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## **Officials ease process for N.J. land developer**

### **Upper Mount Bethel board waives subdivision plan on Reliant property.**

By Fred Walter  
Special to The Morning Call

Upper Mount Bethel Township supervisors have made it easier for a New Jersey developer to buy 80 acres of industrial-zoned land from Reliant Energy on River Road.

Supervisors on Monday night voted 3-1 to exempt Reliant from submitting a subdivision plan and getting township approval before the land is sold to Lamtec Inc. of Flanders, N.J. Supervisor Loren Rabbat opposed. Supporting the request from Lamtec were Supervisors Jerry Geake, Ed Nelson and Vice Chairman Joe Battillo, who led the meeting in place of absent Chairman Andrew Nestor.

Lamtec's attorney David Jordan of Bangor said the company faced a Feb. 20 deadline to close the deal to purchase three parcels totaling 80 acres from a larger tract of about 900 acres. He argued that a subdivision plan shouldn't be required because each of the three lots is still identified as a separate parcel for taxing purposes.

He said a deed conveyed in 1999 to Reliant from the former owner, Metropolitan Edison Co., actually shows 31 separate taxable parcels that total 905 acres. Jordan stressed that once the tract is sold, a land development plan for the site would be submitted and provide all the technical information that would be included in a subdivision plan.

Reliant disclosed last month that it is also considering the sale of 800 acres of the total land area to Ashley Development Corp. of Bethlehem. Proposed uses for that site are to be discussed by company representatives at the supervisors' public workshop at 7 p.m. Feb. 27 at the Mount Bethel Fire Co. social hall on Route 611.

Supervisors said neither Lamtec nor Ashley has submitted plans to show proposed uses for the land located in a general industrial zone that allows light industry and some commercial uses such as office buildings but not shopping centers or residential buildings.

Jeff Manzi, the township's voting member of the Bangor Area Economic Development Authority, applauded supervisors for supporting Reliant and Lamtec's request to expedite the sale by waiving the subdivision approval process. If the sale is made, he believes development of the 80 acres could create at least 100 new jobs for the area. The authority is overseeing the development of the nearby 100-acre Slate Belt Industrial Park along the township and Portland borough border.

Rabbat said she voted against the waiver because she feared it would set a legal precedent for similar requests to avoid the subdivision review process.

Township solicitor Ron Karasek said the best solution would be to ask Northampton County Court to decide the waiver issue, but Jordan said that process would take too long.

In other action, supervisors unanimously voted to ask the Northampton County Association of Township Supervisors to support efforts to give townships or school boards the power to require developers to pay school impact fees on residential projects.

The fees would apply only to housing that requires local school districts to expand their educational facilities for new children living in the new units. The fees would be used to avoid local property tax increases by the schools and municipalities.

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