

Amity crafts village for everyone

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After recently determining the "low impact" property uses that could be permitted in rural village zoning, the Amity Township Planning Commission agreed on May 8 to decrease the permitted density of multi-family developments for rural villages.

Commission members said the township's current zoning ordinance (of 1991) should be amended for rural villages to permit two units per acre instead of the current three units per acre.

It also agreed to change the number of single-family, semi-detached units from seven units per acre to four units per acre.

Various members of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission proposed the creation of a modern rural village in Amityville to permit by-right businesses in the existing (and new) buildings that would hopefully result in a successful, profitable village and make it a destination point in Amity Township.

"I don't want to see someone trying to build some huge apartment complex -- that isn't what we're trying to encourage," said Chairman Paul R. Weller.

"I want this to be as restrictive as possible unless attached to a business," said member Terry L. Jones.

The rural village would be located in the area of Weavertown and Old Swede roads at Old Airport Road and on properties that are zoned medium density residential (MDR).

Township Engineer John Weber provided the commission with an Amityville rural village map to indicate the six land parcels in the proposed rural village boundaries that have between five and 10 acres.

Under the current ordinance of three units per acre in MDR, a 10 acre parcel could contain up to 30 apartment units.

The result of multi-family developments would be more children attending the Daniel Boone School District, increased school costs, higher property taxes and then program cuts to reduce the district's \$5 million annual budget deficits.

Weber said an exception to the new decreased density could be when the multi-family housing would be attached to a commercial use.

He said in that case, a dual usage on a large property could have three housing units.

"The idea was that we wanted to 'incentive-ize' the dual use," said township Solicitor Brian F. Boland.

Commission members said their next steps are to refine the ordinance's supplementary regulations that include signage, parking, landscaping, and exterior lighting.

Their intent with the low impact property uses, density considerations, and other future ordinance amendments is to continue to protect residents.

An example of that would be to not allow items to be displayed in front yards.

Jones said the current sign ordinance that allows a two-foot sign for a small home occupation business in MDR is too restrictive to home occupations.

"The township's rural village purpose is different than home occupations and supplementary regulations should be less restrictive to commercial owners," said Boland.