



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Existing homes in The Maples neighborhood are set on a hill overlooking the Dakota Woods condominiums. A proposed expansion would set one condominium building 25 feet from one of The Maples home's property line.

CONDOS

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Developments, which allow construction of two units per acre of land, compared to the usual one-acre requirement for single-family homes in Agricultural zones.

"I don't see how they can turn it down," Kozick said.

After more than 90 minutes of testimony, zoning board member Gary Hozempa said the hearing will be continued until Feb. 14 in order to allow time for board members to visit the site and Maples residents' properties.

That pleases Bill DeAngelo, who has led the petition drive. "I'm tickled pink that they are coming out," he said. He believes that when board members see the site, they may conclude the expansion is unwise.

One of the proposed new units would be built 25 feet from the back of DeAngelo's property line. "It's going to kill my property value, big time," he said.

If approved, the new units would be built on a triangular piece of land that Dakota plans to buy from Commonwealth Telephone Company. At least half of the land — closest to Route 309 — is wetlands, and the homes would be built right behind DeAngelo's corner lot.

DeAngelo and a neighbor have retained a lawyer to present their case, and he sounded

determined to appeal if the expansion is allowed. "We'll take it as far as we can," he said.

Their attorney, Eric Mahler, implied that Dakota is in for a long battle. "They're just beginning this process. You're going to have at each stage active opposition," he said.

Thomas, who did not attend the meeting, expressed shock at the protests. "We're not looking for a fight, but we are prepared to defend our rights."

Removal of trees during construction has angered some Maples residents. "I don't want to live where I live right now," said Chris Ferrara, who told the board the trees had served as a buffer between his home and the condominiums. "They told me they would leave 150 feet of trees, but all I see is their development."

Joe Albert, an attorney who is also listed on incorporation records as secretary and treasurer of The Dakota Group, said trees had to be removed as part of the construction process, but many will be replaced during later phases of the project.

"You wouldn't do the landscaping and then build your home," said Albert. He stressed the project has met all applicable regulations regarding wetlands preservation and erosion control.

Developer says condos are equal to neighboring homes

The Dakota Woods condominiums being developed in Dallas Township are an asset to nearby properties, not a detriment, says John Thomas, President of The Dakota Group Inc.

"If anything, I believe we'll bring the values up in The Maples," he said last week. But he acknowledged there may be an accompanying downside.

"The more progress happens, the less privacy you have." Residents of The Maples are protesting a planned expansion of Dakota Woods, and have complained about the removal of trees that shield their neighborhood from traffic noise and the condos.

Thomas said seven units in "Phase 1" of Dakota Woods have been sold. The eighth is used as a model. He expects the first closings in February or March.

The original prices for the 2,800 square foot, three-bedroom units were \$225,000 to \$250,000. Thomas says most are now going for at least \$250,000, and some are over \$300,000. The proposed 14 additional units will be the highest-priced, he said, "because they have the best views."

"It's going to be a very attractive community," Thomas said. "These are very dignified, and they rival anything in The Maples."

Buyers tend to be middle-aged, equally divided between locals making a change in lifestyle and arrivals from other areas. Thomas said the entire project will cost \$12 million to complete.

Thomas said he built some of the single-family homes in The Maples, which was developed by his late father-in-law, Paul Klug. He pointed out that some of the people protesting his expansion now look down on storage units and the Commonwealth Telephone buildings.

Dakota Group is planning to buy about 11 acres of land from Commonwealth, and will use less than half of it for the expansion. Much of the rest is wetlands. After a long battle, Commonwealth had obtained the right to build a storage building for telephone poles on the land, using an access road through the wetlands. Thomas suggested that would have been a worse alternative for Maples home owners.

— by Ronald Bartizek

Deadline nears for Legion oratorical, essay contest

High school students and home-schooled students of the Back Mountain have been invited by Dallas American Legion Post 672 to compete in the 66th annual National High School Oratorical Contest. The contest has been arranged with the full cooperation of the local school districts who will assist with the contest arrangements.

