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Solicitor questions development's size

Forks Township official says scaled-down project would abide by laws.

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By **COURTNEY LOMAX**
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FORKS TWP. | A developer who wants to build 3,000 homes in the farmland protection district could have avoided challenging the township's zoning laws if plans were slimmed down, township Solicitor Karl Kline said Monday at the second of several hearings on the challenge.

Bethlehem-based developer KMRD LP proposes constructing apartments, mobile homes and townhouses on 545 acres in the farmland protection district.

Roughly 50 residents sat on bleachers in the community center's gymnasium listening as Kline asked the developer's engineer Charles H. Unangst why sketch plans weren't submitted to fit current township zoning laws which allow a "cluster" option.

Kline said about 270 homes could be built on 545 acres if the developer followed the cluster option which calls for 1-acre of open space for each developed acre. Those estimates don't include roads which take up acreage.

"There's nothing in the ordinance to prevent (the developer) to submit plans to the township right now," Kline suggested.

Unangst agreed plans could be submitted to show what Kline suggested but said he wasn't asked to draw those plans.

The developer's attorney, John VanLuvanee, pointed out the ordinance doesn't require the developer to build cluster-style homes.

The last hearing in August attracted about 250 residents who trickled out of the gym as testimony wore on. Residents are not permitted to testify until all witness testimony is heard.

Resident Carole Rapp said there are several issues of concern related to the development that township residents should hear. She listed tax hikes associated with an increase in school-aged children and an increase in traffic.

One resident is concerned the hearings will increase taxes.

Rachel Hoagland wants the township to consider developing a legal defense fund to pay for the cost of the attorney and earmark left over money for open space improvements.

She said residents could speak through their wallets by contributing to the fund.

"I think people would love to donate," Hoagland said after the meeting.

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