Dennis Township, Cape May County
Petition for Plan Endorsement

New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy
May 2013
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INTRODUCTION

The Township of Dennis has requested Initial Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission. This report contains findings and conclusions concerning consistency of the Township's plans and Planning & Implementation Agreement (PIA) with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan). The review of the petition is based on information submitted by the petitioner and information otherwise available to the Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA). The Township has requested the designation of five Village Centers.

Village Centers:
South Dennis
Dennisville
South Seaville
Clermont
Ocean View

BACKGROUND

Dennis Township initiated the Plan Endorsement process with a pre-petition meeting on November 23, 2004. On February 16, 2006, the Township formally submitted a petition for Initial Plan Endorsement. A consistency review was issued on July 17, 2006. This report outlined issues to be resolved through the Action Plan. OPA offered the Township the opportunity to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Action Plan.

The Township adopted Resolution #2007-38 on January 31, 2007 to enter into the MOU with OPA. Since then, the Township has worked actively with the state to move through the Action Plan.

LOCATION AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Dennis Township is a rural community located in Cape May County at the southern tip of the State of New Jersey. Created from portions of Upper Township in 1826, the Township's early history was based around natural resources, such as its cedar trees and the swamp. and has a total area of 64.3 miles.

Dennis Township is surrounded by Upper Township and Woodbine Borough to the north, Sea Isle City to the east, Middle Township to the south, the Delaware Bay to the southwest and Cumberland County to the west. Major roadways that run through Dennis Township include the Garden State Parkway (with access at Exit 17), Route 9 (SR 9), Route 47 (SR 47) and Route 83 (SR 83). Dennis Creek and Sluice Creek form large portions of the southerly boundary of the Township. Extensive tidal wetlands are located along the eastern shores of Dennis Township, including those associated with Ludlam Bay and Townsend Sound.

DEMOGRAPHICS

With the construction of the Garden State Parkway, the Township's population began to rise significantly, increasing dramatically between 1970 and 1990 from 2,635 to 5,574 people. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Township has a total population of 6,467 people and a total area of 64.3 miles. The Township's summer population is estimated at about six times that of its year round population.

The SJTPO has projected that Dennis Township's permanent population will increase to approximately 6,594 through the year 2040, a gain of approximately four residents per year on average. This increase will account for an additional 127 residents or a two percent increase between 2010 and 2040.

According to the 2010 Census, approximately one out of five residents of Cape May County was age 65 or older. The County will continue to be a popular retirement destination and the senior citizen population is expected to account for up to 30 percent of the population by the year 2028.

As of 2010, the largest age cohort in Dennis Township is the 50 to 54 years, with 684 residents or 11 percent of the total population. The second largest age cohort is 45 to 49 years, with just under 600 residents. The age cohort with the fewest residents is the 80 to 84 years range, with only 139 residents or just two percent of the total population.

Dennis Township's population increases over five times the permanent population during the summer months. The County has projected an increase of 4,174 summer residents in Dennis Township by the year 2025. Many of the summer residents are attracted to the 14 campgrounds located within the Township.

Cape May County's economy is dependent on the seasonal tourist industry, most of which is concentrated along its coastline. The County's main source of employment is the service industry, which includes tourism. The County's employment market increases by about 20,000 jobs between the months of January and July as a result of the seasonal employment.

Employment within the government and retail trades account for the County's next largest job sector. The health service and retail industries have produced the County's most new jobs from 1995 to 2000 and should continue to remain vibrant with the projected influx of new residents.

According to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDLWD), in 2011 Dennis Township contained 187 business establishments in the private sector. Retail and Construction establishments made up 40 percent of the private sector. The retail industry employed the highest number of people (271 workers) in 2011, followed by the construction industry (248 workers). The construction industry had the highest average annual salary ($47,856) and highest total wages ($11,880,344) in Dennis Township in 2011.

Dennis Township is projected to see an increase of five percent or 99 new jobs by 2040, an average of approximately three new jobs per year. This projection is substantially less than the County's projected growth of 22 percent during the same period. Only one percent of the County's projected employment growth through 2040 is expected to occur within Dennis Township.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Individual workshops were held on Saturdays in April and May 2009 to meet the visioning requirement of Plan Endorsement. Both workshops were held at the Dennis Township Senior Center in Dennisville from 10 am to 3 pm. Each workshop attracted 30 to 40 participants and followed the same format.

