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Business owner's OK gets Forks stop light under way

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After months of bickering between Forks Township officials and a local businessman, both sides have agreed on a plan to install a traffic light at one of the community's most congested intersections.

Rob Leiser, owner of Leiser's Rentals, signed plans last week for the township to reconfigure the entrances to his business and construct a light at Sullivan Trail and Meco Road at taxpayer expense.

The state Department of Transportation, responsible for issuing permits for traffic signals, had previously said it would not green-light the project without Leiser's approval.

"The main reason I came around is because they have said they will pay for the changes to my property," said Leiser, who has been feuding with the township since he was denied a building permit in 2002. "I still have a lot of issues with the township, and they know I wasn't treated well."

Tempers on both sides flared in December when Leiser refused to sign the plans. He said the township proceeded with \$70,000 in design and engineering work without involving him in the discussions.

Annoyed local officials chastised Leiser at a Board of Supervisors meeting that month, saying he was holding the project hostage and jeopardizing safety improvements at one of the township's worst intersections.

"I'm very appreciative that Mr. Leiser has agreed to this," said Supervisor Chairman C. David Howell. "I'm sure the improvements to his property will advance his business."

Under the pending plan, the township would move Leiser's driveway on Sullivan Trail about 40 feet away from the intersection and build an additional entrance on Meco Road.

Officials made the traffic light a top priority after a 2004 study identified the intersection as one of the most congested in the township. The examination focused on 42 intersections and considered development in Forks and adjacent communities through 2012.

But few of the study's other suggestions have been accomplished, partly because the traffic light was given priority.

The township raised \$2 million from a 2003 bond issue to pay for improvements stemming from the study, but \$1.5 million was used to pay for the new municipal building. About \$400,000 remains in the account for road upgrades.

Work will begin as soon as PennDOT receives the plans back from the township and issues a permit. A final cost for the project is not yet known.

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