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RIVERDALE - Farms endangered in boro

(by Leslie Scott - Staff Writer - February 04, 2009)

RIVERDALE - Residents interested in the proposed PioCosta development, to consist of homes planted on one of the borough's last farms, will have to stay tuned for more testimony.

The Zoning Board heard its first presentation from the applicant about this property on Jan. 22 and is scheduled to hold an additional hearing on Feb. 26.

Anthony and Robin PioCosta, owners of this 24-acre site off of Windbeam Road, have proposed to build 10 homes on it. The application also requests a variance to disturb some of the steep slopes in the area.

During the first hearing, residents on Windbeam and nearby Evans Road asked for clarification on how the water would drain through the development. They also asked about erosion and the amount of trucking that would go through the area if this project gained approval.

Daniel LaMothe, engineer for the applicant, explained that at least 35 trucks will go through the area with soil for the property. Other trucks would transport building materials as well.

The applicant also was asked for assurance that no erosion would occur from this development.

"I can't predict what kind of storm will come and promise you there won't be any erosion," said Tom Malman, attorney for the applicant. "I don't think anybody can. I can't promise you even if we don't do anything, that there won't be any."

Mayor William Budesheim, also a Zoning Board member, commented on the classification of the property, which is currently zoned as farmland.

"It is funny how we are known as the Garden State. We have two farms left in Riverdale and we are looking to plow one under," said Budesheim.

The other farm is the Worman Farm off Mathews Avenue and butting the borough of Butler, officials said.

Malman responded that the owners have the right to develop their property.

The PioCostas scaled back their original plan, which was submitted to the municipality last April to build 21 homes on this site, after learning that the borough strictly enforces its steep slope ordinance.

Today's revised application still requests a steep slope variance. However, it is related to the construction of the roadway, not the proposed homes.

In the application, the developer proposed a 40- to 50-foot-wide street to minimize the slope disturbance.

This site is located between Interstate 287 and the Pequannock Township border. It has access from Evans and Windbeam roads. Currently it is vacant and divided into two lots.

The 10 proposed lots would range from 1.45 to 4.45 acres. An access road, a cul-de-sac, would be constructed on the proposed site.

The next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 26 at 7:30 p.m. at Borough Hall.

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