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Commissioners delay vote on county gas zoning amendment

February 17, 2011 - By DAVID THOMPSON dthompson@sungazette.com

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The Lycoming County commissioners will not vote today on a proposed amendment to the county Zoning Ordinance as it pertains to natural gas drilling.

The commissioners plan to vote on the amendment during their Feb. 24 meeting to allow for more time to review verbal and written comments received during and after last week's public hearing on the amendment, according to Kurt Hausammann Jr., director of the county Department of Planning and Community Development.

According to Hausammann, it has become apparent, based on calls to the planning department and commissioners' office, that there are misconceptions regarding the proposed amendment.

The amendment only applies to the 17 municipalities that participate in the county Zoning Partnership. They are Brown, McHenry, Cummings, Piatt, McNett, Lewis, Moreland, Jordan, Mifflin, Penn, Cascade, Cogan House, Muncy Creek, Washington, Jackson and McIntyre townships, and the Borough of Salladasburg.

The remaining 35 municipalities in the county have their own zoning in place, Hausammann said.

Hausammann said the proposed amendment should be considered in context with the zoning ordinance that already is in place. The ordinance addresses issues such as noise, dust, glare, lighting and odor, he said. Regulations governing those issues will be applied to the uses included in the amendment.

Hausammann added that the current zoning ordinance permits gas development in all zones, while the proposed amendment would prohibit it in both Rural Center and Neighborhood Preservation Districts, thus adding protection to the most densely populated zoning districts.

Hausammann said the proposed amendment should be looked at as a "first step" that can be amended in the future.

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