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# Timbering plan approved

## Opponents vow to press their fight

By **MARGARET HARPER**  
Gazette Staff Writer

To the dismay of many citizens packed into the White Township municipal building Wednesday

night, township supervisors voted unanimously to accept a controversial forestry and stewardship management plan for the White's Woods Nature Center.

One part of the plan, drafted by local forester Dave Babyak, calls for the removal of 550,000 board-feet of trees from White's Woods that Babyak says will protect and enhance the forest by fostering growth.

But since the plan was revealed at a meeting in March, area residents have protested through the group Friends of White's Woods,

lobbying with petitions, hikes and letters against removing any trees that do not pose a danger to park users.

Before the vote, the supervisors discussed the results of a public hearing about the issue Monday. Supervisor Gail McCauley reiterated her position on the plan.

"I do not view Babyak's plan as a 'tree-farming' plan," she said. "I view it as a plan to save White's Woods. How responsible would we be if we ignored White's Woods?"

She then made a motion to

"adopt the plan with modifications at the discretion of the supervisors."

Supervisor Eugene Gemmell, who gave the second to the motion, said the woods are in "deplorable" condition, with dead trees lying on the ground, posing threats to hikers and nature enthusiasts who use the area. He said he also believes the plan is in the best interest of the forest.

"With the timber cutting that we propose to do, it's not going to ruin the woods," he said.

Continued on Page 14

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**Gail McCauley,**  
White Township  
supervisor

# Supervisors OK timbering plan for White's Woods

Continued from Page 1

He also said that the money gained from the timber sale — reported by Babyak at an estimated \$166,000 if harvested today — could be put back into White's Woods for maintenance and other improvements.

As the supervisors voted, each commented about their own decision. Board chairman Robert Overdorff said that while he voted in favor of the plan, he is opposed to immediate implementation. Supervisor George Lenz agreed, saying, "We need not buy chain saws tomorrow."

An outraged crowd left the room immediately in an uproar after the vote.

**AFTER THE** meeting, McCauley explained her reasoning in wording the motion to give the supervisors the option to modify the plan as deemed necessary.

She believes that was important "just in case something comes up" and stressed there was no hidden agenda in the motion's phrasing.

"It's feasible to make changes as we go along," she said, "It's just to be prepared."

Friends of White's Woods member Susan Dahlheimer expressed discontent at the decision and said she didn't understand why the public outcry didn't change the supervisor's decision.

"I'm very disappointed that the opinions of over 1,000 citizens were really not addressed," she said, referring to a petition presented to the supervisors Monday.

"This was not democracy in the works," said member Michael Scott.

Though the decision is made, Friends of White's Woods said they aren't ready to give up just yet.

"We will certainly consider legal action," Dahlheimer said.

A letter written to the supervisors by Walter B. Cope Jr., an Indiana attorney, asks a list of questions that have been at the heart of the debate and at the end states: "Should you move forward with this plan, without considering, acting on, or answering the above, Friends of White's Woods will have no choice but to pursue all available legal procedures to stop it."

The home rule charter may be another option the group investigates, said Brian Cope, Walter Cope Jr.'s son. The charter demands constituents be given greater self-government options.

He said he believes that with 400 signatures, the issue may be put on November's ballot for a public vote. For this option, Friends of White's Woods would work with Ben Price, of the Community Environment Legal Defense Fund, which works with community groups and municipalities to draft local laws.

Garner had no additional comment after the

meeting but did say the supervisors will "wait and see" what becomes of the threatened legal action.

A copy of the forestry and stewardship management plan is available at [www.whitetownship.com](http://www.whitetownship.com).

**IN OTHER BUSINESS**, the supervisors:

■ Heard a request from Leslie Krummert, Indiana Area Soccer Boosters president, for the addition of a third soccer field at the White Township Recreation Complex.

Citing issues of safety, increased field use and new field regulations, she proposed that the supervisors build a field measuring 42 yards by 56 yards east of the two existing fields at the complex.

Because the PA West Soccer Association, which governs soccer in western Pennsylvania, recently changed regulations for field size, the White Township fields must be modified for different games, Krummert said. Instead of needing two field sizes, the league now needs three.

To make up for the difference, fields are modified to fit the regulations by drawing extra boundary lines and moving the goals. But, she said, that is a dangerous practice, as goals are heavy — about 400 pounds — and not easy to move. She noted a child from Virginia was killed in May after being crushed with a goal and said she doesn't want to see that happen here.

"This is not a safe situation," she said. "We have to put the safety of our children first."

The supervisors and Milton Lady, township facilities manager, will investigate the feasibility of constructing another field and meet with Krummert to discuss options, Garner said.

■ Signed the 2007 fire agreement plan with Indiana Borough and Indiana Fire Association. It is estimated the township will contribute \$110,000 to the fund, Garner said.

■ Adopted ordinances to add a stop sign at the intersection of Heritage Run Road and Concord Street and to post speed-limit signs on Lilac Street and Lisa Drive. Lilac Street will be posted at 30 mph; Lisa Drive will be posted at 25 mph.

■ Voted to allow Garner to draft a letter of intent to purchase an F350 pickup truck for \$23,860 and an F350 dump truck for \$49,539 through the South Hills Council of Governments.

■ Will place various items no longer needed by the township up for sale on Asset Auctions, an Internet auction site for municipalities. Items include a sewer cleaner machine, Dodge Ram utility truck, traffic signals, scoreboards and more.

■ Hired Ryan Shaffer as an assistant facilities manager for the township. Shaffer previously worked part time for the township and has a degree in sports management, Garner said.

