



**MIKIE SHERRILL**  
Governor

**DR. DALE G. CALDWELL**  
Lieutenant Governor

# State of New Jersey

## HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL

100 North Road (Route 513)  
Chester, New Jersey 07930-2322  
(908) 879-6737  
(908) 879-4205 (fax)  
www.nj.gov/njhighlands



**CARL J. RICHKO**  
Chairman

**BENJAMIN L. SPINELLI, ESQ.**  
Executive Director

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Plan Conformance Committee

**FROM:** Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director

**DATE:** April 10, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Plan Conformance Committee Minutes – April 7, 2026

A Plan Conformance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 12:30 pm via Zoom. The following participants were present:

Committee Members present: Council Chair Richko, and Committee Members Basralian, Bush, and Van Abs.

Staff Members present: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kelley Curran, Elizabeth Ward, Carole Ann Diction, Kyli Engle and Annette Tagliareni

GAU Member present: Azeem Chaudry, Associate Counsel, Governor’s Authorities Unit (GAU).

*Council Chair Richko opened the meeting at 1:01pm.*

### **Amended Petition for Plan Conformance for a Center Designation, Bernardsville Borough (Somerset County)**

Elizabeth Ward, Principal Planner, presented an overview on Highlands Center Designations as well as the Amended Petition for Plan Conformance for a Center Designation for the Borough of Bernardsville, Somerset County. This same presentation will be provided to the full Council at its April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Ms. Ward noted that there were three (3) comments received for Bernardsville Borough’s Amended Petition:

1. One commentor expressed the importance of education and awareness of the Highlands and the importance of protecting natural resources.

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2. Raritan Headwaters Association expressed their support and noted the alignment with the NJ Transit Village designation makes for good planning.
3. Members of the Bernardsville Environmental Commission want to ensure provisions for Mine Brook and public green space and had questions about the inclusion of residential areas and the quarry.

Upon approval of the designation, the Borough will undertake center planning to develop a land use plan specific to the Borough. The Environmental Commission will have opportunity to participate and provide input on zoning and regulations through that process.

*Chair Richko asked if there were any comments/questions.*

Ben Spinelli, Executive Director, referenced the Mine Brook comment above and how it will be addressed. Ms. Ward responded that a condition has been added to the Implementation Plan and Schedule (IPS) for the municipality to complete a Stream Corridor Protection/Restoration Plan.

Committee Member Basralian asked about monitoring to ensure the Mine Brook plan is implemented. Mr. Humphries noted that the Highlands can provide funding for the Stream Corridor Protection/Restoration Plan, however, the municipality will need to implement the project.

Committee Member Van Abs shared with the committee that there was a news article regarding removal of the Pond Dam in Bernardsville Borough and the funding for that project. Committee Member Van Abs added that New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) would be involved with the project in terms of flood hazard area regulations, stream restoration, etc. and expressed that the review will most likely include Mine Brook.

As a reference, it was also noted that there are 18 Highlands Centers and 10 of those centers are implemented.

*Member Van Abs made a motion to move Bernardsville Borough's Amended Petition for Plan Conformance for a Highlands Center Designation to the full Council for consideration; Member Bush seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

### **Highlands Redevelopment Area (Amended Application) – Lopatcong & Pohatcong Townships**

At this time, James Humphries, Director of Planning, Science & GIS, gave a presentation on the amended application.

Committee Member Basralian had concerns regarding the mitigation of the farmland.

At this time there was much discussion regarding the loss of farmland soil and mitigation. There was discussion about adding a time limit on the mitigation funds (how long the township/s can hold those funds) and refining the language regarding the soil mitigation requirement to ensure it would be used locally for agriculture or environmental restoration.

Gabrielle Gallagher, Chief Counsel, urged the committee members to call Highlands staff if they have any questions on details of this project. Ms. Gallagher emphasized that this project meets all standards for a Highlands Redevelopment Area.

*At this time, Committee Member Van Abs made a motion to move this Amended Application with edits to the full Council for consideration. Council Chair Richko seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

Mr. Humphries noted that the Amended Petition for Bernardsville Borough will be considered at Council's April meeting and the Amended Application for Lopatcong and Pohatcong Townships will be considered at Council's May meeting.

*The meeting adjourned at 1:18p.m.*