

MARK DEMITROFF
822 MAIN AVENUE, VINELAND (RICHLAND), NJ 08360-9346

RE: PINELANDS VILLAGES

March 26, 2012
Dr. Gerry Scharfenberger,
Director, Office for Planning Advocacy
PO Box 820
Trenton, NJ 08625-0820

Priority Investment Areas Designation

Dear Dr. Scharfenberger,

Please include this document as testimony for the draft Final State Strategic State Plan, pursuant to State Planning Rules, N.J.A.C. 5:85-5.1.

ABSTRACT

Pinelands Villages cannot be included as an Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) Priority Growth Investment Area since “significant” redevelopment is the preferred tool to achieve the State’s Strategic Plan’s goals. The Pinelands Commission (PC) is responsible for all development within its jurisdiction. Redevelopment is development, yet the PC’s ability to review redevelopment is limited in scope. This can’t be. Additionally the PC lacks authority to determine if redevelopment parcels meet the standards of “land in need of redevelopment.” Normally, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) performs that duty, but by Memorandum of Agreement (MOA, 1999) with the PC, the DCA has no say over Pinelands redevelopment. Also, the 1999 MOA indicated the SPC (*also* DCA, OPA) must "rely on the adopted plans and regulations of the PC to achieve objectives of the [State Development and Redevelopment Plan] SDRP," and not the other way around. Also troubling, when things go wrong, there doesn’t appear to be an entity to turn to for help. Significant conflicts exist between redevelopment and legal requirements of the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). The very planning mechanism sought is in itself flawed within its Pinelands National Reserve (PNR) context.

DISCUSSION

- 1) PINELANDS HAS AUTHORITY OVER DEVELOPMENT – One of the environmental controls of the CMP is that *all* PNR development is under the purview of the PC. This is true even if jurisdictions overlap, as in the case of Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA) regulations. According to Attorney General Dow (2011, *see addenda*), “N.J.S.A. 13:18:A-23 and N.J.A.C. 7:7E-3.44 ... provides that ‘[w]ithin the Pinelands National Reserve, the Pinelands Commission will serve as a reviewing agency for the coastal construction permit applications.’” Redevelopment is a State-constitution authorized land-use management designation. In extension, it seems reasonable that the PC also has management powers over redevelopment (a specific form of development).
- 2) REDEVELOPMENT IS DEVELOPMENT – According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2009), redevelopment is defined as “The action or an act of developing again (in various senses),” *specifically* “The redesigning and rebuilding of an urban area, typically after the demolition of existing buildings. (The usual current sense.)” In fact, redevelopment is a form of development. According to the CMP (7:50-2.11 Definitions), *Development* means “change of or enlargement of any use or disturbance of any land...”
- 3) ALL DEVELOPMENT MUST COMPORT TO THE CMP – Herein lies a dilemma. According to Attorney General Dow (2011), “The New Jersey Pinelands Commission’s ... role in municipal redevelopment is only to ensure that any such redevelopment in the Pinelands Area comports with the ...CMP ... adopted in accordance with the Pinelands Protection Act, N.J.S.A. 13:18A-1 *et seq.*” According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2009), comport means to agree or endure, so redevelopment must coincide in all and any respect to the CMP. In implementation redevelopment does not agree (*i.e.*, harmonize or accord) in all its respects with the CMP.
- 4) THE STATE PLANNING ACT DOES NOT APPLY TO THE PINELANDS – Hartkopf (2010) noted that the State Planning Act (NJSA 52:18A-196 *et seq.*), which governs the SDRP, was “adopted by the State Legislature in 1985 in response to Mount Laurel II (Fair Housing Act, NJSA 52:27D-301 also passed in 1985)..... [but] The State Planning Act

does not apply (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-206) to lands within the federally designated Pinelands (see Pinelands Protection Act, N.J.S.A. 13:18A-23 *et seq.*)” Hence compliance with the State Plan is not a PC *obligation*, just as COAH requirements are not a PC *obligation* (also Kinsey, 2008: 4 & 6, P.L. 1987, c. 267; N.J.S.A. 13:18A-12.b. and -15). It is also worth noting that this also means the PC is not *obligated* to turn Pinelands Villages into sewerage growth zones as suggested by Leaken (see Donio, 2011).

- 5) REDEVELOPMENT IS INCHOATELY REVIEWED – The PC can at best provide a partial examination of a redevelopment plan, their role limited to portions that are covered under the CMP. Also, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-8b&c, which is cited as statute in current Pinelands redevelopment plans, a redevelopment plan cannot be effected until State approval (when the SPC makes a determination that a redevelopment parcel meets their standards of “land in need of redevelopment).” Yet, as stated earlier in #4, the SPC (also DCA, OPA) has no jurisdiction over Pinelands redevelopment. Outside the Pinelands the State Planning Commission (SPC) reviews and endorses redevelopment plans, making recommendations to enhance plan efficiency and effectiveness to insure redevelopment implementation is consistent to Smart Growth plans under the *State Development and Redevelopment Plan* (Hartkopf, 2010). Again, there is a deficiency in that no one performs that function in the Pinelands.
- 6) ONLY PC PLANS AND REGULATIONS CAN BE USED TO REACH SDRP OBJECTIVES – According to MOA (1999: 2, II. D) between the PC and SPC (also DCA, OPA), it was recognized that “the SPC will rely on the adopted plans and regulations of the PC to achieve the objectives of the SDRP.” Redevelopment is a tool of the SPC, and not the PC. This is inconsistent with current MOA applicability, and is another reason that redevelopment should not be used in the PNR.