The workshops began with a brief introduction by Mr. Dennis Crippen, then Deputy Mayor. Maser Consultants then presented an introduction to the project, information on the Villages/Town Centers as well as photographs detailing the individual Villages/Town Centers and explained what a Form-Based Code is to the audience. Next, Maser conducted the Community Visioning (CV) Survey, which included 80 images, classified into seven categories – streets, building typologies, pedestrian realm, signage, parking, open space and amenities.

After the participants finished the CV, they were divided into groups to complete the mapping exercises – at least one group for each Village. This exercise asked participants to evaluate the study areas "susceptibility to change". Three colors were given to each group representing varying levels of potential for change:

Red = Preservation, do not change

Blue = Minor Changes, building improvements

Green = Transformation, development/redevelopment

Once the first mapping exercise was completed, the questionnaires were handed out and lunch was served. Questionnaires were also available on the Township's website for those who could not make it to the workshops.

After lunch, the groups reconvened to begin the next exercise. The second mapping exercise focused on mobility and new thoroughfare connections. Participants were asked to created new street connections using the color green and delineated existing roads in need of repair with the color purple.

Additionally, each group was provided a set of pictures of streets from around the United States. Each group was then asked to attach a picture from the example sheets to illustrate what they would like each major road to look like in the future. Green dots were also provided to indicate where participants would like to see crosswalks installed. It was quickly apparent that traffic is an issue, especially during the summer months, as many travelers pass through local streets to get to the shore. Bike lanes and sidewalks were discussed in many of the groups, as were traffic calming measures and safety issues.

The third and final mapping exercise supplied the groups with a new set of picture sheets, this time with various types of buildings in each picture. The groups were asked to paste pictures that represented the type of development they would like to see occur in each Village/Center.

	Dennis Township	Cape May County	New Jersey
Land area (sq mi)	64	259	7,417
Population		96,601	8,864,590
Households	2,370	44,788	3,180,854
Average Household Size	2.68	2.11	2.69
Housing Units	2,672	98,017	3,562,553
Home Ownership Rate	86.5%	74%	66%
Vacancy Rate	11.3%	54%	7.4%
Median Household Income	$81,446	$55,315	$71,180
Per Capita Income	$29,966	$33,796	$35,678
% of Persons below poverty level	NA	9.6%	9.4%

Goal 1: Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns

The goal was not furthered by the Township's petition. Dennis Township is comprised of planning areas three through five. Coastal centers were previously established in Dennis Township; however, as of March 15, 2007, these centers expired. The Township's proposed centers are based on Coastal Center boundaries that expired in 2008.

Goal 2: Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems

Dennis Township has taken several actions to implement Goal 2 of the State Plan.

The majority of the land area in Dennis Township (70 percent) is recommended for Conservation or Pinelands Forest Conservation. The land uses reflect the high level of public lands in the Township, with over 20,000 acres of lands in county, state, federal or not-for-profit ownership. Further protecting environmentally sensitive lands, the Pinelands Management Area includes over 35 percent of the northern areas of the Township. These lands are planned for very low density development in the Pinelands Forested and Rural Development areas. The four Pinelands villages are also low density rural development. The current land use plan and regulations have been certified by the Pineland Commission as being consistent with the Pinelands Management Plan.

The Township worked with DEP to protect the habitat of threatened and endangered species. The center boundary surrounds land that has been disturbed by human development. Environmentally sensitive lands were excluded from the center denoting more pristine, undisturbed habitat in the environs. The zoning boundaries coincide with the center boundary, encouraging higher density human scale development in the center and discouraging development outside the center.

The lands in the Environs outside of the Centers and within the CAFRA area will be low-density development ranging from one unit / three acres lots in the R-3 district to one unit/25 acres in the C Conservation district, which includes primarily public lands and wetlands. In keeping with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (N.J.A.C. 7:50), the Pinelands Management Area development will include one unit/ 3.2 acre in the Belleplain, North Dennis, Dennisville and Eldora Pinelands Villages in the underlying Pinelands Rural development zone. The lands planned for forest area preservation range from PF8 at one unit/eight acres to PR25 at one unit/25 acres. Techniques such as Residential Conservation Cluster are recommended to better preserve open space in the Environs.

The Conservation zone was expanded to include public lands and lands with severe wetlands constraints. Over 16,000 acres or 40 percent of the total land area of the Township is within the proposed conservation zone. This includes protected wildlife management areas; including the Cape May Wetlands in the east, Heislerville and Dennis Creek in the southwest, Waterfowl in the northeast and Beaver Swamp in the south. The federally-owned Cape May National Wildlife Refuge (CMNWR) and the federally-approved CMNWR Acquisition Area are also located primarily within the Conservation zone. Additional areas protected within the Township include the Belleplain State Forest, Cape May Wetlands State Park and other miscellaneous areas within the Cape May Wetlands.

