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135 homes approved in Forks, despite driveway worries Township planners fear subdivision could hike chance of crashes on Mitman Road.

By Joe Nixon
Of The Morning Call

Forks Township supervisors Thursday gave final approval to a 135-home subdivision near Shawnee Middle School and went along with a proposal by their newest member to establish supervisor committees in five areas.

Supervisors were unanimous in their approval of plans for Sterling Hill Estates, a 135-home development proposed by builder Jim Seitz on 69 acres south of Arndt Road and west of Mitman Road.

The township Planning Commission last month recommended against approval after at least one member, Vice Chairman Erik Chuss, expressed concern about safety along Mitman Road because of several common driveways exiting onto that street.

Chuss expressed those views again Thursday, saying he was worried about cars from the development interacting with heavy bus traffic from the school. Project engineer Don Frederickson said an 8-foot-wide sidewalk, which will double as a bike path, will ring the project. He said Seitz also agreed to include a tot lot in the center of the project.

In response to a proposal from new Supervisor C. David Howell, supervisors agreed to establish five standing committees, made up of two supervisors each, eliminating the former liaison system where one supervisor had responsibility for a specific township area, like police, or public works.

Howell, the current board vice chairman, said the system he proposed fostered open government and was necessary for supervisors to better handle the problems facing the township. He said roles under the old liaison system were never defined.

"Some simply minded the store. Others are proactive. It's all over the place," he said.

Committees established Thursday include finance and administration, public works, public safety, parks and recreation, and community relations. Howell also suggested the township consider establishing an ad hoc committee for economic development.

One supervisor, Chairman John Ackerman, initially expressed skepticism about the the advantages of the new system. "I'm willing to give it a try," said Supervisor Donald Miller.

In other business, supervisors approved final plans for the Riverview Estates recreation center, a private facility that will serve residents of the Riverview Estates and Riverview Estates West subdivisions near Newlins Road.

Sal Panto Jr., chief executive officer for Riverview Estates developer Gary Strausser, said he hoped construction could start in the next month.

joe.nixon@mcall.com

610-559-2145

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