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Zoning laws lax, land expert says

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By **COURTNEY LOMAX**
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FORKS TWP. | A second witness supports a developer's claim the township's zoning laws don't preserve farmland.

The same witness also pointed out that the township, which has grown more than 50 percent since 2000, will continue to grow.

Attorney John VanLuvanee questioned an expert municipal planner for nearly two hours Monday in the fourth of at least six hearings of a zoning appeal filed by Bethlehem-based developer KMRD LP. The developer owns 545 acres in the farmland protection district and proposes more than 3,000 homes on the land.

The hearings, which were previously held in the community center, were moved to the more comfortable seats of the municipal building to accommodate the dwindling crowd.

Dennis Glackin of Glackin Thomas Panzak Land Planning in Paoli testified the township's laws do not preserve farmland. The laws allow 3-acre lots or clustered development on 1-acre lots as long as half the land remains open space.

VanLuvanee asked a witness from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission similar questions at the last hearing. That testimony resulted in the same response.

Glackin said effective agricultural zoning requires much larger lot sizes. He suggested allowing one house on 25 acres.

Glackin pointed out the township's zoning ordinance doesn't fulfill the purpose of the farmland protection district as outlined in the township's 1997 comprehensive plan.

"(Cluster development) kinda takes a stab at it but it doesn't quite get there," Glackin said.

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