D. This MOA acknowledges the statutory treatment of the New Jersey’s Pinelands under the Pinelands Protection Act and the State Planning Act and recognizes that the SPC will rely on the adopted plans and regulations of the PC to achieve the objectives of the SDRP .

(above) Excerpt from MOA (1999: 2).

7) REDEVELOPMENT LACKS OVERSIGHT – Additionally, there doesn't seem to be an entity that has oversight of Pinelands redevelopment law. PC plan endorsement only provides an illusion of due process. In actuality, State redevelopment statutes can be cited but then can be ignored with impunity within the PNR. For example I use Richland Village, where redevelopment was touted as “a prototype for the immediate region as well as the State” (Karabashian/Eddington Planning Group, 2006: 1). The Township began redevelopment at least two-years before the PC gave the municipality permission to move forward. In response to violations in State redevelopment statutes (*e.g.*, issuance of bonds and accumulating real property before they had a plan), I tried to find an entity who had jurisdiction over Pinelands redevelopment. Not a single person could, or can, tell me where to go, including councils for the PC, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and the Local Finance Board (LFB). Examples of their responses are provided below:

a – *On multiple occasions the PC indicated they had no such authority;*

The third reason for your appeal request is alleged deficiencies by Buena Vista Township under the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. The Pinelands Commission has no authority to enforce the requirements of this Law. The Commission's authority is limited to its enabling act, the Pinelands Protection Act. The Executive Director's recommended approval

(*above*) Excerpt from a letter by Pinelands Senior Counselor S. Roth to M. Demitroff denying his appeal to the Office of Administrative Law, May 12, 2010, even though I lived within 200-feet of the parcel in question and was not notified pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-12.

With respect to the question concerning the review and enforcement of local redevelopment and housing laws, the Executive Director would only submit that the Pinelands Commission's authority is limited to determinations of whether municipal redevelopment plans are consistent with the Pinelands Protection Act and the Comprehensive Management Plan. The Commission does not have the authority to review or enforce local redevelopment and housing laws. To the

(*above*) Excerpt from CMP Policy & Implementation Committee Meeting, September 24, 2010.

Permitting, of this comment. Public Comment: Additional comments regarding “redevelopment lands” and authority of the Township Engineer to proceed with developing Sawmill Park were offered by the commentor. Staff Response: These matters are not regulated by the Commission.

(above) Excerpt from Pinelands Commission Report on an Application for Public Development, June 24, 2011.

b – The DCA indicated it has no authority to review or enforce Pinelands redevelopment rules;

In addition, you inquired as to whether the Office of Smart Growth was aware of six points relating to the project. While we are aware that you have concerns regarding the process by which the Township has conducted their redevelopment activity, that issue must be addressed at the local level. The Office of Smart Growth has not been actively involved in assisting Buena Vista Township in its redevelopment efforts, and as a result is unable to comment on their activities.

(above) Excerpt from DCA's Acting Executive Director, D. Rendeiro, Office of Smart Growth, response to M. Demitroff's query, October 1, 2009.

c – The NJ LFB indicated it has no authority to review or enforce Pinelands redevelopment rules;

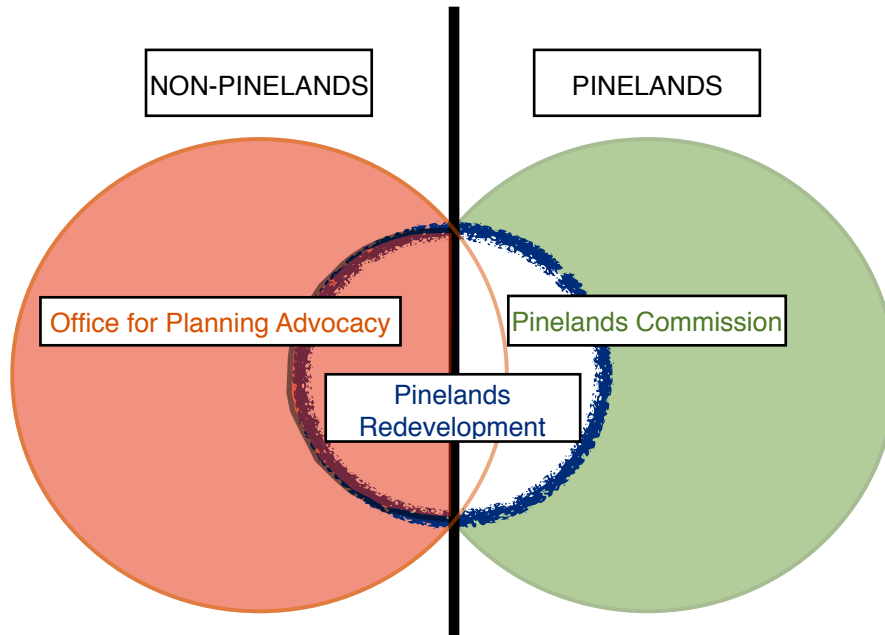
was secured, (or attempted to be secured). Please also be advised that the Board has no jurisdiction over the Pinelands Commission, the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law or the Municipal Land Use Law. It is suggested that you speak to a private attorney concerning the possibility of filing civil action to represent your interests in a court of law.

