New Jersey Pinelands Commission

PRESS RELEASE

September 12, 2008

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Pinelands Commission approves increased fees to review development applications

NEW LISBON, N.J. – During its regular meeting today, the New Jersey Pinelands Commission voted to adopt amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan that will increase fees to review development applications in the Pinelands.

"The new fee schedule accomplishes two important things," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission. "First, it more equitably distributes the review costs amongst the many different types of development applications the Pinelands Commission is obligated to review. Secondly, a higher percentage, about half, of the Commission's permit review costs will be recouped through fees."

Since April 2004, the Pinelands Commission has charged application fees as a means to cover a portion of the costs associated with reviewing development applications and related services that support the development application process. In Fiscal Year 2007, the Commission expended approximately $1,479,000 on its application review functions and recouped $713,000 in application fee revenue. While expenses have remained relatively stable during the past few years, ranging from $1,422,000 to $1,501,000 annually, the percentage of those costs recouped through application fees has dropped. In Fiscal Year 2008, fee revenues may cover only 32% of the Commission's permit-related expenses.

During this same period of time, the Commission has had to assume greater responsibility for the review of storm water management plans associated with development applications. The Commission also is increasingly asked to review non-standard wastewater treatment technologies that are proposed as a means to allow more development on an individual parcel of land. Even though the number of development applications submitted for Commission review has dropped in the last several years, the amount of staff time devoted to most application reviews has increased. These circumstances have caused the Commission to re-examine its application fee rates and incorporate numerous changes designed to more equitably distribute the permitting expenses and to increase the percentage of Commission permit-related expenses recouped through fees.

Prior to charging application fees, the Commission relied on a combination of legislative appropriations, interest income and other miscellaneous revenues to fund its permitting applications. Since legislative appropriations represented the vast majority of the available funding, these costs were borne by the taxpayers of New Jersey rather than by the developer, property owner or beneficiaries of the development.

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Under the amendments, the Commission will begin assessing a $200 fee for single family dwellings; increase rates for residential subdivisions; increase rates for linear development; increase rates for mining operations; assess a moderate fee for public development; assess a surcharge for "alternative" wastewater technology reviews and maintain current rates for commercial and industrial developments.

Stokes noted that the application fees to review single-family dwellings can be eliminated through the institution of a Local Review Officer Program, which expedites the approval process by having municipal officials review certain applications, without the need for Pinelands review first. Additionally, costs to review public development applications for many projects can be eliminated through streamlining agreements.

The following chart compares current and new fees for several illustrative development applications:

Development Application	**Current Fee**	**New Fee**
Single family dwelling	$0	$200
50-lot residential subdivision	$6,250	$11,150
15-mile electric transmission line	$9,091	$13,636
20-acre resource extraction application	$700	$2,100
15,000-square foot municipal building	$0	$9,375

The amendments were published in the June 2, 2008 issue of the New Jersey Register, and the Commission held a public hearing to elicit comments on the changes on July 15, 2008.

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