



Borough of Hopatcong

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
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March 16, 2004

ANJEC
Sandy Batty, Executive Director
Post Office Box 157
Mendham, New Jersey 07945

**RE: HIGHLANDS REGIONAL PLAN
BOROUGH OF HOPATCONG, SUSSEX COUNTY**

Dear Ms. Batty:

In response to the request for input from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions ('ANJEC') in regards to the Highlands Regional Plan, the Borough of Hopatcong ('Borough') respectfully submits the following:

- 1) The Borough requests ANJEC to recommend to the Highlands Task Force the **exclusion** of Hopatcong *Block 20002, Lot 3*, which is a 294-acre parcel located adjacent to Sparta-Stanhope Road in the Borough, from the Highlands Preservation Area.

During the past two and one-half years, the Borough has been involved in negotiations with the representatives of the property owner in regards to a multi-family, age-restricted development on this site. The proposed low-density (less than 3 units an acre) development is consistent with local zoning, which classifies the property as Multi-Purpose Development Zone (MPD), and will result in the preservation of approximately one-third to one-half of the property through deeded open space and/or conservation easements.

On January 9, 2004, a general development plan for the aforementioned property was submitted to the Hopatcong Planning Board for consideration. At the present time, the plan is being scrutinized by the Planning Board Engineer and the Borough Planner to ensure the development meets strict environmental standards, including wetlands conservation, steep slopes protection, and adherence to the appropriate stormwater

regulations. In short, the Borough is committed to developing the property in an environmentally responsible manner.

Besides the conservation of one-third to one-half of the property as outline above, the responsible development of the property will also provide a sizable tax ratable for the community without the corresponding negative impact to the local school system. In 2002, the local electorate approved an open space tax referendum of \$0.01 per \$100 of assessed value. Therefore, the supplemental open space tax funds received from the proposed development will further enable the Borough to acquire additional properties throughout the municipality for open space preservation purposes.

2) The Borough requests ANJEC to recommend to the Highlands Task Force the **inclusion** of the property immediately adjacent to Bear Pond in the Highlands Preservation Area. Specifically, the Borough seeks the inclusion of Hopatcong *Block 50002, Lot 6* and *Block 50002, Lot 7*, which comprise a total of 440 acres located off of Maxim Drive and Sparta-Stanhope Road.

The aforementioned properties, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the Bear Pond shoreline, is presently utilized as a private hunting club and is taxed on a farm assessment basis. Due the environmental qualities and scenic features of these properties, it is the position of the Borough that their preservation be recommended as part of the Highlands Regional Plan.

Your consideration of the above recommendations is sincerely appreciated. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at (973) 770-1200.

Very truly yours,



Mayor Richard Hodson
BOROUGH OF HOPATCONG, NEW JERSEY

cc: Curtis Fisher, Governor's Deputy Policy Director
Tammie Horsfield, Sussex County Chamber of Commerce
Hopatcong Borough Council
Hopatcong Borough Administrator
Hopatcong Municipal Clerk