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From The Morning Call

Forks Twp. officials grant permit for recreation center Complex will be built on nearly 5 acres in Riverview Estates.

By Fred Walter
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Forks Township supervisors unanimously agreed Thursday that a proposed recreation center is a suitable use in the private Riverview Estates development along Ramblewood Drive.

After a public hearing, the board voted 4-0 to grant a conditional use permit to the developer, Strausser Enterprises, for a 4.8-acre tract in the residential district. The site would include a swimming pool and outdoor areas for volleyball, tennis and basketball.

Strausser's attorney, Leonard Mellon, said a recreation trail through the development would provide walking and biking access to the complex.

He said the center would be maintained and operated by a homeowners' association for use by Riverview residents, but the association would have the option to rent some of the facilities to community groups.

Mellon said there would be no night activities, so there is no need for lighting that could annoy nearby residents. Most of the site would remain as open space areas.

The complex originally was part of a 25-acre "town center" complex that included retail shops, but supervisors rejected that plan. Strausser returned with the new plan for the recreation center only. No one objected to the proposal.

Supervisors ruled that the proposal meets the township's comprehensive plan objectives, complies with zoning regulations and would be a suitable use for the residential community.

In related business, supervisors said they will notify Strausser to complete all the street and utility improvements in the first phase of the project by the end of November. The plan originally was approved in May 2001.

Supervisor Donald H. Miller, the township's recreation director, said work is under way to improve the Zucksville Road access driveway to the township's community center. He said a more visible sign and lights will be added to mark the entrance.

The Forks supervisors also considered a request of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley for a \$5,663 donation to support homeless shelters operated by the Lehigh Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing in Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton.

Even though the shelters are in the cities, supervisors learned that nearly half the residents using them originate from area townships, and that 25 percent are employed, but can't afford the high rental housing rates. Supervisors will consider the request when they prepare the 2006 budget. The last year the township made a donation was 2001.

Fred Walter is a freelance writer.

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