State Plan; compare the State Plan Map with your local maps; identify your infrastructure needs, such as sewer and stormwater facilities; consider how you are impacted by the Highlands legislation; if you have a designated center, how have you implemented your planning and implementation agenda; do you have plans for redevelopment.

For the time-table, today is our county information meeting. You all have one week to feel out the questionnaire and get it back to us. Once we have your questionnaire, we will draft a Cross-Acceptance report and send it to you by July 15. By August 13, we plan to have incorporated your comments so that a final version can be transmitted to the governing body for approval. Everything should be assembled into one report for the October 25 county planning board meeting. At that meeting we'll discuss the report again and take comments from the public. Once this is approved for release, it will be sent out to the municipalities and a meeting with the board of freeholders will be scheduled. We're looking at the November 23 meeting for the official public hearing of the Cross-Acceptance report. Once that's adopted, the report is sent down to the state and from December through February there will be negotiations based on the agenda that's developed.

### **Question & Answer Discussion**

**Q.** What happens if the June 25 deadline imposed on the municipalities by the county to submit local Cross-Acceptance reports is not met?

**A.** The county is making every effort to meet the state's deadline and is asking the municipalities to try their best to get the information to the county. If you want to have one-on-one meetings, we'll work with you on that. We will try to have regional meetings and try to group a series of municipalities' together if

**Comment:** Municipalities are concerned that the county hasn't provided them with the figures they need to complete their work.

**Q.** To what extent will the towns within the Highlands Planning Area be developed?

**A.** Participation in the Highlands regional master plan, which will be developed once the Highlands Council is appointed, is purely optional. If a town opts in to this, it will be entitled to receive legal assistance from the Council if any lawsuits are brought against the municipality as a result of its opting in to the Highlands Plan. In addition, it is eligible for the same benefits as a municipality that has had its plan endorsed by the State Planning Commission. There's an additional provision to allow towns to set up transfer of development rights programs in growth areas. Those towns are also eligible for planning grants of up to \$250,000; they can charge impact fees on residential development; and they are accorded a priority status within the Highlands for State capital and infrastructure programs.

**Q.** Why do we need the Highlands legislation when we already have the State Plan? How will the two relate to each other?

**A.** The Highlands Council will submit its plan for the Highlands Planning Area to the State Planning Commission for Plan Endorsement, and it will be linked to the State Plan.

**Q.** How were the Highlands boundaries determined?

**A.** Legislatively.

**Q.** How can changes be made?

**A.** The State Planning Commission does not have the authority to change the Highlands boundaries. That must happen through legislation. But within the Highlands Planning Area, and outside of the Highlands, you should go through the cross-acceptance process and tell us where you want to propose mapping changes.

**Comment:** Towns weren't given enough time to consider the consequences of the Highlands legislation.

**Q.** In the last cross-acceptance process, were the municipalities' concerns addressed and implemented?

**A. County:** Some were implemented and some were not. He has seen changes made to boundaries as agreed upon. **A. J.Eskilson:** The county needs to let the SPC know about what issues they want the SPC to consider.

**Q.** What are DOT and NJ Transit doing for the county?

**A.** DOT is currently working on Route 57 in Washington Boro. They are trying new techniques that support the community's plans instead of just widening the road. The regional county plan mentions extending the rail from Hackettstown.

**Comment:** The farmland preservation valuation is too low.

**A.** The farmland preservation program is constrained by the appraisal process that the county is responsible for. If you feel the appraisals are coming in too low, then talk to the farmland preservation office. Actually, what the numbers show is that deed-restricted farmland is going up in value.

**Q.** If two towns go in for a joint center designation in plan endorsement, can one town go in and make changes on their own?

**A.** Although we encourage regional cooperation, we will not prevent any town from coming in on their own.