



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission's Executive Director schedules public hearing on proposed agreement regarding redevelopment of the Stafford Business Park

NEW LISBON, N.J. – John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, will hold a public hearing May 22 on a proposed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding the redevelopment of the Stafford Business Park in Stafford Township, Ocean County.

“Members of the Commission’s Public and Governmental Programs Committee have spent a significant amount of time and effort discussing and closely examining this multi-faceted proposal,” Stokes said. “We look forward to hearing from the public and gaining its insight and perspective.”

The public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. in the Ocean Acres Community Center on 489 Nautilus Drive in Stafford Township. Following the May 22 public hearing, Stokes will submit a report on the hearing and a formal recommendation regarding the proposed MOA to the 15-member Pinelands Commission. The Commission will then decide whether the agreement should be adopted.

The proposed agreement would be among Stafford Township, Ocean County and the Pinelands Commission. If approved, it would enable Stafford Township’s government to proceed with a plan to redevelop the township’s Business Park as a means to pay for the environmentally safe closure of landfills that are located onsite and are polluting groundwater supplies and the nearby Mill Creek Stream.

The Stafford Business Park is located within a Pinelands-designated Regional Growth Area. The Pinelands Commission approved the development of the business park in 1990, with a plan for the development of 67 lots. The property currently contains 12 developed lots, including a motor vehicle inspection station, an animal shelter, a recycling center and other buildings. It is also home to a 55-acre licensed landfill and three unlicensed landfills, the closure of which has been estimated to cost more than \$45 million.

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Remediating the unlicensed landfills and closing the licensed landfill with an impermeable cap will have significant benefits to water quality. However, the work necessary to close the landfills would have an impact on habitat for rare plants and animals on the property and would not be consistent with Pinelands regulations governing threatened and endangered plant and animals species and wetlands buffers.

Executive Director Stokes is seeking public comments on whether the MOA, which would allow activities that are not in strict compliance with Pinelands regulations, is accompanied by measures that will, at a minimum, afford an equivalent level of protection of Pinelands resources than would be provided through the strict application of Pinelands standards.

As part of the MOA, Stafford Township is proposing measures that it believes will provide an equivalent level of protection of Pinelands resources. The Township is proposing to buy and deed restrict 570 acres of land for conservation purposes. A portion of the land will be located within the Mill Creek drainage area to offset impacts to wetlands, and the remainder will constitute suitable habitat for Northern pinesnakes. Additionally, Stafford is proposing the following offsets:

- Limiting the amount of acreage on the capped landfill to be utilized for the relocation of Ocean County's leaf composting facility to 20 acres;
- Deed restricting the area of the capped landfill and other open space on the redeveloped business park site so that those areas remain undeveloped in perpetuity;
- Requiring its designated redeveloper to incorporate low impact and "green building" design measures in developing the property. These design measures are intended to promote pedestrian oriented designs, reduce energy and water uses, improve indoor air quality and reduce pollution from stormwater runoff;
- Requiring its designated redeveloper to investigate and implement improved stormwater measures to the portion of Route 72 that crosses Mill Creek and;
- Requiring its designated redeveloper to develop and submit for approval a Species Management Plan devised to address issues associated with the proposed development activities and threatened and endangered species.

The proposed MOA and supporting materials are available for public inspection and copying at the Pinelands Commission's offices in Pemberton Township. Anyone interested in submitting public testimony or obtaining information can call the Commission's Communications Office at (609) 894-7300. Written testimony may be submitted at the hearing or mailed directly to the Commission at 15 Springfield Road, P.O. Box 7, New Lisbon, NJ, 08064. Written comments can also be sent via

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facsimile at (609) 894-7330 or sent by e-mail at info@njpines.state.nj.us. Comments must be submitted no later than May 22, 2006.

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