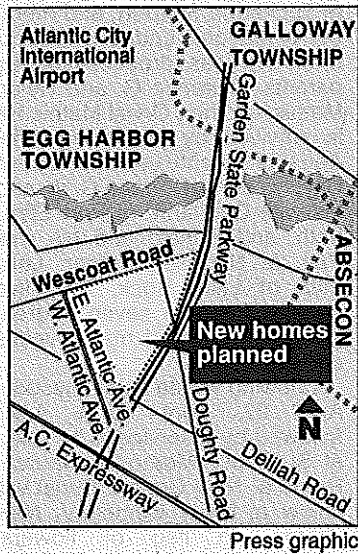


TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2008

Region

EHT OKs plan for 657 new homes



No details from developer about timeline, prices

By **MICHELLE LEE**
Staff Writer, 609-272-7256

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP — The population of the township could grow by a village in the future. The Planning Board gave final subdivision approval Monday to Ocean Club, a 657-home project that is the largest housing proposal ever in Egg Harbor Township's history.

Pulte Homes, a large home-building company based in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., has been working for nearly four years on plans to build Ocean Club on a 273-acre tract in the northern part of the township on Wescoat Road, by the Atlantic City International Airport, the Atlantic County Utilities Authority landfill and recycling cen-

ter, and the Garden State Parkway.

The project includes a mixture of multi-family houses and homes for people over age 55, two clubhouses, two pump stations, swimming pools, tennis courts and a recreation field. Pulte Homes also proposes to donate \$350,000 and a 2-acre section of land to the Farmington Volunteer Fire Department to build a firehouse substation and pay \$800,000 to the township's recreation fund.

It was unclear when the homes will be built and how much they would cost. Robert Pisano, the Pulte regional land manager for New Jersey and Delaware, told the Planning Board the current housing market has been unpredictable and it might take twice as

long to build the homes as the company first anticipated.

But Pisano told the township that the company is "very excited about the project and seeing it through."

Pisano declined to answer questions about the new construction timeline, house prices and population estimates. He referred all questions to a corporate spokesperson. Last year, Pisano told the Planning Board the company projected the four-bedroom homes would sell for about \$350,000, the age-restricted homes would sell for \$250,000 to \$280,000, and the townhouses would run in the mid-\$200,000 range.

☐ See Pulte, Page C3

BY THE NUMBERS

- Single-family detached homes: 259.
- Single-family attaches homes: 140.
- Homes for adults over 55: 258.
- Number of school children estimated: 367, according to a community impact statement.

Pulte

(Continued from Page C1)

The majority of the Planning Board voted in favor of the development. Mayor James "Sonny" McCullough cast the lone objection because he believes the state Pinelands Commission's designation of the township as a growth area is overcrowding the community. McCullough said Pulte Homes "bent over backwards" to comply, but he voted against the project to symbolically protest Gov. Jon S. Corzine's proposed budget cuts to state aid. "The state of New Jersey forced this development on us, and compounding us, it cut the state aid ... For that matter, I vote no," he said.

Manny Aponte, the acting chairman for the hearing, said he wasn't very happy with overcrowding either, but Pulte Homes met all the township's development requirements. "It could have been worse, with 1,200 homes," he said, referring to an earlier proposal. Planning Board Chairman James Garth, who is the Farmington fire chief, recused himself from the proposal.

Three Absecon residents who live in a senior housing development on Wescoat Road spoke out against the project. Two of them, Kathleen Antonelli and Dennis Hannigan, who live in Gatherings at Bel Aire Lakes, said a traffic light should be installed on the road because of congestion.

"Whatever the proposal, it will be difficult to navigate there without traffic lights," Hannigan said. Another concern Hannigan had is that the odors from the ACUA landfill



Staff photo by Ben Foglietta

A back road cuts through the proposed 273-acre building area along Wescoat Road across from Gate 12 of the Federal Aviation Administration center and near the Garden State Parkway. could get worse once Pulte Homes starts cutting down trees to build the houses.

A fourth person, Adam Gordon, an attorney with the Fair Share Housing Center, a Cherry Hill advocacy non-profit, also protested to the Ocean Club project. He said it should have included affordable homes.

Township Administrator Peter Miller said that Absecon officials were notified about the housing proposal. McCullough and other Planning Board members told the residents to bring their concerns to Atlantic County officials and the freeholders.

Pulte Homes got preliminary approval to build Ocean Club in January 2007 with the condition that the developer conduct surveys for endangered and threatened species and form a plan to protect older trees on the land. A study done last spring by Trident Environmental Consultants, of Toms River, found no barred owls on the property. While a study for the Cooper's hawk

recorded one bird sighting and five other birds flying over the land, it found no evidence for hawk nests. The environmental consultant identified several trees that could be saved.

Another condition the company followed was to create a homeowner's association and notify future residents that their homes would be located near the airport, the ACUA landfill and recycling facility, the Garden State Parkway and the U.S. Air Marshal Training Facility, which has an indoor and outdoor firing range.

Jack Plackter, an attorney representing Pulte Homes, said the Ocean Club project got conditional approval from Atlantic County in January and approval from the Municipal Utilities Authority last week. The project still needs a confirmation letter from the Pinelands Commission, and water and sewer permits from the ACUA and state Department of Environmental Conservation.

To e-mail Michelle Lee:
MLee@pressofac.com