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Forks zoning challenge continues

By: Christina Georgiou

The Forks Township Zoning Hearing Board heard more than two hours worth of testimony Monday night from developer KMRD LP's expert witness Dennis F. Glackin, President of Glackin, Thomas, Panzak Inc., concerning the definition and amount of developable land in Forks.

KMRD, LP owns 550 acres of land in the township, which is zoned farmland protection (FP), and as such can only be developed as three acre housing lots, Zoning Hearing Board Chairman John Pappas said. The developer is challenging the zoning ordinance, claiming that several sections are arbitrary, unreasonable, exclusionary and unconstitutional.

"The applicant is challenging the farmland preservation district, claiming it is restrictive zoning and does not allow for an adequate array of housing," Pappas stated. "He would like to build apartments, townhouses, condos and mobile homes to maximize the amount of units."

Under cross-examination from Township Attorney Steven Goudsouzian, Glackin stated that developable land would include lots that have received approval to be developed, lots that are currently being built on and land that is being used as farmland. The farmland protection district in Forks covers 25.8 percent of the township or 1,603 acres, he said.

Glackin stated that the developer's proposal for development T-16, which covers 219 acres, would include 6.4 units per acre of townhouses and 4.4 units per acre of mobile homes. Development T-17, which is 166 acres, would feature 8.9 units per acre of condos and apartments.

Goudsouzian listed five or six developments which allow townhouses currently under construction in Forks, asking Glackin if he was aware of them.

He replied in the negative. The attorney then noted the explosive growth of the township over the past three years, which is seven times the growth of other townships in the county. He asked Glackin if he had done any traffic studies, and he replied that he had not done so.

"We're the fastest growing township in the area," said Zoning Hearing Board member Lou Moyer. "The township has made provisions for townhouses, mobile home parks, etc. Yet you say the township is unreasonable in issuing permits. Do you look at quality of life issues when you look at a township for developing?"

"I assume the township has picked a parcel of land and zoned it as EC (Employment Center), etc., based on their own studies," Glackin replied.

"Do you ask school administrators what impact 2,500 more kids will have on the school system?," Moyer asked.

"We talk to the fire and police officials and look at the impact of more school kids," Glackin said. "But if zoning says a piece of ground can accommodate X number of people, I assume they've studied all this."

Board Vice Chairman Robert Egolf asked Glackin if he was aware that the land his client wants to develop has no sewer and water service. "We could possibly put in wells," Glackin replied. "But if we can't provide sewer, then we can't develop at a certain density."

The board agreed to continue the hearing on February 19 at 7:30 p.m. and March 12 at 7:30 p.m.

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