Dennis Township has created planning documents affirming their stewardship efforts. The Township created a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) in December 2007 that was revised in May 2010. An environmental protection ordinance has been drafted. The Township has a Natural Resource Committee and has created a forestry plan. The Township is

considering the preparation of an Open Space and Recreation Inventory to enable funding of future recreation and open space acquisitions.

Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey

Municipal officials and the residents of Dennis Township value the rural landscape and would like to maintain it. The primary industries in Dennis Township are landscaping and campgrounds. The densities proposed maintain this rural landscape and are consistent with the projected demand for labor. The new building types are more consistent with market trends than building types prescribed by the previous zoning.

The Township has worked to enhance economic development potential in a rural landscape in other various ways. The Master Plan provides the following recommendations that the Township is considering. Many of these documents exist in draft form already.

- Provide standards for the design of new or modified commercial and retail development consistent with the vision of the overall township plan.
- Provide standards for Home Occupations as conditional uses within single family residential districts.
- Provide standards for Bed and Breakfast uses as conditional uses in residential zones.
- Provide standards for Contractors Yards as conditional uses in residential zones.
- Update Township parking standards consistent with current planning standards. Consider enacting a minimum as well as a maximum parking requirement to reduce paving and to support shared parking.

Goal 4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution

There are two closed landfills in Dennis Township. The Township has installed monitoring wells and reviews the results on a regular basis. The Township also has a non-point source pollution ordinance and pollution prevention methods have been incorporated into the storm water ordinance.

Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost

Dennis Township has made major changes to development regulations to ensure that adequate infrastructure is planned for. Their efforts have been focused on Transportation, appropriate capacities for septic tanks, sewer capacity and water supply.

Capacity for Septic Tanks

Dennis Township contributed significant information to their municipal chapter of the Cape May County Wastewater Management Plan. Maser Consulting provided a report analyzing the lot density (minimum lot size) that can be supported in the septic management areas of the Township to meet the nitrate target goal and includes calculations on the allowable number of new lots based on the calculated septic density in that portion of the Township within each of the four HUC11 watersheds within the Township boundaries. A HUC11 watershed or "hydrologic unit code 11" is defined in N.J.A.C. 7:15 as an area within which water drains to a particular receiving surface water body, also known as a watershed, which is identified by an 11-digit hydrologic unit boundary. The four HUC11 watersheds within the Township are: Dennis Creek, Tuckahoe River, Riggins Ditch and Cape May Bays.

Summary of Results:

- At full buildout, the Dennis Creek Watershed has the zoning potential to create 256 new units, 225 units less than the 481 unit target.
- At full buildout, the Tuckahoe River Watershed has the zoning potential to create 21 new units, 47 units less than the 68 unit target.
- At full buildout, the Riggins Ditch Watershed has the zoning potential to create six new units, 26 units less than the 32 unit target.

- At full buildout, the Cape May Bays HUC11 Watershed is projected to exceed its 165 unit target by 192 units, with 357 potential new septic units. In accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.25(e), the Township is required to adjust the zoning in order to achieve consistency between zoning and the allowable number of additional equivalent dwelling units at build-out in the undeveloped and underdeveloped areas. Unfortunately, due to the number of equivalent units already approved and the number of lots that would be grandfathered, decreasing the density (increasing the minimum lot size) will not resolve the deviation. In order to protect the water quality of this HUC11 Watershed from degradation, the Township should adopt a Cape May Bays & Tributaries East Overlay Zone (see Map 15 - Proposed Zoning). This area is designated "Restricted Septic Area (Planning Flows of 2,000 GPD or Less AND Less than 6 Residential Units)" on the Future Sewer Service Area Map in the CMCWMP. Within this area, residential development or subdivisions with a total of less than six dwelling units are permitted in accordance with the underlying zoning, but residential developments of six or more units must undergo a nitrate dilution analysis to ensure that the individual or other subsurface sewage disposal systems can meet the two mg/L nitrate planning standard on-site.

