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Pinelands Preservation Alliance

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PPA
1989 - 2009

Celebrating 20 years of
Pinelands Preservation

**Theresa Lettman,
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
November 16, 2009**

I am here again tonight to talk about the ordinance for the residential and conservation zones in Ocean Acres.

Some background for the members of the public that may not know- the Pinelands Commission staff issued a determination that a 38 acre-135 lot area, which was originally placed in the conservation zone, is not now critical habitat for the Northern Pine Snake which was captured on the site 2 years ago. The Pinelands Commission is recommending that this area be removed from the conservation zone. This action is the result of the September 2004 Three Party agreement which included Barnegat Township.

I want to state again that Ordinance 2004-23 which established the residential and conservation zones in the Ocean Acres subdivision was not just about protecting critical threatened and endangered species habitat – it was to set up a zoning concept that would assure both the lots inside and the lots outside of the conservation zone would retain value.

In the agreement on page 4, Item 15. it states there are approximately 730 lots which development would be prohibited and goes on to say --*allow the owners of the land in the "Conservation Area" to realize some reasonable economic benefit for their land.*

How were the seven hundred and thirty lot owners supposed to "realize some economic benefit for their land"? They were to have their lots purchased by those lot owners who had undersized lots of 9,000 to 10,000 square feet in size in the RH zone or the buildable area of Ocean Acres. In 2004 the Pinelands Commission determined that there were 567 undersized lot owners who might need to purchase lots to be able to build. If each of the 567 lots purchased two conservation lots it would mean many opportunities for "economic benefit" for the conservation lot owners.

And to date how many have been purchased? None and it has been five years. Why? I could stand here and tell you and the public about the road easements that resulted in 82 rights for homes that went to one developer and about the resubdivisions that have negated the need for the purchase of any lots in the conservation zone – but doing so will not get any of the property owners in the conservation area any "economic benefit" for their land.

The developers (mostly just one to date) in the RH buildable zone, got an easier application process because he is no longer required to do threatened and endangered species surveys. Now the Barnegat Township Governing Body and the Barnegat Township Planning Board needs to make it easier for the conservation zone lot owners to get some economic benefit!

I urge you do all you can.