



JON S. CORZINE
Governor

State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
100 North Road (Route 513)
Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322
(908) 879-6737
(908) 879-4205 (fax)
www.highlands.state.nj.us



JOHN R. WEINGART
Chairman

EILEEN SWAN
Executive Director

Contact: Craig Garretson, Manager of Communications
(908) 879-6737 ext. 108 or craig.garretson@highlands.state.nj.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 12, 2009

Highlands, COAH Moving Ahead

State agencies coordinate to issue guidelines to Highlands municipalities

CHESTER, N.J. – The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council and the Council on Affordable Housing announced today new guidelines for Highlands Region municipalities, including a six-month extension for Highlands municipalities that earlier received an extension to prepare their third round Fair Share Housing Plan.

“The goals of environmental protection and providing affordable housing are not mutually exclusive, and the coordination of our two agencies enables the state to provide municipalities with guidelines to achieve each of these important goals,” Highlands Council Chairman John Weingart said.

As a result of the continuing cooperation between the two state agencies, at its meeting today in Trenton, the Council on Affordable Housing approved two resolutions applying to Highlands Region municipalities, and also announced it is seeking public comment on a third item.

The first resolution grants a waiver from COAH’s third round growth projections for any Highlands municipality that fully conforms to the Highlands Regional Master Plan and petitions COAH by June 8, 2010. This allows a conforming Highlands municipality to use either the RMP Adjusted Highlands Growth Projections for full build out, or COAH’s original growth projections through 2018, to develop its Fair Share Plan and Housing Element. The RMP Adjusted Highlands Growth Projection is based on the results of the municipality’s Highlands Municipal Build-Out Report and actual growth based on residential and non-residential certificates of occupancy issued from 2004 through 2008.

The Highlands Municipal Build-Out Reports can be viewed on the Highlands Council website at <http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/planconformance/buildoutreports.html>.

The second resolution grants a six-month extension, until June 8, 2010, for all Highlands municipalities that previously received an extension from COAH until December 8, 2009. The additional time can be used by these municipalities to continue to work with the Highlands Council on conformance issues and prepare a fair share plan and housing element consistent with the Regional Master Plan.

The third item, still under development by Regional Planning entities (including the Highlands Council) and COAH, is the Regional Affordable Housing Development Program (RAHDP). Under this program, a Highlands municipality can transfer up to 50 percent of its fair share housing obligation, consistent with the July 17, 2008, amendments of the Fair Housing Act (P.L. 2008, c.46). The amendments required Regional Planning entities, including the Highlands Council, to plan for and create opportunities for affordable housing on a regional basis in order to take advantage of existing infrastructure or transportation, or avoid areas requiring environmental protection.

COAH is accepting comments on a draft of these guidelines until Friday, August 14; the draft can be viewed at <http://www.state.nj.us/dca/affiliates/coah/regulations/thirdroundregs/rahdp.pdf>.

“The coordination between our agencies follows Governor Corzine’s Executive Order 114, which directed the Highlands Council and the Council on Affordable Housing to work together to provide the best guidance to our Highlands municipalities as they make these critical decisions involving the future of their communities,” Highlands Council Executive Director Eileen Swan said. “We are grateful to the Council on Affordable Housing and their staff for all their work on this and look forward to our continued collaboration.”