

From The Morning Call

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Forks Twp. planners recommend approval for industrial park

By Joe Nixon Of The Morning Call

A proposed 124-acre industrial park got a recommendation for preliminary approval from the Forks Planning Commission on Thursday in a meeting that also saw the panel call for rejection of a planned 185-home subdivision in the farmland protection district.

The commission also recommended preliminary approval for a proposed CVS drugstore at Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road, and accepted for review plans from the same developer for a Weis Market on essentially the same land.

Plans for the industrial park, known as Fort James III and proposed by J.G. Petrucci Co. of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, call for 19 lots on property east of Kessler'sville Road, and south of Uhler and Glover roads. While the commission favored the plan concept, a secondary access road into the development became a point of contention.

Greg Rogerson of J.G. Petrucci said that in addition to the primary entrance on Uhler Road, the company favored acquiring easements to build a secondary road out to Glover Road — if the first option of going over a Norfolk & Southern Railroad crossing to Kessler'sville Road can't be achieved.

The planners said that instead of getting railroad approval for the grade crossing, they preferred the secondary road be extended through the boundary of two neighboring industrial sites to Kuebler Road.

Rogerson said those neighboring businesses already have rejected the idea of routing the secondary road between them.

The planners then recommended the road situation be resolved within five years and called for the township to condemn land if necessary. Rogerson at one point told the planners that the plan might be withdrawn based on the stance on the Kuebler Road option.

The recommendation to reject plans for the 185-home King's Farm subdivision came after township solicitor Karl Kline and township engineer Fred Hay said no work had been done on the plan, including soil tests for on-lot septic systems, after a time extension was accepted this summer.

Reached after the meeting, Bethlehem attorney Dennis Benner, a partner in the project along with builders Nic Zawarski and Sons and Signature Homes, disputed the township's characterization of the situation. He said the township "failed to respond" to inquiries from the developers and said updated plans "will be forthcoming" for work that needs to be done on the project.

The King's Farm plan was submitted late last year and is grandfathered under the former zoning ordinance that permitted single-family homes on minimum 2-acre lots. The homes are planned for about 500 acres.

The development partnership has challenged township zoning in the farmland protection zoning district and alleged the municipality failed to provide for its fair share of some high-density uses. An informal sketch plan for more than 3,000 apartments, townhouses and mobile homes was submitted along with the zoning challenge.

The CVS drugstore plan was the original one submitted by SamCar Ltd. of Pittston, Luzerne County. The company also submitted plans for a 62,000-square-foot Weis Market on about 9 acres that included the smaller proposed drugstore tract in the same development, the Sullivan Trail Business Park at the southeast corner of Sullivan Trail and Uhler Road.

