

# Hearing debates fairness of Forks' zoning regulations

Builders of proposed development say township doesn't allow for affordable housing.

By **Madeleine Mathias**  
Of The Morning Call

Forks Township continued its ongoing debate over a proposed 3,000-unit development.

Monday night's meeting at the township's municipal building marked the 11th hearing on the Kings Mill proposal for apartments, town houses and mobile homes in the northeast part of the township.

The developers, who are challenging the township zoning code, adopted in 2006, say Forks' code is unconstitutional because it does not assure affordable, diverse housing in the municipality.

Throughout the cross-examination of Art Bernard, a housing and land-use planner from Lambertville, N.J., Steven Goudsouzian, the township assistant solicitor, asked how and why the developer was emphasizing the New Jersey law which does require municipalities to provide affordable housing, no matter how affluent they are.

Bernard, who was witness for the developers, suggested the township should adopt something closer to what has been enacted in New Jersey.

The Kings Mill plan has been criticized by many residents who argue it will put 6,000 more cars on the township's two-lane roads and 8,000 children in the already crowded Easton Area School District.

Goudsouzian pressed the point that what is developed

depends on market forces. But Bernard said Forks Township needs more diverse housing, and that it should be providing for everyone in the community. He added that municipalities should be providing density requirements that allow developers to build different housing not just single-family homes.

The new code requires 3-acre minimum size building lots. Previously the minimum was 2 acres in the farmland district.

Goudsouzian asked Bernard if he was aware that the growth in Forks Township was fueled by people moving from New Jersey, but continuing to work in New Jersey.

Because of the spiraling cost of homes in Forks Township, Bernard said single people can't afford to live there, a reason for smaller houses and apartments.

He said a code change could meet the needs of older residents by including mobile home parks.

When Goudsouzian said there was a low vacancy rate in the township of 3.93 percent, Bernard said that was because there is an undersupply of housing.

James Wideman, a candidate for supervisor, questioned Bernard on statements that the present code does not allow the developer to make a high enough profit.

"I question whether their quest for profitability was of a higher regard than any kind of social issue they might have presented," said Wideman.

The next hearing is scheduled for May 21.

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