SEWER

At this time, Dennis Township does not plan public sewers in any area of the Township. However, the Township would allow privately constructed, funded and maintained alternative wastewater treatment facilities such as community package treatment plants for use in the proposed CAFRA Centers. The Township understands that without this infrastructure it will not be possible to develop the Clermont and Ocean View Centers at the scale proposed in the Land Use Plan. These facilities may be individual systems serving one development; however, it is hoped as more detailed planning occurs in these Centers that multiple property owners will coordinate their efforts to address wastewater management comprehensively. For the Villages, implementation of privately constructed and maintained alternative wastewater treatment plants may be considered where feasible. Under NJDEP regulations, an updated Wastewater Management Plan is required. The Township is working with Cape May County to complete the Dennis Township Chapter of the CMCWMP.

WATER

The Township of Dennis lies above the Cohansey aquifer and most of the Township's potable water is derived from on-site private wells. There is currently no public water supply available within the Township. However, New Jersey American Water has plans to construct a water main extension between Upper Township and Middle Township to connect its waterlines and provide connections between the NJ American Water – Ocean City and Neptune facilities. The water main route through Dennis Township is currently unknown. This could provide opportunity for privately constructed and maintained water service for the two proposed Township Centers of Ocean View and Clermont, which would allow for the moderate density development planned for these Centers.

GOAL 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost

Dennis Township has been working diligently to provide more diverse housing options in town. Dennis Township had a Housing Plan Element as part of their 1994 Master Plan. Affordable housing will be promoted as a realistic opportunity to address the Township's affordable housing obligation, which will be addressed when the regulations for affordable housing are finalized by the State. The increased impervious coverage and higher densities permitted will reduce the cost of land, ensuring the potential for more affordable housing options.

Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value

There are historically significant areas in Dennis Township and the Township has completed or planned for historic preservation documentation and planning efforts.

The Dennisville Historic District received designation on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 1987. It includes structures ranging from the early 1700's to the early 1900's. The Township has identified 55 contributing buildings to the District. The historic homes are a prime feature of the Village and are considered an important element to be preserved by the community. The older historic village development is reflected in the street pattern, which is a

road grid system with Main Street linking Route 47 and CR-610, and with Church Road, Gatzmer Road and Hall Avenue being local connecting streets.

The South Dennisville Historic District located on Route 47 in the northern most section of the South Dennis Village Center was issued an opinion of eligibility on July 13, 2001. According to the Dennis Township Natural Resources Inventory (page 80), this area includes 21 properties from the period of 1720 to the 1880s. There are a number of older homes and structures that appear well preserved and are an important element of South Dennis character.

South Seaville is located completely within the CAFRA zone. It does not have public water or sewer, nor are these facilities planned. Currently there are about 193 residential lots within the boundaries of the Center. The Center has an identified Historic District with 17 properties from the period of 1793 to 1890, according to the Dennis Township Natural Resources Inventory (page 80). However, it is not designated as a Historic District by the NJ State Historic Preservation Office. There are a number of older historic homes, which appear well-preserved and are an important element of South Seaville's character.

The Dennisville Historic Home Owners Association is a nonprofit corporation organized to study the history of Dennisville and the surrounding area and to encourage the preservation of the historic homes in the village and in the township so that future generations will be able to view them and learn about the history of the area. Originally accounting for 69 structures, the village of Dennisville is included as an historic district on both the national and state registers of historic places. Currently the DHHOA is in the process of re-surveying the Dennisville Historic District and the areas immediately surrounding the existing district.

Goal #4 of the Master Plan: To protect the historic, archaeological and cultural resources of the Township.

- Establish land uses that are compatible with the scale and unique character of the Village setting.
- Expand design guidelines which maintain the established historic architectural pattern of the Villages.
- Encourage and promote appropriate cultural and historical activities in the Villages, primarily within the Dennisville Historic District.
- Promote development that is compatible with the historic nature of the Township especially within adopted Historic Districts and adjacent to listed National and State Register historic structures.
- Encourage the establishment of an Historic Preservation Ordinance and a Historic Preservation Commission to help preserve the Township's historic resources and to guide preservation efforts especially pertaining to the Dennisville Historic district.

PROPOSED CENTERS

The Township of Dennis has requested designation of five centers. The State Plan outlines both the hierarchy of centers and the designation criteria, which establish certain basic thresholds of land area, population, employment and densities for the various center categories. According to the Plan, these thresholds are intended to serve as a flexible guideline for consideration of proposed centers, especially in terms of their projections out 20 years into the future.

