

# London Grove supervisors schedule June zoning revision hearing to allow for 'Eco-Village' proposal

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The process of building an "Eco-Village" in London Grove took another step forward as township supervisors voted 4-1 May 5 to schedule a hearing in June to revise the township's zoning ordinances to provide for the planned 36-unit housing development -- the first such green development in the area.

The revisions to the zoning ordinance, if given final approve by the supervisors, would create a new type of "eco-village" housing zoning, with specific requirements to meet, including energy-efficient construction and the use of previously developed lands. It is modeled on similar ordinances passed in the roughly 200 communities across the country that have or will soon have similar developments underway. The changes to the township's zoning ordinance have been endorsed by the Chester County Planning Commission, as well as the township's planning commission and the environmental advisory commission.

According to Sandy Wiggins, chairman of real estate consulting firm Consilience, which is helping to shepherd the project through design, approval and construction, the ordinance would have specific requirements, such as building on previously developed properties, be within walking distance of seven distinct uses, schools, shops, businesses and recreational uses and require that the homes built in a covered development be at least 50% more energy efficient than homes currently being built to normal code.

The proposed Three Groves

development would combine efficient building techniques, including smaller homes, as well using a central solar power collector in hopes of having a net-zero energy use. The homes would be built around a central hub building, which would offer shared space for the community, as well as extra bedrooms for guests of homeowners (less extra rooms in each house allows for smaller, more efficient homes).

The housing units will have centralized parking, with roadways primarily surrounding the complex. While there will be internal roadways for emergency and delivery use, typically these roads will be used for pedestrian and bike traffic.

The development, proposed to be located across W. State Street from the new London Grove Township Community Park on a seven and a half-acre tract, would replace a vacant mushroom farm, be within walking distance of various shops, restaurants and schools. Interestingly, the project is technically being developed by the would-be buyers of the home homes. Each prospective buyer will be putting up \$25,000 to help cover the site application and development process. Those funds will be credited at closing of sale of the completed houses. Should the development fail, the would-be buyers will get a prorated share of the funds back, once all loans and other obligations of the project are repaid.

The homes, ranging from one to four bedrooms will be priced between \$200,000 and \$400,000. Currently, six of the units have

been purchased, and six more are said to be close to being under contract, said Anthony Aufdenkampe, one of the prospective homeowners and an organizer behind the proposal. A minimum of 20 units will need to be sold before the project can go forward, he said. Supervisor Robert Hittinger voted against scheduling a hearing.

In other township news, the supervisors approved spending \$10,000 for permits required by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to rebuild the Lake Road Bridge, which has been closed for seven years. While the replacement project is expected to cost about \$60,000, DEP is requiring various studies including a wetlands review and a bog turtle study before the project can move forward.

The owner of Chatham Acres, a 121-bed skilled nursing facility, unveiled plans to build a new building to replace its aging 48,000-square-foot facility. The new building, which would have the same number of beds, would take up about 55,000 square feet and be built adjacent to the current building, which would ultimately be razed. The new building would have only two stories, as opposed to the current building's four, but would offer larger rooms and better amenities for its patients.

The supervisors voted to bring home native American artifacts found during construction of Goddard Park, rather than pay to house them in a Harrisburg museum. Supervisors hope to be able to display the pieces in the township building in the near future.