

May 12, 2006
From The Morning Call

"Once we open the door, there's going to be a wedge opening it even more." DEAN TURNER Forks Township planner Forks planners favor change for grocery store **Zoning issue still faces several more reviews before final decision.**

By Joe Nixon
Of The Morning Call

A possible zoning change in Forks Township that would allow a grocery store in the municipality's north end is gathering momentum.

The township Planning Commission voted 5-2 Thursday to recommend a proposed ordinance to township supervisors who last week agreed with language that would add a grocery store as a permitted use in the employment center district, with conditions that included a prohibition against drive-through business.

The measure, which among other things sets a 100,000-square-foot ceiling on store size and a minimum 5-acre lot size, now goes back to the township supervisors, who must decide whether to advertise the proposed change. The matter then gets reviewed again by the township Planning Commission and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Lastly, a public hearing is held before any final action is taken.

Planners Erik Chuss and Dean Turner cast the dissenting votes Thursday, and both cited traffic concerns with the project. Turner has also expressed concern that allowing an exception in the employment center district will open the door for other requests elsewhere. "Once we open the door, there's going to be a wedge opening it even more," he said.

A Pittston-based developer has proposed building a 69,000-square-foot grocery store and associated gas station on 10 acres in a business park at the southeast corner of Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road, across Sullivan Trail from Braden Airpark. The proposed ordinance also mandates that grocery stores be adjacent to arterial or collector roads or two arterial roads and the intersection meets that requirement.

The developer, SamCar Ltd., originally proposed building a CVS drugstore on about three acres in the business park, but has put that plan on hold in hopes of getting approval to build the grocery store.

In other business, the planners viewed, but took no action on a sketch plan for a new Keystone Nazareth Bank & Trust branch at the corner of Sullivan Trail and Zucksville Road. Bill Petterson, assistant vice president for general services for the banking company, told township officials the existing branch at the site would continue to operate while a new one is constructed. He said bank officials determined it would be more cost effective to build a new branch than renovate the existing one.

Planners also unanimously approved a land development plan for a 25,600-square-foot manufacturing plant on a 4.8-acre lot on Kuebler Road in the Fort James industrial park subdivision. Tom Shaughnessy, representing developer J.G. Petrucci Co. Inc., said the tenant will be an adhesives product maker currently located in the southeastern part of the state. The tenant's identity was not released.

joe.nixon@mcall.com

610-559-2145

Copyright © 2006, [The Morning Call](#)