DENNIS CENTER BOUNDARIES

Ocean View

Dennis Centers

Clermont

Dennis Centers

South Dennis

Dennisville

South Seaville

Center	Land Use			Economy		Infrastructure	
Function	Mixed-residential with compact core of basic services and activities.	Land area (acres)	Housing	Job Base	Jobs-housing ratio	Capacity (general)	Transportation
Village (60%) impervious		< 640	> 3 du / ac	N/A	N/A	Capable of being served by wastewater system.	Integration into network of communities.
South Dennis		785	2 du			Package Treatment Plants	
Dennisville		142	1 du			Package Treatment Plants	
South Seaville		298	1 du			Package Treatment Plants	
Clermont		242	2 du			Package Treatment Plants	
Ocean View		323	3 du			Package Treatment Plants	

South Dennis, Dennisville and South Seaville are comprised of the Village Residential and Village Commercial zones which permit 35,000 square foot lots. The Village Commercial permits a 2.5 story building on each lot. Village Residential permits one single family home on each lot.

The Clermont Center is comprised of the Clermont village center, which permits two units per acre and mixed uses, the Clermont Village Residential zone, which permits multifamily homes at two units per acre and the Clermont Residential Zone that permits residential development on which permits 35,000 square foot lots.

The Ocean View Center is comprised of the Ocean View center core zone, which permits three units per acre, the Ocean View Center zone, which permits two units per acre, the Ocean View center residential zone, which permits two units per acre and the Ocean View Residential Zone which permits residential uses35,000 square foot lots.

Dennis Township Zoning

Dennis Township Village Zoning

IMPERVIOUS COVER

The Town would still like to have all centers designated Villages. The Township intends to limit the impervious cover of all projects to 60% which is consistent with CAFRA regulations for Villages.

PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

Intended to help forge a lasting partnership between the Commission and the Township, Plan Endorsement is a two-way commitment, embodied in the PIA. Additional planning and design work will still be required on the part of the Township, and these efforts need to be carefully monitored by the Commission and the state agencies. From the efforts made so far to reach the present consensus, it is evident that the desire of the Township to succeed is real and the Commission should support these planning efforts.

DENNIS TOWNSHIP PIA: DRAFT			
Item No.	**Subject**	**Action Item**	**Due Date**
1	Capital Improvement Plan	The Township shall prepare a new Capital Improvement Program aligned with its planned development. This shall be an action item in the PIA.	Next Capital Improvement plan is due in 2017
3	Coastal Consistency Statement	The Township shall prepare a statement that addresses natural resource protection and coastal management demonstrating consistency of local plans and ordinances with the goals of the Coastal Zone Management Program.	May be done before the SPC.

4	Cape May County Wastewater Management Plan	The WQMP must be completed by the County, but the Township must comply with the "Responsibility of Municipalities" obligations listed in section N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.8 of the Water Quality Management Rules. Municipalities must provide documentation that water supply capacity exists for the amount of growth detailed in the Master Plan. This documentation must identify existing and proposed water supply sources. Municipalities must identify local water conservation measures required to ensure efficient use of available resources and methods to be used to promote wastewater reuse. Stream corridor protection ordinances must be in place.	Ongoing
5	Septic Management Plan	Prepare a septic management plan in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:15-5.25(e)3; which states, "Demonstrate that areas to be served by individual subsurface sewage disposal systems are subject to a mandatory maintenance program, such as an ordinance, which ensures that all individual subsurface sewage disposal systems are functioning properly. This shall include requirements for periodic pump out and maintenance, as needed."	Ongoing
6	Green Buildings and Sustainability Plan	Prepare and adopt a Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan. Consider working toward certification in Sustainable New Jersey to be eligible for future funding.	2022
7	Historic Site Survey	Update the Township Historic Site Survey to determine State and National Register eligibility. Consider Sustainable New Jersey as a future funding source.	2015
8	Update Master Plan & Zoning ordinance per FEMA maps	Review required changes in the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance as a result of the new FEMA maps. NOTE: The maps for the Delaware Bay side of South Jersey which includes Dennis Township have not as yet been published.	2015
9	Master Plan update	Update the Master Plan in 2022.	2022

10	Lake Management Study	Consider a management study for Magnolia Lake in Ocean View which has has declined due to eutrophication and received further damage during Hurricane Sandy. Consider NOAH as a source of funding. NOTE: The Lake is privately owned but an easement with Open Space funding could be considered.	2015

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Township of Dennis's vision is consistent with the State Plan. Therefore, staff recommends Plan Endorsement for the Township, including the designation of the aforementioned Centers. This recommendation recognizes the efforts made by the Township, which has demonstrated commitment and leadership towards improving its plans, through the fulfillment of the Action plan phase. We look forward to working with the Township to further its plans via refinement and implementation.