



The Express-Times

Septic system lessons urged

Official wants to aid new homeowners.

Friday, August 19, 2005

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The Express-Times

FORKS TWP. -- Flushing cigarette butts, coffee grinds and grease down the drain is a bad idea for residents who use septic systems.

That's just one tip residents who live in the 500 township homes with septic systems might find helpful, said township Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas.

During Thursday's supervisors meeting, she suggested educating residents about how to use and maintain their septic systems.

She envisions a flier with tips such as when to empty the system and a follow-up meeting during which residents could ask questions.

The information could help residents who move into a home with a septic system for the first time, Nicholas said.

Talk about septic systems stemmed from a Forks Township sewer authority meeting and discussions with Supervisor Henning Holmgaard, Nicholas said.

"We don't want to make more regulations," she said. "We just want to make sure they're working and safe for the environment."

Educating residents would be a preventative measure, Nicholas said.

Supervisor John Ackerman stressed the education should come from the township rather than the sewer authority.

The state Department of Environmental Protection offers recommendations on septic systems, Township Engineer Fred Hay said. Educating residents about what to put down their sinks and getting their systems pumped every three years is a good idea, he said.

Presently, a township employee inspects the systems when they are installed and checks out problems, Nicholas said.

Township officials plan to look into the septic system education concept. Nicholas said she expects the topic to come up in future discussions among supervisors.

Nicholas said the topic is timely in light of a recent proposal for a housing development in the farmland protection district, where zoning requires septic systems.

The planning commission recently viewed two informal sketches of housing developments in the farmland protection district.

Kings Mill Development Co. LLC has proposed either 800 or 162 homes at the site. The 800-home concept, which calls for a zoning overlay and extending public sewer into the farmland protection district, met with an unfavorable review from the planning commission last week.

The proposal for 162 homes conforms to the zoning and shows septic systems. Neither is a formal plan.

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