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Perkins condo-office plan gets OK

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PERKINS TWP.

Plans for Ashford Park, a 91.5-acre residential and commercial development behind the Sandusky Mall in Perkins Township, received initial approval during a public hearing Tuesday night.



Perkins Township Trustees Tom Pascoe and Tim Coleman wanted to table the zoning change from single-family residential to a planned unit development, but Trustee Bill Dwelle voted for the planned unit development.

Because of township bylaws and regulations, a unanimous vote would have been required to reverse the recommendation of the township zoning commission.

The zoning change paves the way for mix-used construction on the property, which is owned by the Cafaros, the family that owns Sandusky Mall.

The proposed 200-unit development offers condos in high-rise towers, business offices, shopping and, in its final phase, townhomes and patio homes that are eco-friendly.

Centurion Development Group of New Albany, Ohio, along with Evans Mechwart, Hambleton & Tilton Inc. and Triad Architects of Columbus, presented the plans to trustees. Dialogue on the zoning change lasted more than 90 minutes.

During each phase of construction Centurion will need to seek approval from the county and township to move forward. Once specific plans are approved by both, Centurion cannot change them without approval from both.

The project is geared toward baby boomers and "boomerang" snow birds, who are returning from warmer climates to be closer to loved ones, said Ryan Goldberg president and CEO of Centurion.

Steve Yagiolo, a township resident who represents North Central Ohio Building Trades Association, spoke in support of the project.

"A great deal of effort has been put into making this environmentally protective," he said. "I think it's a great boon for this area, not only for the residential aspect of it, but for the amount of income it will generate. This is a project that everybody should be behind."

But others had concerns about the eco-friendly development's footprint on a ditch running through the property that is currently rated by environmental authorities as a Category 3 wetland.

Gary Toll's presentation to trustees wasn't as glamorous and technologically advanced as the development group's, which included computer-generated models.

But with his slide projector and carefully chosen words, Toll drove a point home about protecting the wetlands with conservation easements in perpetuity -- permanent setbacks from the ditch and

any wetlands.

Coleman and Pascoe voiced additional concerns about the development.

Pascoe asked the company to provide information on itself, because when he went to Centurion's Web site it said it was under construction. He wants to research the group's investors and board of directors.

Coleman and Pascoe were both concerned about the burden such a development and an aging population will put on the township police and fire services.

Ashford Park

What it is: 200 housing units ranging from 900-2,200 square feet, along with a restaurant, dry cleaners, in-house physician's assistant, pharmacy and additional shops.

Architectural style: based off Ashford Castle in Ireland will incorporate limestone and large timber in construction.

Price: \$200,000-\$620,000.

Eco-friendly elements:

Construction company will recycle 76 percent of construction waste

Solar shingles will absorb energy used to light common areas

Wind turbines will also produce electricity to light common areas and commercial areas

Heating and cooling for the common and commercial areas will be done using the local water table.

Phase one: 200 units to the first tower of four proposed towers.