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Forks fills planning board vacancy

Supervisors vote 4-1 to appoint resident David Billings.

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Forks Township supervisors did not take recommendations from their Planning Commission to fill a vacancy on that board Thursday.

Instead they voted 4-1 to appoint resident David Billings, an AT&T manager and rejected a proposal for an alternate.

The planners had suggested Nicole Alexander, an attorney, and Billings as an alternate.

Speaking at a workshop held before the meeting, commission Chairman Dean Turner, noted as a reason for their selection, that Alexander and Billings participated on the subcommittees set up last summer as the commission began the steps to update its comprehensive plan.

In other business, supervisors agreed to have an ordinance drawn up, providing for the freezing of the tax millage on preserved farms within the township under the state's Act 4.

Maria Bentzoni, Northampton County administrator for Farmland Preservation, encouraged the township to act "not only because it would provide an incentive to landowners to preserve their farmland but also help sustain the current preserved farms so they remain productive and continue to support the local community."

Forks Township, she said, has only one farm, which is 103 acres, in farmland preservation.

But, she pointed out, while there will be a tax loss, such action "would actually save money." She said if 75 homes were built on that acreage, it would mean 151 kids in the school district.

Currently Forks has a 4.6-mill real estate tax, but if taxes were raised half a mill, the township would lose \$12 a year from that farm for a total loss in 10 years of \$117.

Recommending support, Chuss said Forks has been talking for years to do something for Farmland Preservation and this could help.

Supervisors agreed to permit the township Historical Society to display its recently restored merchants wagon in the Municipal Building's lobby.

Township Manager Richard Schnaedter said the wagon had been restored at a cost of \$11,000 and was now being stored in a garage. Karl Miller, Historical Society president, in a letter, said the society feels the wagon should be located where members of the community can see and appreciate "this fine piece of Forks history."

The wagon was built in the early 1900s by Cyrus Graver at his blacksmith and carriage shop at Kesslerville Road and Sullivan Trail.

Solicitor Karl Kline said, in granting permission, the society will be notified the township would not be responsible for any damages.

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