



TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL

MERCER COUNTY

201 Washington Crossing Pennington Road

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March 15, 2009

John Watson
Deputy Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
401 East State St.
7th Floor, East Wing
PO Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Re: Proposed Group Cabin
Washington Crossing State Park

Dear Deputy Commissioner:

Thank you for arranging for NJDEP staff to make a presentation regarding the proposed group cabin in the Washington Crossing State Park to the Hopewell Township Committee at its meeting on February 23, 2009. This effort helped educate not only the Township Committee, but the many concerned residents who attended the presentation. Your staff was professional, attentive and extremely knowledgeable.

There were a number of issues raised during the presentation with the following concerns being the most frequently mentioned:

1. **Location** – The Park itself is quite large and the existing designated camp grounds in the park are not located in the vicinity of the proposed cabin. There was overwhelming sentiment expressed that this cabin should be located near other camping areas to take advantage of park amenities rather than being located in the isolated area currently proposed.
2. **Expenditure** – It is recognized that that the Parks systems receives an annual sum of money specifically allocated for capital improvements in its Parks. However, for the past year there has been a continual stream of newspaper articles indicating major cutbacks in State Parks due to budget constraints. Indeed last summer security in this Park was to be cut back to the point that closures were being contemplated.

Even though there is a designated stream of money allocated for new capital construction, there is great fear that there will be a lack of funds and/or significant reduction of funds for maintenance of such facilities. Residents noted several home sites along the perimeter of the Park that were previously used for employees but have since been abandoned and have fallen into significant disrepair. The residents were concerned this pattern might prevail with this proposed cabin, especially given the present dire economic conditions of the State.

3. **Security** – The proposed isolated location of the cabin introduces transient tenants that increase security concerns.

The Hopewell Township Committee appreciates the fact that the Department is trying to make highest and best use of its facilities. However, we respectfully request that such effort respect the concern of its residents and the Township Committee. As such, we support the relocation of the cabin to the area presently used for other camping activities.

At the end of the meeting, next steps were discussed. It was indicated by Department staff that the concerns raised during this meeting would be evaluated and responded to through communications with Paul Pogorzelski, our Township Administrator/Engineer.

Thanks again for your effort in keeping our line of communication open.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Sandom', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Vanessa Sandom, Mayor

C: Hopewell Township Committee