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No decision made on Forks grocery store Supervisors cite traffic as concern in proposal for upscale market.

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They didn't say yes, but they didn't say no.

Forks Township supervisors decided Thursday that a proposal from a developer to locate an upscale grocery store at the southeast corner of Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road needs more study — and discussion. The supervisors will talk about the request in a joint workshop Tuesday with the township Planning Commission.

SamCar Group Ltd., of Pittston, Luzerne County, has proposed locating a 69,000-square-foot grocery store on about 10 acres in the Sullivan Trail Business Park. But to do that in the employment center zoning district, the township would have to approve a zoning change. SamCar has already proposed a CVS pharmacy on one of three lots it wants to develop in the business park, but the grocery project would take up all three lots. The pharmacy is a permitted use and wouldn't require any zoning adjustment.

The developers have said they are prepared to build the pharmacy if the township decides it does not want a grocery store on the site.

Like the township Planning Commission, several supervisors had questions about the traffic impact of the proposed grocery store. Rose Randazzo-Pizzuto, a partner and in-house counsel for SamCar, said negotiations are ongoing with several grocery chains.

Township Solicitor Karl Kline will draw up several proposed zoning changes for supervisors to review next month.

The developers did not push the supervisors for a decision Thursday, and several supervisors said more time was needed. "I don't think this is the time or the place to decide this right now," said Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas.

"I don't think anybody here is saying we're just going to dismiss it," said Supervisor Chairman David Hoff near the end of the discussion.

Supervisor C. David Howell said a grocery store in the township's north end would not be just for Forks and would draw people from great distances. "We have to understand the impact of an upscale grocer," he said.

The developers have said intersection improvements, and a traffic light at the Braden Boulevard entrance to the business park, are part of the grocery store package.

One township resident, Pete Rossi, supported the idea of a second grocery store in the township. He said the use would take strain off the town center district in the township's southern end, where the only township grocery store, a Giant supermarket, is located. "It gives the people of this township a choice," he said.

The developer's attorney, James Broughal of Bethlehem, said the group was only looking for a zoning change to allow a grocery store. He said there was no hidden agenda. "We're not looking for a big box that we could put some other use in there," he said.

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