

From The Morning Call

July 21, 2006

# Forks approves rezoning for 2nd large supermarket

**Despite public opposition, supervisors vote 3-1 for the change.**

By Joe Nixon Of The Morning Call

KRISTIN

SINCAVAGE of Forks Township holds a sign at the township supervisors' meeting to demonstrate her view that local zoning should be enforced without change. However, developer SamCar Ltd. persuaded the supervisors to alter zoning for a large supermarket.

Betty E. Cauler

The Morning Call

Forks Township may well be in line for its second large supermarket, this one in the municipality's north end.

The township supervisors Thursday night approved a change to the Forks zoning ordinance that will allow, with conditions, a large grocery store in the township's employment center zoning district.

The board voted 3-1 for the change in front of a packed meeting room. Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas was the dissenting vote. Supervisor John Ackerman was absent.

While plans must still be submitted and approved by the township Planning Commission and supervisors, the rezoning removed a big hurdle for the proposed development.

The developer, SamCar Ltd., of Pittston, Luzerne County, asked that supermarkets be listed among permitted uses in the employment center district.

The company has three 3-acre lots in the Sullivan Trail Business Park at the southeast corner of Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road and initially proposed a CVS drugstore on one of the parcels. But after receiving interest from grocery chains, the developer proposed a 69,000-square-foot store on the entire 9 acres and sought the zoning change.

The developers had said they would return to the pharmacy proposal if the grocery amendment failed. SamCar officials attended Thursday's meeting, but declined comment after the vote.

The zoning change sets certain conditions on a grocery store in the employment center district. Among the conditions is the requirement that each store be adjacent to arterial and collector roads, or two arterial roads.

A township group, Residents Who Care, mailed fliers in advance of Thursday's meeting, urging residents to attend and object to the proposal on the grounds it would create too much traffic and invite other rezoning requests.

Easton attorney Timothy Prendergast, representing the group, said the zoning should not change. He said the proposed store will worsen an already bad traffic situation on Sullivan Trail.

"It's going to bring people from all over," he said, arguing that it is "simply ridiculous" to claim the supermarket traffic wouldn't add to the problems on Sullivan Trail.

He said the group had a petition signed by about 90 people objecting to the proposed store. "If we change one part of the EC [employment center district], then the domino falls," he said.

Prendergast said the group's mail campaign was financed by residents and not Giant Food Stores, the only supermarket in the township.

Others spoke against the proposed supermarket, but there were supporters and even a petition in favor of the store. Some supervisors said the majority of the calls they got on the matter favored the store.

Supervisor C. David Howell said the township needed sustainable development in the employment center district, an area he said was the "economic engine" that drives the community.

"We can only live so long on the revenue we get from our homes," Howell said.

Copyright © 2006, [The Morning Call](#)