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From The Morning Call

Forks eyes septic system program

Officials say plan would focus on education as well as management.

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Only about 10 percent of the homes and businesses in Forks Township use septic systems, but the potential for more has officials considering a low-key education program.

The supervisors on Thursday said Township Manager Cathy Kichline would review state recommendations on septic system management programs. Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas, a member of the township Sewer Authority, said the goal will be to provide information to septic system owners about the proper use and care of the systems.

"I think the Sewer Authority would like to make sure people are educated," she said.

Nicholas said the idea for a management program was first raised by Supervisor Henning Holmgaard. The township, through its engineer, has a sewage enforcement officer, and Nicholas said there are no plans for inspection mandates or other requirements on property owners.

Kichline, who serves as the authority's assistant secretary/treasurer, said a management system could create a database of septic systems, start an education program, and track any problems. Forks has about 520 septic systems out of about 4,800 properties, she said.

The township recently installed sewers along part of Route 611 because of septic system problems there on undersized lots near the Delaware River. Nicholas said she was not aware of problems with septic systems elsewhere and stressed the program could serve to educate property owners, especially those who have never had a property with a septic system.

"That way, you prevent the problem instead of creating one," she said.

The septic system discussion comes on the heels of proposals for development of about 380 acres in the farmland preservation district in the township's northeast quarter. One of the plans from Nic Zawarski and Son of Bethlehem and Doylestown's Signature Homes calls for 162 homes that would comply with the 2-acre minimum lot size and use septic systems and wells.

Another more controversial idea shows more than 800 housing units on the site, with a 460-unit active-adult community near Richmond and Newlins roads, and about 375 single-family homes on a second chunk of land farther north and west. The larger plan would need a zoning change, something the township Planning Commission resoundingly rejected last week.

The Sewer Authority this week also reiterated a stand taken in January against extending sewers north of Newlins Road, a crucial element of the larger plan proposed by Zawarski and Signature.

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