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Forks officials move forward on store

Solicitor to draft ordinance allowing market as use in zone.

By Fred Walter
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Forks Township supervisors are opening the zoning door to permit the use of a 10-acre site for a proposed 70,000-square-foot building that would feature a major grocery store with in-house bakery, sit-down cafe, pharmacy and banking outlet. A gasoline station would be adjacent to the store.

Supervisors on Thursday night unanimously agreed to have township solicitor Karl Kline prepare an ordinance that would allow the food market as a conditional use within the employment-center zoning district at the southeast corner of Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road.

Currently the use is not permitted in that zone. The site is part of the Sullivan Trail Business Park. A public hearing will be scheduled before final action is taken.

The proposal has been under discussion for the past month as presented by SamCar Ltd. of Pittston, Luzerne County.

The company has a plan to develop one of three lots on the site for a CVS pharmacy that is a permitted use, but told supervisors there is a strong interest in the township by several grocery chains.

The township Planning Commission, although concerned about traffic impact, and many residents support the grocery store proposal because the growing township now has only a Giant food store as a major supermarket.

Rose Randazzo-Pizzuto, a SamCar business partner, last month described the proposed as an "upscale" grocery store, but Supervisors C. David Howell and Bonnie Nicholas questioned the description without knowing the name of the store chain.

Randazzo-Pizzuto said her partnership is talking to at least six interested grocery chains, but can't negotiate a contract without knowing that the township will approve the required zoning change.

She said the Wegmans food market group is not one of the interested clients because that company would need a larger store and generally doesn't build one that is less than 20 miles from an existing Wegmans.

Fred Walter is a freelance writer.

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