(above) Excerpt from NJLFB Chair, T. Neff, response to M. Demitroff's query, February 28, 2011.

SYNTHESIS

Redevelopment is a powerful tool for the land-use planner, and it must be used wisely and fairly. The NJ State Comptroller recently expressed his concern about historical evidence of corruption of the redevelopment process (Boxer, 2010: 6, 13). Many redevelopment ordinances are written by the developer (Boxer, 2010: 16). Boxer indicated that more County and other officials should be “involved at earlier stages of the redevelopment process” and that there should be “fulsome public discussion” of redevelopment dynamics that goes beyond the “modicum of public notice” (Boxer, 2010: 22).

Municipal land-use applications within the PNR cannot have less oversight and jurisdictional accountability than areas outside the Pinelands. As it stands, it appears that only the redeveloper (the municipality) is minding the hen-house (*see #4–7 above*). Reforms are needed so that the mechanism properly fits the PC’s mission to preserve, protect, and enhance the environmental and cultural environment of the Pinelands. Heed NJAPA’s (2006) warning, that “planning professionals should exercise extreme caution when advising clients regarding redevelopment practices.” Redevelopment can be rife with controversy (*e.g.*, eminent domain). We, the Pinelands residents, are the PC’s primary clients - not the developers, and the PC must fully safeguard our individual and societal rights, as well as the Pinelands cultural and environmental ecosystem.



CONCLUSION

Redevelopment cannot be used anywhere in the Pinelands, until it becomes abundantly clear which entity oversees and which entity enforces Pinelands redevelopment. Not even the Office of the Attorney General was able to resolve those issues (*see attached*). According to the CMP (7:50-1.4 Applicability), “It shall be unlawful for any person to carry out any development in the Pinelands Area which does not conform to the minimum standards of this Plan.” Redevelopment does not comport to the CMP (*e.g.*, eminent domain). The 1999 MOA does not provide equal or greater protection to Pinelands resources, nor does it allow the use of non-PC land-use tools. This is important, since the PC, through the CMP, has effectively managed growth, while the SPC (*also* DCA, OPA) has not (Kinsey, 2008). While I am not an attorney, the “hole” story, one of less - not equal or greater protection, points out very real conflicting legal requirements that must be resolved.

Sincerely,

Mark Demitroff

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- NJAPA, (New Jersey Chapter, American Planning Association), 2006: Position statement on redevelopment planning and exercise of eminent domain. c/o URS Corporation, One Gateway Center, Suite 1000, Newark, NJ, 6 pp.



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November 23, 2011

Via Regular & Certified Mail

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Re: September 23, 2011 Correspondence to the Office of
the Attorney General

Dear Mr. Demitroff:

I am in receipt of your September 23, 2011 correspondence to the Office of the Attorney General. You asked for a determination as to "who has authority over redevelopment within the Pinelands National Reserve."

As noted in the August 1, 2011 correspondence sent to you by DAG Julie Cavanagh, this office is unable to provide you with legal advice or assistance.

That being said, the New Jersey Constitution authorizes redevelopment. N.J. Const., art. VIII, § III, ¶ 1. Municipal redevelopment is primarily governed by the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq., which gives municipalities the authority to designate "areas in need of redevelopment." N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5. The New Jersey Pinelands Commission's ("Commission") role in municipal redevelopment is only to ensure that any such redevelopment in the Pinelands Area comports with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan ("CMP") adopted in accordance with the Pinelands Protection Act, N.J.S.A. 13:18A-1 et seq. See N.J.A.C. 7:50-4.11 et seq. (development in municipalities not certified in compliance with the CMP); N.J.A.C. 7:50-4.31 et seq. (development in municipalities certified in compliance with the CMP). The Commission has no authority to implement the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.



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Finally, it should be clarified that, since your letter asks who has authority over redevelopment in the "Pinelands National Reserve," the Commission's authority is limited to the "Pinelands Area" as defined by N.J.S.A. 13:18A-11. See also N.J.S.A. 13:18A-3; N.J.S.A. 13:18A-8. Although the CMP constitutes the management plan called for by the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, 16 U.S.C. §471i(f), the Commission's jurisdiction is limited to those portions of the Pinelands National Reserve that overlap with the Pinelands Area. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has primary jurisdiction over those portions of the Pinelands National Reserve located outside the Pinelands Area within the Coastal Area. See N.J.S.A. 13:18A-23 and N.J.A.C. 7:7E-3.44 which provides that "[w]ithin the Pinelands National Reserve, the Pinelands Commission will serve as a reviewing agency for the coastal construction permit applications."

Sincerely yours,

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