



July 31, 2020

Office of Planning Advocacy
Secretary of State
NJ Department of State
P.O. Box 820
Trenton, NJ 08625-0820

ATTN: Matthew Blake, PP, AICP Senior Planner

RE: Vernon Township, Sussex County Request for Waivers from PE Process

Dear Mr. Blake:

Vernon Township, Sussex County would like to request two (2) waivers from the Plan Endorsement process as mentioned in Vernon's draft Municipal Self-Assessment Report. The waivers are from Step 2, Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee and Step 5, Visioning. In this letter, I will outline the reasoning behind the requests and attach additional background information for your review.

Vernon is asking for a waiver from Step 2, Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee, for a few key reasons. The first reason is that given the COVID-19 health emergency, it is very difficult to bring groups together from the public and to hold meetings. Vernon is conducting a combination of online and in-person meetings but both are challenging. Internet service in Vernon is not uniformly high speed and it presents people with difficulties in accessing video meetings. Additionally, the Township is trying to move through this process relatively quickly given the short timeframe that this process needs to be completed within. The Township has also been working with a broad group of interested parties as it moves through this process including the Land Use Board, the Vernon MUA, the Township Council and several subcommittees of the Township. For these reasons, the Township is requesting a waiver of this step.

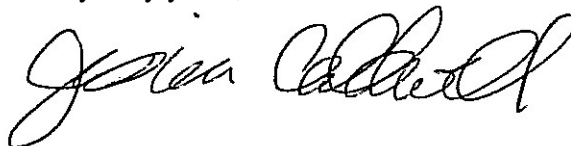
Vernon is asking for a waiver from Step 5, Community Visioning, for a few key reasons. The first reason is that given the COVID-19 health emergency, it is very difficult to bring groups together from the public and to hold meetings. Vernon is conducting a combination of online and in-person meetings but both are challenging. Internet service in Vernon is not uniformly high speed and it presents people with difficulties in accessing video meetings. The second reason is that the Township has engaged the public recently in visioning for its Sustainable Economic Development Plan. These meetings addressed a broader range of issues than just the economy given Vernon's focus on tourism and bringing people into the community to enjoy its farms, open spaces and parks. The following meetings were held for the Sustainable Economic Development Plan:

1. 8/1/2018: Vernon Township Planners met with the Vernon Police Athletic League and conducted a SWOT analysis and discussed the programs and priorities of the PAL.
2. 8/1/2018: Vernon Township Planners met with the Vernon Chamber of Commerce and conducted a SWOT analysis and visioning with the Chamber and its members.
3. 8/6/2018: Vernon Township Planners attended a Vernon Township Greenway Action Advisory Committee meeting and conducted a SWOT analysis and visioning with its members. The meeting was a regularly scheduled meeting open to the public.
4. 8/7/2018: Vernon Township Planners attended a meeting with Vernon Economic Development Advisory Committee and conducted a SWOT analysis and visioning. The meeting was a regularly scheduled meeting open to the public.
5. 8/9/2019: Vernon Township Planners attended a Vernon Township Board of Education meeting and conducted a SWOT analysis and discussed visioning. This was a regularly scheduled meeting open to the public.
6. 8/2019-10/2019: Vernon Township Planners conducted individual meetings with business owners in the Township and discussed the SWOT analysis and visioning. The businesses included the Daily Bean, Heaven Hill Farm, BOZ Electric and Smokey's Brick Oven Pizza.
7. 1/23/2019: Vernon Township planners attended a public meeting of the Vernon Land Use Board and discussed the SWOT analysis and visioning. This was a regularly scheduled meeting open to the public.
8. 3/13/2019: Vernon Township Planners attended a public hearing on the Sustainable Economic Development Plan and gave a presentation of the plan to the Board and the public. Public notice was given.
9. 4/10/2019: Vernon Township Land Use Board adopted a resolution approving the Sustainable Economic Development Plan.

The results of the public meetings and stakeholder meetings are in the Vernon Township Sustainable Economic Development Plan that was submitted to the Office of Planning Advocacy as part of the Plan Endorsement Pre-Petition. It was also further described in the Municipal Self-Assessment Report. Attached is the public notice published for the public hearing on the plan. Because Step 5 also envisions a public hearing before the Governing Body, which was not conducted, we would like to ask that the public hearing before the Township Council discussing the Municipal Self-Assessment with the visioning component take the place of the second required public hearing for Step 5.

Thank you for considering these waiver requests. I appreciate this opportunity to continue to work with the Office of Planning Advocacy. Please contact me if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Caldwell', written in a cursive style.

Jessica Caldwell, PP, AICP, Township Planner

Attachment

cc: Mayor Howard Burrell
Charles Voelker, Business Administrator
Harry Shortway, Council President