

Asphalt plant testimony sought

► A Hawbaker facility is said to have benefited a township outside Williamsport.

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Staff writer

In an attempt to abate criticism of the proposed Hawbaker asphalt plant in the Barkeyville Industrial Complex, local economic development leader Randy Seitz has sought testimony from a township manager in Lycoming County, where a Hawbaker asphalt facility has been operating since 2000.

Bill Burdett of Loyalsock Township, a "suburb" of Williamsport, said the Hawbaker facility has been a considerable benefit to the township of 10,800 residents.

The Loyalsock facility, however, has some fundamental differences from the Barkeyville plant, which is under construction.

An opposition group of Barkeyville residents has formed to try to keep the Hawbaker plant from being built in their community. The group has asked the Department of Environmental Protection not to grant the facility an air quality permit and has asked the borough to revoke the State College-based Glenn O. Hawbaker Inc.'s zoning permit.

The group alleges the plant is in violation of the borough's zoning ordinance and its zoning permit was underhandedly issued by the former zoning officer Gary Dovey, an Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism employee, who resigned from the Barkeyville post shortly after the permit was issued. The ORA sold the land to Hawbaker.

A group of five residents filed a petition for a restraining order in Venango County Court, asking for construction to be stopped at the Stevenson Road location until a zoning appeal hearing is granted.

One of the biggest complaints coming from Barkeyville residents is that the Hot Mix Asphalt plant will burn coal, which the group says is a dangerous pollutant.

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The project's building plan limits the plant to 560,000 tons of asphalt per year and would combust natural gas, fuel oils, reprocessed oils, biodiesel, coal and any combination of the fuels. The plant would emit 8.96 tons of volatile organic compounds, 28 tons of nitrogen oxides and 37.8 tons of carbon monoxide per year.

The Loyalsock facility runs on electricity, Burdett said.

The opposition group put up no resistance to Team Hardinger Transportation, which began work on a 40-acre parcel of the industrial complex in October, partly because the emissions from that facility did not require an air quality permit.

The addition of the Hawbaker facility will leave about 15 acres available for development in the industrial park. Seitz said the ORA would continue to try to find an occupant for the remaining 15 acres of the industrial complex, but the "negativity and infighting has got other prospective companies nervous."

Another chief complaint of the opposition group is the increase in truck traffic and diesel emissions expected in the residential area.

Burdett said he has not received any complaints against the Loyalsock facility in the past seven years, but that facility is in a designated industrial zone of town separated from the residential areas by a commercial district.

Burdett said, being in the industrial zone, the heavy truck traffic does not affect any residents.

The Barkeyville Industrial Park is located on Stevenson Road within a few miles of several family homes.

One potentially comparable facet is the number of new jobs Loyalsock has seen since Haw-

baker moved to the township. Most people in favor of the project have cited a desperate need for jobs in the Barkeyville area.

The Loyalsock plant is much smaller than the proposed Barkeyville facility — about 10 acres versus 25-plus acres — but the Loyalsock facility employs about 150 people. Like the plans for Barkeyville show, the Loyalsock plant requires only about seven employees to run the facility. The rest of the employees are salespeople, clerical staff, construction crew workers, truck drivers and heavy equipment operators, Seitz said.

"At the end of the day, (those employees) lay their heads in Loyalsock," Seitz said.

Burdett said another boon to Loyalsock has been the expertise and economic development opportunities the company has brought to the township.

Burdett said having the construction company has helped draw other new businesses to Loyalsock.

"To have the experts, people and equipment here makes it cheaper to have someone look at your town for developments," Burdett said, "especially with fuel costs, it's a big savings."

Loyalsock Township also has reaped the benefits of cheaper road paving projects. Burdett said Hawbaker's bids are generally about 20 percent lower than competitors' bids because of the savings in transportation costs for bringing materials into town.

Seitz said the success of Hawbaker's facility in Loyalsock is evidence of the company's dedication to the communities it serves. He pointed to three generations of family ownership without a single DEP or Environmental Protection Agency violation, low employee turnover, and thousands of dollars reinvested into local communities as further verification.

"Hawbaker isn't this evil company that pollutes the place and leaves," Seitz said.