

To the Editor:

A “revised center” was re-introduced at the May Holland Township Planning Board meeting that still does not appear to address the opinions expressed by Holland’s citizens during the April sub-committee meeting. A loud round of applause followed a statement indicating that Holland Township was not required to provide a center larger than a “hamlet” for the Huntingdon Knolls site. The continued approach against the affected residents’ desire, and without the recommended community committee, seems to further contradict the State’s Plan Endorsement Guidelines, which indicate, “... *nothing is more critical than coordination and public support and understanding.*” (Plan Endorsement Guidelines, NJ DCA, NJSPC, April 2004) The residents’ significant concerns along with the lack of benefits justify minimizing the center designation. Since a center’s boundaries are expandable, its use clearly has the potential of negatively affecting more properties than just those in the current proposed center.

During the sub-committee meeting, both State and Township representatives indicated a center designation, a “smart growth” policy, is not related to eminent domain nor does it affect zoning. The NJ Public Advocate’s review of the current laws regarding the use of eminent domain indicates this is not the case. “*An area could meet none of the traditional requirements of a ‘blighted area’ but because it fell within a swath targeted for smart growth, it would be blighted. The potential for abuse is apparent and the Constitutional limitations must be enforced.*” (Reforming the Use of Eminent Domain for Private Redevelopment in New Jersey, NJ Department of Public Advocate, May 2006).

Concern over a center designation’s impact on property rights is justified and documented within the Public Advocate’s report. Likewise, the center designation clearly can affect zoning, as evidenced by the zone change currently under consideration for the corner of Route 614 and Route 519. In 2005, the Township Planner considered the Village Residential –A District as something which may be used elsewhere in the center. Finally, the State Plan Center policies allow expanding a center’s boundaries, potentially exposing additional properties in the future to “smart growth” or the Village Residential – A District zoning. The potential exposure to the abuse of eminent domain along with rezoning is clearly associated with the “smart growth” policy of a center designation.

During the May 8<sup>th</sup> Planning Board meeting, it was indicated that Plan Endorsement with a revised center would be discussed again in June. Please contact the Planning Board Secretary to confirm the Planning Board agenda. Attending these meetings may help redirect the Township Planner and the Planning Board Chairman to focus the Plan Endorsement Petition on the more consequential issue of how to encourage the redevelopment of the two paper mills closing in Holland. Public information regarding Plan Endorsement and the center designation is available on the following website, [www.hollandhighlands.org](http://www.hollandhighlands.org)

Kenneth GrisewoodHolland Township