

Proposed Amity zoning district likely to include residential

Published: Wednesday, August 17, 2011

http://www.berksmontnews.com/articles/2011/08/17/southern_berks_news/news/doc4e4c09ae4b8c5483160735.txt

By Denise Larive
News Writer

The Amity Township Planning Commission said Aug. 10 that a new commercial area along Route 422 would likely include a 200-unit residential component in order to be successful, but that it wouldn't be a "village" concept as suggested by the county.

Planning Commission members discussed a review letter by the Berks County Planning Commission and agreed that a "village" concept with residential above first floor commercial businesses wasn't part of the original concept.

Joseph F. Tornetta, owner of a 100 acre land parcel off of Township Line Road, proposed the Route 422 Overlay zoning district to develop 50 acre parcels along Route 422 that are in the shopping center and highway commercial zones.

Planning Commission Chairman Joseph Hayik said the county letter questions if the township is "interested in getting residential and commercial [on the parcel] or just the residential."

"I thought it was going to be commercial and age restrictive housing, but now we're opening it up to the general market?" asked commission member George Ferensick. "It's a beautiful location there at that bend [at Route 422 westbound] for commercial, but it looks like it's leaning toward neighborhood residential? What about the [township's] tax base? I thought we had enough residential and we're trying to build the tax base."

Commission member Paul R. Weller said the county is wrong that the residential was included in the ordinance as a goal.

"It was put there in addition to the commercial," said Weller. "The commission thought residential would work as a buffer and could complement it, but we pushed for age restrictive. Nobody has ever made a move to develop that parcel and it does have access issues. The infrastructure costs would be too high for just residential and it needs the commercial."

Supervisor and commission member Terry L. Jones said his previous motion for less than 200 units was not supported.

"Tornetta can't make a dime with just the 200 units," said Jones, adding, "he has to do another component, so that was my sway in allowing it to be written in this way."

"All his [Tornetta Realty Corp., Plymouth Meeting, Montgomery County] developments are beautiful

and contain an age targeted/residential element,” said Jones.

Commission members aid they are also considering a pedestrian walkway that would connect with the nearby Leaf Creek Trail and other walkways created one day by Reading Hospital at its medical buildings' site on Toll Gate Road.

The commission's recommendations will be forwarded to the Amity Township Board of Supervisors for review.