



## THE EXPRESS-TIMES

### **Forks group stays active, despite lulls**

**No crises in township. As a result, group works to regroup for next issue.**

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**By SARAH MAUSOLF**  
The Express -Times

FORKS TWP. | A developer had just pitched building 837 homes in the farmland preservation district, and the Forks Action Committee's Web survey asked this question:

"How long before the board of supervisors caves into the developers' whims and changes the farmland preservation requirements?"

The survey shows the self-described watchdog group refuses to shy away from controversy and remains intact despite a post-election exodus of some members.

Former member Scott Gingold, who once coaxed writers onto the FAC's blog, left the group this past fall over philosophical differences. He declined to elaborate why.

Gingold recently launched Residents Who Care. The group, like FAC, also drums up candidates for local offices.

Several people familiar with Forks Action Committee said November's election created a rift among its membership.

While the committee endorsed now -Supervisor C. David Howell, some members supported his political rival, Leon Fisher. Some members drifted away from the group.

Now FAC seeks recruits for its steering committee, said member Frank Hawkinson.

"We've had some successes, and we've sort of gone dormant since the November election, and as a result people have drifted away," he said. "We don't have any impending crises or issues that we've had to mobilize for, so we're now in a re-assembling mode and a reorganizing mode to get active again."

A weekly survey question chronicles controversy in the township.

This week, the question gauges support for a proposed supermarket at Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road.

Sometimes questions transcend township boundaries. In January, 70.6 percent of respondents argued a horse-racing track in neighboring Palmer Township would have an adverse effect on Forks.

Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas said the survey would be more useful if results listed the number of respondents.

"It does give you kind of a feeling for what the people think, but if you knew how many people voted it would be a lot better," she said. "It could be 80 percent out of five."

Hawkinson said the group keeps the number of respondents private because it varies widely from week to week.

Howell, the candidate FAC endorsed, said the survey reveals which issues fuel the most public interest.

"What I do like about them is they are very topical and at least I can get a feel for what buttons are being pushed," he said.

Howell said township officials might revive a quarterly newsletter and include a survey.

Gretchen Gerstel, a Former Forks Action Committee member, said some of the questions are good but others are misleading.

For example, a question on Big Woody's Pizza and Sports Bar off Sullivan Trail asks "How happy are you that Forks will be home to another pizza restaurant?" The question skirts the controversial question of whether the shop should score a liquor license transfer, Gerstel said.

A second question on Big Woody's gauged concerns on the liquor license.

In survey work, it's impossible to completely avoid bias, Hawkinson said.

"We try to present things fairly but, yes, we do have a bias," Hawkinson said. "We think we represent a large body of citizen thought, and we're trying to represent that."

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