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Food for thought in development debate

Forks has a question. Supervisors want comment on plan to allow another Sullivan trail supermarket.

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FORKS TWP. | Supervisors want to hear from the public about a zoning amendment to allow a supermarket at Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road.

The officials scheduled a 7 p.m. June 29 public hearing.

SamCar of Pittston, Pa., proposes a roughly 69,000-square-foot supermarket on 10 acres in the southeast corner of the intersection.

The employment center district where the project stands forbids supermarkets. The proposed amendment would allow a supermarket with a maximum building floor area of 100,000 square feet.

It could include a bakery, pharmacy, bank or restaurant within the store. A grocery store must stand on at least 5 acres and border an arterial and collector street.

During a Thursday night meeting, supervisors agreed to consider the amendment.

Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas said the town center zoning district where supermarkets are allowed lacks available land for another grocery store. As a result, residents have one choice for food shopping in Forks: a Giant off Sullivan Trail.

"I think they need a choice and some competition," Nicholas said. "That's what everybody wants, is competition."

Supervisor C. David Howell said supervisors could attach conditions to their approval of a supermarket.

"It's a conditional use," he said. "The board has much more control in determining the final outcome."

With conditions, supervisors could shape the supermarket's quality and design to meet the needs of the residents, Howell said.

Supervisors decided to collect feedback from the township's planning commission and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission on the amendment.

Following the public hearing, the board will decide whether to place the zoning amendment on the agenda for the July, 20 supervisors' meeting, said board Chairman David Hoff.

Rose Randazzo, an attorney for the developer, said seven tenants have interest in the property.

If the supermarket clears approvals, construction would start in spring 2007, she estimated.

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