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Forks approves National Guard center

Facility would house new Stryker troop transport, other military vehicles.

By Joe Nixon Of The Morning Call

Forks Township supervisors on Thursday approved a land development plan for a new Pennsylvania National Guard readiness center that will house the new Stryker troop transport and other military vehicles.

The project, made public in early 2004, is set for a 22-acre site on Uhler Road, east of Kesslersville Road. The township Planning Commission recommended approval at its June meeting.

Two National Guard units, a cavalry troop based in Wilson and a support company from Bethlehem will be housed at the new Forks facility but retain their identities.

Construction could start next summer and take about 18 months to complete, a National Guard official said last month.

The Forks site will feature a 38,000-square-foot readiness center and a 34,000-square-foot maintenance facility.

Paul D. Erfle, an engineer with STV Inc. of Douglassville, Berks County, told supervisors on Thursday that the maintenance facility would be built first. He said only light maintenance will be done on vehicles at the Forks facility. Erfle said the project probably will exceed \$9 million.

Lt. Col. Chris Cleaver, public affairs officer for the Pennsylvania National Guard at Fort Indiantown Gap, said last month that \$1.5 billion is being invested in the Stryker program statewide.

Stryker vehicles housed at the Forks site will be part of a larger state National Guard Stryker Brigade Combat Team. Erfle said only about 16 Stryker vehicles will be housed in Forks. Strykers are rubber-wheeled, 19-ton transport tanks. Humvees and two types of military cargo trucks also are slated to be housed in Forks, but no ordnance will be stored at the facility.

In other business Thursday, supervisors gave preliminary approval to a land development plan for Jacob's Farm II, a proposed active-adult community of 135 manufactured homes.

The development is adjacent and just north of the first phase of Jacob's Farm, which is under construction. The project is between Kesslersville Road and Sullivan Trail, south of Uhler Road.

Also Thursday, supervisors filled a vacancy on the township Recreation Board, appointing John O'Neil, who will serve until the end of next year.

O'Neil has been volunteering with the board, filling a treasurer role. He was one of two candidates for the vacancy.

"It's unfortunate there are only two candidates in a community this size," observed Supervisor Chairman David Hoff.

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