The subject of the prepared oration portion of the contest must be some phase of the Constitution of the United States, emphasizing the duties and obligations of a U.S. citizen. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant and must be 8-10 minutes in length.

The three national finalists receive scholarships of \$18,000, \$16,000 and \$14,000, respec-

tively. In addition, contestants who win their state finals contest and represent their state at the national contests will receive no less than \$1,500 in scholarship funds. The American Legion will pay the expenses of state winners at the national contest.

The Post is also sponsoring an essay test. The topic this year is "America — Sweet Land of Liberty." All essays must be no less than 600 words and no more than 1,000. The local school must determine its own winner by Feb. 5. Prizes will be awarded locally and at the state level.

Students interested in either competition may find complete rules at their respective schools or by contacting Clarence J. Michael at 675-0488.

Low-interest home loans available in rural areas

USDA Rural Development offers a subsidized government program designed to assist low-income, credit-worthy families and individuals in purchasing or building homes in rural areas.

To qualify, applicants must be under the low-income limit for the county in which they live (80 percent of median income), have an acceptable credit history, and meet certain debt to income ratios. The current interest rate is 5.875 percent fixed (33 years). No down payment is required, and funds for repairs (and sometimes closing costs) may be included in the loan. The unique feature about USDA Rural Development mortgages is that the payments may be subsidized, or reduced, based on the applicant's income.

Call the Wyoming office at

836-4157, ext. 4, for more information. You may be prequalified over the telephone, if you supply your annual gross household income and monthly debt payments. Deductions to the annual gross income are made for the number of children in the household, child care expenses and persons with disabilities.

USDA Rural Development does not compete with other lenders. In fact, USDA Rural Development will participate in a joint loan where another lender contributes part of the money as a first mortgage, and USDA Rural Development contributes the balance of funds as a second mortgage.

For more information on the programs offered by USDA Rural Development, visit the website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa



Conyngham leads Meadows campaign

Msgr. Donald A. McAndrews, co-founder and President of the Board of Directors of Ecumenical Enterprises, has announced that G. Guthrie Conyngham, at right in photo, has agreed to serve as chairman of the Friends of EEI Annual Fund — 2005. Conyngham, a well-known resident of Shavertown, is very familiar with fund raising activities in Luzerne County, having served as chairman of numerous campaigns.

All funds raised from Friends of EEI Annual Fund — 2005 will be used to refurbish the dining areas at the Meadows Nursing Center and to benefit residents of the Meadows Manor.

Send your news to The Post by e-mail.

thepost@leader.net

Digital photos welcome, too!

Deadline for submitted news is Wednesday at noon.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

George S. Huntzinger and James E. May have been named to the Board of Trustees at College Misericordia.

Huntzinger is the president and chief operating officer of Superior Consultant Company, Dearborn, Michigan. He has served in senior management roles for several healthcare organizations, including a 12-year term as president of CSC Healthcare, one of the largest nationwide vendors of computer software and business process outsourcing to managed care organizations. Mr. Huntzinger and his wife, Sharon, reside in Dallas.

May currently serves as president and CEO of Mercy

Health Partners, Scranton. Prior to his position at Mercy, he served as senior vice president of operations for the Kaleida Health System, Buffalo, New York, and as president and chief operating officer of Instromedix, Inc./Alaris Medical, Portland Oregon, and San Diego, California. He lives in Moosic.

Carol Maculloch has been appointed as the new director of Annual Giving Programs in Institutional Advancement at The University of Scranton.



A resident of Hunlock Creek, Maculloch comes to Scranton from Wilkes University, where she served as director of the Wilkes Fund and major gifts officer since 2000.

She earned a bachelor of arts degree in business administration summa cum laude and a master of arts degree in business administration from Wilkes-Barre.

ness administration from Wilkes University. Prior to her position as director of the Wilkes Fund, she served as coordinator of special events and annual giving program manager at Wilkes.

Maculloch is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. She is active in several community organizations, including the League of Women Voters, the Arthritis Foundation, and Leadership Wilkes-Barre.

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