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## National Guard center endorsed

**Forks planners favor building for Stryker vehicle, and Wilson and Bethlehem units.**

By Joe Nixon Of The Morning Call

A proposed Pennsylvania National Guard readiness center and maintenance facility in Forks Township got a favorable recommendation Thursday from the township Planning Commission.

The panel voted 6-0, with one member absent, to recommend preliminary land development approval for the facility, which among other things will house the Army's new armored Stryker troop transport vehicle.

Two National Guard depots, of the 104th Cavalry troop in Wilson and a support company in Bethlehem, would be housed at the new Forks center, but will retain their identities.

Construction on the facility, on 22 acres off Uhler Road, east of Kesslerstown Road, could start late next summer and would take about 18 months to complete, said National Guard Maj. Mark Austin. According to project plans, the site will feature a 38,000-square-foot readiness center and a 34,000-square-foot maintenance facility.

In addition to the new Stryker vehicle, other vehicles, such as Humvees and two types of cargo trucks will also be stored at the Forks site, Austin said. No other types of vehicles are planned for the facility, and Austin told the planners there will be no ordnance at the site.

Lt. Col. Chris Cleaver, public affairs officer for the Pennsylvania National Guard at Fort Indiantown Gap, said \$1.5 billion is being invested in the Stryker program statewide, including facilities, equipment and other needs.

"It's a tremendous investment in the Pennsylvania National Guard," Cleaver said earlier this week, calling the amount of money "historically unprecedented."

In other business, planners also recommended preliminary approval for plans for Jacob's Farm II, the second phase of an age-restricted manufactured home community east of Kesslerstown Road and south of Uhler Road.

There are 135 homes in the second phase. Braden Boulevard will run from Kesslerstown Road, through the development and an office park, and connect to Sullivan Trail.

A proposal for a 36-unit twin-home condominium development proposed by Cahill Properties of Easton won a split-vote recommendation for preliminary land development approval Thursday, amid continuing concerns of some planners about a flood plain that runs through the 14-acre property bounded by Kesslerstown and W. Newlins Road and Sullivan Trail.

Also Thursday, the planners saw a sketch plan for a 100,200-square-foot plastics manufacturing plant planned for a 12.4-acre tract off Glover Road, near Kuebler Road.

[joe.nixon@mcall.com](mailto:joe.nixon@mcall.com)

610-559-2145

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