

#34

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COUNTY OF ESSEX

R-2025-
RESOLUTION NO. 01040
PROPOSED BY: COMMISSIONERS GILL, POMARES, SEBOLD
AND MURRAY-THOMAS
SUBJECT:

AUTHORITY FOR RESOLUTION N.J.S.A. 40:41A-38(a)
AUTHORITY FOR ACTION C.C.E. 2-29 (B)

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESERVATION OF THE FOREST
ON THE SECOND WATCHUNG MOUNTAIN RIDGE**

WHEREAS, the 120-acre property at Block 179, Lot 32, in West Orange, New Jersey, known as the "West Essex Highlands" is a core forest: a critical, irreplaceable environmental facet of Essex County, New Jersey, providing essential habitat and water resources; and

WHEREAS, waters from this forested land feed the Canoe Brook tributary and replenish critical aquifers that contribute to the New Jersey American Water supply, providing drinking water for 2.9 million New Jersey residents, in more than 190 communities; and

WHEREAS, replacing old-growth trees that filter groundwater with impervious surfaces causes extensive surface run-off, containing sediment, chemicals, and microplastics, into this drinking water source; and

WHEREAS, such run-off can lead to turbidity spikes, harmful algal blooms, and higher pathogen levels in this drinking water source; and

WHEREAS, roughly 84,000 residents in various communities receive their drinking water from the Canoe Brook, including the Essex County municipalities of South Orange, Maplewood, Millburn, Livingston, and West Orange; and

WHEREAS, residential neighborhoods surrounding and adjacent to this core forest are flood prone, experience repeated flood events, and exist in the 0.2% annual chance (500-year) FEMA floodplain; and

WHEREAS, open space properties and parklands downstream from this property contain floodways, and/or exist in the 1% annual chance (100-year) FEMA floodplain, and experience repeated flood events; and

WHEREAS, urban flooding can occur in places that are well outside of mapped floodplains and can be caused by rain falling on increased amounts of impervious surfaces overwhelming the capacity of drainage systems; and

WHEREAS, the forest provides biodiversity, groundwater recharge, clean air, and carbon storage, as well as natural habitats for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife; and

WHEREAS, this forest contains tens of thousands of trees, providing green infrastructure for stormwater management, absorption of carbon dioxide, the production of oxygen, and relief from the heat island effect, serving as a major cooling zone; and

WHEREAS, the proposed removal of untold numbers of trees will exacerbate flooding, degrade the core forest, displace hundreds of native species, and decrease open space in an area with little open space; and

WHEREAS, the applicant is not adhering to the most current stormwater rules and as such are not planning onsite stormwater management that would act to better protect all surrounding properties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Essex County Board of Commissioners hereby respectfully urges the Township of West Orange to reject the proposed housing development, and instead permanently preserve the forest on the Second Watchung Mountain Ridge Forest; and be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be transmitted to Mayor, Town Council members, and Planning Board members of West Orange.

Approved as to form and legality Khalifah L. Shabazz-Charles
Commissioner Counsel

RECORD OF VOTE (X=Vote N.V.=Abstention ABS=Absent)

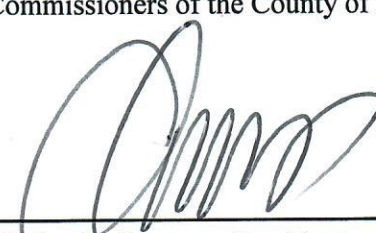
Moved by Commissioner Richardson
Second by Commissioner Cooper

Commissioner	Yes	No	N.V.	ABS	Commissioner	Yes	No	N.V.	ABS
COOPER, V.P.	✓				RICHARDSON	✓			
GILL				✓	SEBOLD	✓			
LUCIANO	✓				SERMONS	✓			
MERCADO	✓								
MURRAY-THOMAS	✓				POMARES, PRES.	✓			

It is hereby certified that the foregoing Resolution was (✓) adopted () defeated () tabled by roll call vote at a Regular meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Essex, New Jersey held on 10-8-25

Is Publication Required () Yes () No

Date Published _____


Carlos M. Pomares, President