

Rolling Hills development hits snag in tract's soil analysis

Heather Radick

The Springfield supervisors acted on the preliminary plan and planning modules of the proposed Rolling Hills development at their Sept. 25 meeting.

Rolling Hills is a proposed subdivision on a 70-acre tract off Route 212 and Slifer Valley Road.

Although he saw many issues with the plan, Township Solicitor Terry Clemons stated that the central issue is conflicting soil classification of the property.

Clemons noted that the soil classification needed to be resolved and would be impacting the board's action.

Del Val Soils, the applicant's environmental consultant, stated that the project will not disturb prime agricultural lands. A report he submitted stated that there were no prime agriculture soils.

Springfield Township hired

Soil Services Company to evaluate the soils and the township's consultant determined that the soils were not properly classified, with a report stating that about 75 percent of the soils are prime agricultural soils.

Robert Gundlach, who represents developer HMH Limited, told the board that if the soils are mapped, as suggested by Soil Services Company, it would make a difference in the density, allowing for only eight to 12 homes. Gundlach stated that the application did not receive a fair review from the planning commission.

"There was clear hostility and intent to deny this plan from the beginning," stated Gundlach.

Clemons responded that the applicant had the opportunity to appear at meetings with his consultants numerous times but was not always present. He also explained that there should not have been any surprises with

the issues because they were clearly raised and addressed by the township engineer.

Supervisor Chuck Halderman commented on the township's stance in relation to protecting agricultural soils of statewide importance. He stated that the intent of the ordinance is to keep prime agricultural land preserved and protected for people in the future. Halderman explained that soil protection is vital to the well being of future generations.

"It's not going to be for us, our kids or grandkids, but it might be for somebody down the road who is looking for good soil to grow something and feed the people," Halderman said. "To change a name to reclassify these soils, how can you feel good about it?"

Because more time is needed to review recently submitted documents from the applicant, an extension was granted through the end of October.