



## THE EXPRESS-TIMES

### Official defends Forks rezoning

Supermarket foes say amendment to law was done improperly.

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By **COURTNEY LOMAX**  
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FORKS TWP. | The township planning board and board of supervisors hadn't considered a second grocery store in the township prior to a developer's proposal to build one at Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road, according to township zoning officer Tim Weis.

Weis testified Monday as the first of at least two witnesses called by attorneys defending the supervisors' July decision to allow a grocery store on 9 acres in the employment center district of the township.

A grocery store was added as a conditional use to the employment center district, which already allows medical buildings and bus stations. Supervisors can impose conditions on the developer that would ensure specific stipulations are met.

A group of residents is challenging the zoning change, calling it spot zoning and arguing it was done with one developer specifically in mind.

Lidia Development Company Inc. wants to build a roughly 69,000-square-foot Weis Market and a gas station on the tract.

Giant is currently the only supermarket in the township.

Tim Weis, who has been working for the township for 20 years and is not related to the supermarket's management, said an additional grocery store would benefit the township and possibly residents in neighboring townships.

"(Our) first reaction was 'What a great idea. Why didn't we think of this?'" Weis testified in front of the zoning hearing board.

He said the planning commission and supervisors worried about traffic at the already busy intersection but PennDOT decides whether improvements are needed on state roads.

The developer originally proposed a CVS pharmacy prior to the grocery store proposal. Gary Asteak, attorney for the residents, said the zoning change was geared toward a specific developer.

"(There was) never any doubt to who this ordinance was designed to assist," Asteak said. "No other developer was knocking on your door."

Lidia Development Company Inc. attorney Jim Preston said the two plans had nothing to do with each other.

Weis said the developer wouldn't specify which grocery store it planned to build prior to the zoning change.

"As a matter of fact, there was a lot of interest in that and they wouldn't disclose that," he said.

Reporter Courtney Lomax can be reached at 610-258-7171 or by e-mail at [clomax@express-times.com](mailto:clomax@express-times.com).