

Amity hears fifth plan for Schmale Farm

Published: Wednesday, April 06, 2011

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http://www.berksmontnews.com/articles/2011/04/06/southern_berks_news/news/doc4d9c7c05631cb240115527.bt

The owner of the 117-acre Schmale Farm, Old Swede and Pine Forge roads, Douglassville, has submitted at least four housing plans to Amity Township in the last seven years seeking a plan that would also satisfy township residents.

Plans have ranged from 237 single family homes to a 486 general market and age restrictive community and also to a 351-unit apartment community.

The latest plan from GCP Amity Residential, LP, 700 S. Henderson Road, King of Prussia, was presented to the Amity Township Board of Supervisors on March 23 in a conditional use hearing.

GCP, previously known as Greystone Capital Partners, wants to build 291 single family units as a planned residential development on the renamed Leaf Creek Farm that is in the medium density residential zoning district.

The board said it will render a decision at its May 4 meeting.

The land parcel is located adjacent to the Cider Mills subdivision.

Richard P. Almquist, Jr., vice president of land development at GPC, said Leaf Creek is proposed to have a combination of single family townhouses, twins, and homes.

Four people made themselves a party to the application, a far fewer number than the roomful of people opposed in 2007-08 to the 351 unit apartment plan.

Although the township approved that land development plan in April 2008, Greystone did not move forward with construction.

Prior to that plan, the board and township Planning Commission were working with

Almquist and Greystone on a "transitional age development" plan that proposed 256 general market town house units and 230 age restrictive single family homes.

A Greystone official told the board that the development would generate \$1,958,208, but the plan was denied by a tie-vote on Aug. 1, 2006. Supervisor Scott Stepp did not attend that meeting.

After that plan was denied, Greystone said they would submit another plan of 100 percent age restrictive 400 units.

"The 351 apartment units met with some rather frustrated response from the community and we have revisited the development options, said Almquist on March 23.

"The options include a number of single family detached and attached units that we believe through the work that we have done with the community and the boards that we have arrived at a plan that satisfies everyone," said Almquist.

"PRDs specify that all units have a common architecture although all the units will look a little different," said Almquist. "They won't just be soldiers in a line -- but staggered so there are horizontal and vertical differences, and there will be four to five townhouse units in a section."

He said the twin unit lot sizes will allow for a loft and a vaulted ceiling; those units will be age-targeted instead of age restricted for people to downsize but retain some character that they are downsizing from.

The townhouses will back up to the 25 percent of active open space included on site.

Matthew Hammond, engineer with Traffic Planning & Design, Pottstown, said Leaf Creek Farm would add 221 new vehicles to township roads during the afternoon peak hours of 4 and 6 p.m., for a total increase of 2,158 trips during a 24-hour period.

He said GPC is proposing to perform off-site road improvements that they would like applied as a credit against the traffic impact fees of \$800,000.

Those improvements include softening a curve on Pine Forge Road at a cost of \$400,000 and the installation of a traffic signal at Old Swede and Pine Forge roads, of about \$300,000 to \$350,000.

Leaf Creek Farm's main collector road, Gregory Boulevard, will empty onto Old Swede and Pine Forge roads.

Hammond said a study by the township's traffic engineer McMahon & Assoc., Exton, indicates that the prohibition of a left turn from Gregory Boulevard onto Old Swede Road, and forcing the traffic out to Pine Forge Road, could result in the state Department of Transportation approving the installation of a traffic signal at that nearby intersection.

PennDOT said in 2008 that a traffic signal is not warranted at Old Swede and Pine Forge roads.