



New Jersey Pinelands Commission PRESS RELEASE

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Pinelands Commission implements new public comment procedures

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission will implement new procedures that provide the public with more opportunities to comment on public development applications.

"The Commission greatly values the public's input and insight because they lead to better, more informed decisions," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "These procedures provide an opportunity for the public to speak directly to Commissioners about public development applications before any decisions are made.

"When you couple these procedures with recent enhancements to our website, the public has never had more opportunities to learn about, and comment on, public development applications in the Pinelands."

The new procedures were needed to address regulatory provisions which restricted the opportunity to comment on public development applications during Commission meetings.

Under the new procedures that the Commission will begin instituting in July, the Commission will notify the public when public development applications are found to be complete and ready for public review. The Commission will post this notice on its website (www.nj.gov/pinelands) at least 10 days prior to the next scheduled Commission meeting. Interested parties can also register to receive notification of these applications via e-mail.

In addition, the Commission will accept written comments on these applications up to, and during, its next scheduled meeting. The comment period will close the day of the Commission meeting. Following the meeting, the Executive Director will then prepare and issue a report that summarizes and includes responses to relevant public comments, as well as a recommendation for approval or denial of the public development application. The Commission will then take action on the application during its next scheduled meeting.

Under Pinelands rules, the public has 10 days to provide the Commission with written comments on public development applications. This comment period begins after the applicant publishes a notice of its proposed project in the newspaper. The Commission's Executive Director reviews the application, considers any public comment that is received, then recommends whether the 15-member Commission should approve or deny the application during their regular meeting. At that point, the Commission cannot accept any additional comments, including oral comments

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Pinelands Commission press release

Page 2...

presented during its regular meetings, because the comment period has expired. However, the new procedures afford the public an opportunity to comment on these applications during Commission meetings, while adhering to the comment process established in the rules.

Wittenberg said the Commission has taken major steps in recent months to better inform and notify the public about public development applications.

In early January, the Commission launched a new web page that provides detailed information about the status of active public development applications and applications for waivers of strict compliance. The Commission's staff devoted 200 hours of programming to create the web page, which can be found under the "Permitting and Applicant Services" section of the Commission's web site (www.nj.gov/pinelands).

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