

HERMITAGE

Zoning frustrates effort to build community at LindenPointe

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By Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*

LindenPointe technical business park was created to provide a place for companies involved in new and emerging technologies, but the park's zoning was set before the tech boom. City officials want to change that.

Officials also want to look at opening up the uses of the South Hermitage Road park to allow non-tech businesses that could help create a sense of community in the park. Half of the park is zoned planned technical park, and the other half a more restrictive zone called planned technical park-2. The PTP zone was created in the mid-'80s, said Director of Planning and Development Marcia A. Hirschmann.

"We tried to imagine what would be used in a technical park," she said. "Things are changing rapidly in the world and we haven't really revisited that ordinance." "Many of the entities, including the Internet, weren't there when the planned technical park ordinance was put in place," said Rex W. Knisley, chairman of the Hermitage Community and Economic Development Commission.

Assistant City Manager Gary M. Gulla said so-called "green" companies were not widely known at the time, and might be zoned out of Linden- Pointe, a place city officials would very much like to see them locate. Referring to the Linden- Pointe technology center's business incubator suites, now under construction, Gulla said officials would want the firms that locate there to have the option of moving elsewhere in the park once they graduate from the incubator.

City officials also have been talking to officials who run business incubators, technology centers and tech companies, and have found that the park is not really conducive to the "happy collisions" that occur when people from different businesses within and outside a technical park bump into each other, such as at a coffee shop.

The PTP zone does not permit coffee shops or restaurants, meaning employees in the park must leave in order to get lunch, and there is little reason to come into the park unless you have business with one of its companies.

The park has an extensive trail system that attracts many walkers and joggers. Noting that LindenPointe has more than 100 employees working for the various companies located there, and generates more than \$8 million in payroll, there might be a need for a day care center or limited use retail business, Gulla said. Neither type of business is allowed under the PTP zoning.

Officials also are mindful of the experience at Innovation Park at Pennsylvania State University, where a regular program of community events has brought together people from within the park and attracted community members who would not otherwise have a reason to come into the park.

"Anything we can do to create community awareness would benefit the park," Gulla said. "You never know where the next idea will come from that could have an impact in the park."

The commission on Thursday recommended that city commissioners launch a review of the PTP ordinance. City Manager Gary P. Hinkson said he would recommend to commissioners that a committee be formed including city staff members and representatives from the commission and Hermitage Planning Commission. The committee would then reach out to other Linden- Pointe businesses for input, Hinkson said.

Mrs. Hirschmann noted discussions will not just impact LindenPointe, but also the other two planned technical parks in the city, on North Hermitage Road and Maple Drive, both undeveloped.

Commission member Anthony Pagliaroli recommended taking into account surrounding areas of the park, although Hinkson said he would not want to recommend anything that impacts the residential sections around LindenPointe. "If we start today with a recommendation, we're looking six to eight months to get through the process," Hinkson said of any changes.

City solicitor Thomas W. Kuster added that changes to the zoning ordinance would require at least three months of public hearings and reviews by the planning commission and Mercer County Regional Planning Commission before commissioners could act.