

VOTING

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parking lot. Although every citizen who came out to vote was eventually given the opportunity to do so, unusually long lines and seemingly endless waits, some over three hours long, were not uncommon.

According to county election Director Len Piazza, realigning the county's voting places is a multi-stage process that hasn't been attempted within the last 10 to 12 years. Piazza's plan, which will cut the number of polling places from 316 to 189, includes an added polling place in both Dallas and Kingston townships and one less in Lehman Township. Piazza says the realignment will save the county an estimated \$200,000, but still needs to be fine tuned before taking effect in 2008.

"The next step is to notify the municipalities and afford them the opportunity to amend the plan," said Piazza.

Piazza also said the plan is based off of the number of registered voters in each area, but that those numbers have not been updated since 1994. He said the county also is planning to purge the file of inactive voters.

Lake Township recycling Feb. 12

The voluntary recycling dropoff center for Lake Township accepts items from 10 a.m. to noon on the second Saturday of each month. The center is at the township building on Rt. 29. The following items may be dropped off: aluminum and bi-metal cans, clear, brown and green glass, plastic #1 and #2 only. No motor oil containers or scrap aluminum can be accepted. Newspaper will be collected this month. Pack tight in paper bags with glossy inserts removed. Do not drop off items before the center opens.

Dock insurance again available

The Harveys Lake Protective Association is again offering dock insurance. The cost remains at \$20 per front pile, with a \$100 minimum. That gives a dock owner up to \$3,000 coverage. For more information, call Mark Sobek at 714-5326.

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SADDLE RIDGE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PRELIMINARY SUBDIVISION PLAN



One page of the preliminary subdivision plan for Saddle Ridge, a proposed 101-lot development in Dallas Township. The entrance is at the lower left, off Harris Street.

Developer hopes to overcome obstacles by spring

By RONALD BARTIZEK Post Staff

DALLAS TWP. — Provided he can meet conditions yet to be imposed on his plan, developer John Halbing hopes to start work this spring on Saddle Ridge, a 101-lot development that straddles a ridge off Lower Demunds Road.

"It's going to take a few months to work through this," Halbing said last week. "I wanted to be further along at this point." He has already received inquiries about buying lots.

Halbing-Amato Development LLC submitted a preliminary plan for the subdivision in late December, after the 73-acre parcel was rezoned entirely to S-1. While that designation allows individual lots as small as 11,250 square feet, the plan shows none less than one-third acre, or roughly 15,000 square feet.

"To get an affordable house, you have to have affordable lots," Halbing said, and that means smaller. "If I do one-acre lots, they're going to be \$90,000."

Halbing, who is known for creating more grand developments, such as Windsor Farms in Kingston Township, said about half the lots will be 1/2 acre or larger, some more than an acre. Most of the property had been zoned agricultural (A-1), where the minimum size is one acre.

He expects lots, with public water and sewers, electric and gas service to sell in the \$50,000 range.

While suggesting that Saddle Ridge is aimed at buyers with more modest incomes, Halbing acknowledges that, "Modest today is a lot different then it was just a few years ago."

The houses will range from "low 2,000 square feet" and up, he said, and most will sell for under \$300,000. "There is a mixture there."

"There's a definite need for affordable housing," Halbing said. Ondish Hills, which he developed on the other side of Hill Street, proved that. He estimates 25 to 30 percent of the 60 homes there went to first-time home buyers, with most of the others bought by families moving up in size.

Halbing's Summit Pointe Builders company has constructed all the homes in his smaller developments, but he will open up Saddle Ridge to other builders. He says that's because he can't build at the pace he expects the lots to sell. The last 20 lots in Ondish Hills sold quickly, and in response he allowed other builders there.

SUBDIVISION

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posed main entrance, at a sharp uphill curve on Harris Street, which is also known as Hill Street. "It's a terrible road," said Adrian Merolli, Executive Director of the county commission. "You're going to put all that traffic on that little street?"

John Halbing, the principal developer, said the project would include widening Harris Street, allowing school buses that now avoid the curve to go through. Gibbons doesn't regard the plan as adequate, and recommends that the township require a complete study of traffic on Harris Street and nearby roadways and intersections.

Both the county and township have reservations about road grades within the development, which at some points exceed 10 percent. That was the topic for much of the discussion at a meeting the morning of Feb. 2 between Halbing, his engineer and the three supervisors.

The meeting had not been advertised,

"It's a terrible road. You're going to put all that traffic on that little street?"

Adrian Merolli Executive Director Luzerne County Planning Commission

and was therefore illegally conducted, according to Teri Henning, Media Law Counsel for the Pa. Newspaper Association. "Any time a quorum of the board (in this case two supervisors) deliberates agency business, it is required to do so at an open meeting," she said.

George Albert, Halbing's engineer, defended the grades shown on the preliminary plan. "Seven percent is flat, even 10 percent is not steep," he said. "There's just so much you can do to get up and down these hills."

Supervisor Frank Wagner said a 10 per-

cent grade may be acceptable for short distances, if it is not on a curve. "When you got to 13 percent, that's definitely a no-no."

Halbing also asked for flexibility on the placement of manholes. A recent township resolution requires that manholes not be placed in the "cartway," the actual paved road surface. County engineer Gibbons also makes that recommendation. Manholes increase the cost of repaving, and striking them can damage snow plow blades.

The county planning commission has no authority to stop development in a municipality that has its own planning commission, as Dallas Township does, and the township is not compelled to follow their recommendations. Other points addressed by the county include wetlands, street lighting, lack of fire hydrants and sidewalks and the installation of guiderails, which is not recommended.

COG

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to obtain more than \$150,000 in grant commitments that will be used to pay for regional planning and traffic studies. The largest study is partially done, and Moskowitz said in the letter that he would see it through to completion. Beyond that, he wrote, "I will not participate with the administration or coordination of BMACOG programs outside of my specific duties as Dallas Borough

Manager." Moskowitz was not paid for his work for the COG, but that didn't stifle his enthusiasm, Oliver said. "A lot of this stuff he does on his own, over Saturdays and Sundays."

Kingston Township Supervisor Jeffrey Box, who had pursued the issue of insurance protection for COG grant money, said last Wednesday that his questions were not directed at Moskowitz personally. "The issue is whether Dallas Borough's bonding company

will cover COG funds," Box said.

Despite assurances made by Oliver and others at the Jan. 25 COG meeting, Box is still not satisfied the funds would be covered. "I'm not really trying to be an obstructionist," he said, but he feels the public must be certain the funds are secure.

Box was generous in praise of Moskowitz's work. "I think over all the borough and Joe have done a good job administering this organization," he said.

Oliver said he is aware of opposition to the COG within the communities, including among some public officials who have viewed Moskowitz and the borough as attempting to overstep their authority.

One issue that stirred debate was a letter, written by Moskowitz on COG letterhead, that pledged the COG's support for Dallas Township as it attempted to determine the legality of a halfway house for women in the township. Kingston Township Solicitor

Ben Jones III warned his board that the letter could potentially cause the township liability.

"Things kind of blew apart after that," Oliver said. But he feels the letter was a mild affirmation of support for Dallas Township, not an attempt to take sides.

Box could not commit Kingston Township to a more active role, although he said the township would continue to work with the COG. "We have every intention of being at the next meeting."

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