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Forks residents fume over developers' zoning fight

They tell supervisors to resist. Homeowner says proposed changes would put slum in township.

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By Ted Strong
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FORKS TOWNSHIP | Residents at the township supervisors meeting Thursday night were angry that a group of developers are challenging the township's new farmland preservation zoning.

And they hope the supervisors will stand their ground.

The developers say the zone does not allow for trailer parks or multi-family homes, according to township Solicitor Karl Kline. Kline said the developers control more than 500 acres of land near Richmond Road, much of it in the preservation district, and want to build more than 3,000 townhouses, mobile homes and apartments.

"I think, quite frankly, it's just an effort to force the township to make the changes," he said.

Residents agreed.

"That the only open space in our township would be doomed to being a slum is a direct affront to every supervisor here," Jim Wideman said.

Wideman said he's also worried about the impact high-density development could have on municipal services such as roads and police and fire departments.

Robert Alford, who moved into a house near the affected properties last month, said the lawsuit and the homes its backers want to develop would be an unwelcome change.

"I absolutely believe the township should stand their ground and maintain that farm preservation land," Alford said after the meeting.

The recently adopted zoning regulations require houses be built on either 3-acre lots or 1-acre lots with 1 acre of dedicated open space each.

The first stop for the case will be the zoning hearing board, Kline said. Hearings should start in the next month and a half for the development firms, which include Bucks -Lehigh Land Co. LLC, KMRD LP, Nic Zawarski and Sons Developers Inc., and Nic Zawarski and Sons Development Corp.

The zoning board's decision can be appealed by either party to county court, the Commonwealth Court and later the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Kline said if all those appeals are made, the case could easily stretch to five years or more.

Kline discussed the matter in more detail with the supervisors during a closed -door session.

Chairman Dave Hoff and Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas were absent from the meeting.

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