

Tinicum hears plans for 611 development

Fiercely protective residents fear loss of open space

Elizabeth Bowman

Plans for residential development near Route 611 in Tinicum Township do not sit lightly with neighbors.

When they heard that plans for development near Route 611 would be presented at the Nov. 21 supervisors' meeting, citizens of Tinicum came out in force.

They were organized and encouraged by ECO-Bucks, a grass-roots organization of residents determined to stave off development of the township.

The crowd overflowed the municipal building, spilling out into the parking lot and making it necessary for the supervisors and those testifying, to use microphones, as the representatives and members of the Piper Group and Main Street developers shared the latest plans for development of three tracts on the Route 611 corridor.

Supervisor Boyce Budd asked the members of the audience to maintain civility and identify themselves before asking questions of the applicants. There were some early ruffians but the crowd settled in and challenged the applicants on many aspects of the proposal.

Attorney Rob Gundlach presented the revised plans for the three tracts beginning with the Carr tract of 20 acres, which will be deed restricted in perpetuity to Tinicum as a recreational space for township residents. This acreage is figured in to the 2.5 units per net acre in the proposal.

The Cooper-Wehrung parcel, once slated to hold 444 units, is now designed for 118 single-family homes or townhouses with all garages in the rear. The third development has three sub-parts at Old Durham Road and 611, and the arrangement is designed according to the Village-Residential guidelines set by the township.

Part of the property will hold 77

dwelling units and another part is to hold the sewage treatment plant. This part will be deed-restricted except for allowance for a farmer's market.

The part known as Durham West is to hold 23 townhouse units, and Durham East is to have 36 townhouses and 18 single-family units.

Drainage basins for storm water will flank the outer edges of the plan., which fits the Traditional Village format adopted by Tinicum since the Piper Group began the application process.

Fred Ebert talked about the sewage treatment facility, explaining that it will be a membrane, bio-reactive system with wetlands drainage that will need no chemical additives to function, and will discharge pollution-free water into the watershed of the Tohickon Creek.

He explained that the membrane bioreactor takes activated sludge and puts it through a fine filtration system before discharge. The plant itself is to be located in a building that resembles an old stone farmhouse to minimize the odor and noise and to make attractive in the landscape.

In this kind of system ultra violet light is used to kill germs, negating the need for chemicals. Ebert went on to describe the nature of the shallow marsh up to 18 inches deep and planted with wetlands plants into which the effluent will flow to "allow Mother Nature to recharge the ground."

Several residents questioned Ebert including Bob Stanfield who voiced concern about medications, hormones and caffeine now known to pass from our bodies into septic systems and rivers nationwide. Ebert responded that the system will meet all existing requirements for safety.

Jeff Clark spoke on behalf of the developers about the hydrology of the sites and the proposed wells for testing and pro-

duction. He said that the township requires a flow of 350 gallons/day/unit for approval, even though the typical home uses much less. The two 10-inch production wells are 400 feet deep and are expected to get 300 gallons/minute, though as yet untested.

The developer will be required to monitor wells within 1,000 feet of their wells which are in the Brunswick Foundation of aquifers, and has agreed to monitor even farther away. "If four years from now my well goes dry will you drill me a new one?" a resident called out, and Gundlach responded that the developer will sign a well-depletion agreement without an end.

When the developers were asked about the traffic impact, they voiced a plan to install a traffic light at Tohickon Valley and 611, which elicited some sounds of disapproval from the crowd. One resident asked about widening the road and another spoke about the school systems and lack of funds for expansion should the development attract families with school-age children.

Gundlach summed up the presentation by pointing out that the applicants had attempted to alter the plans in compromise with Tinicum, to satisfy the township ordinances.

The original proposal was for 10 units per acre of land and the new one is 2.5 units per acre, including the 20 acre open space parcel in the calculations. One of Gundlach's major requests was that in exchange for the reduction of density and the arrangement of units with garages in back, the developer needs to be allowed to build steps that intrude into the front yard.

That part of the presentation ended after 10 p.m. and most of the residents left during a brief break before the supervisors could get other business done.

The next meeting is 7:45 p.m. Dec.5.