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From The Morning Call

Forks planners back Seitz housing proposal

Development calls for 135 homes near Shawnee Middle School.

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A developer's plans for 135 single-family homes on 69 acres near Shawnee Middle School in Forks Township got a preliminary nod from the township Planning Commission Thursday.

Planners voted 4-1, with Erik Chuss abstaining and Dean Turner casting the dissenting vote, to recommend that township supervisors give preliminary conditional approval to the project. Daniel Lichtenwalner was absent.

Developer Jim Seitz of Forks has proposed the homes on the former Seifert Farm, a parcel at the southwest corner of Mitman and Arndt roads. The east end of the development would be about two blocks from Shawnee. Seitz said he hoped to begin construction within six months.

Among the conditions on the project are a bike path around the exterior of the property and provisions for safe bus stop areas, the locations of which will be determined by Easton Area School District.

Chuss abstained because he said he knows Seitz's attorney, state Rep. Craig Dally, R-Northampton. Turner said he objected to the pressure more housing would place on the township and the school system. Asked by planners about the possibility of reducing the number of homes, Seitz's engineer, Donald Frederickson, said an earlier plan from another developer had proposed 176 homes on the same land.

Planners also recommended final approval for the Fort James II subdivision from developer J.G. Petrucci of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Three lots will be created on a 40-acre tract on Kuebler Road, including a 21-acre tract for a pipe distribution company. Petrucci will develop the land and build a nearly 150,000-square-foot facility for Jalapeneaux Inc.

In other business, planners also recommended approval of land development plans for the expansion of the Career Institute of Technology off Kessler'sville Road. The school's Joint Operating Committee in December approved a \$16.5 million bond issue to finance the expansion and renovations. The 17,000 square feet of additional space will be built first, followed by renovations that include a new roof and an updated heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system.

School officials have said they hope to have the project completed by August or September 2007.

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