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## Supervisors made right call in postponing ethanol forum

When more than 300 people showed up Tuesday night to hear a discussion about a proposed ethanol plant in Greene and Letterkenny townships, the Greene municipal building couldn't hold them all. Nor could everyone hear the brief discussion that did take place.

So the supervisors did the right thing and postponed the meeting until 7 p.m. April 28, at a larger site to be determined.

The people at Tuesday's meeting didn't object to the delay, even though they'd taken the time to attend. Instead, they cheered the supervisors' decision. After all, only about 125 people could fit inside the meeting room, meaning the majority of those attending ended up in the parking lot.

The size of the crowd is an indication of community interest in the ethanol plant, and growing opposition to it.

Forty people at the meeting signed a petition opposed to the plant, joining the 800 who had already signed it. Several people wore T-shirts that said, "No Ethanol Plant in Franklin County."

It will be the supervisors' responsibility to review land development plans from Penn-Mar Ethanol, while the state Department of Environmental Protection will be a key player as well. The plant owners will have to meet state regulations for air emissions, water discharge and ethanol storage.

If the plant receives the necessary approvals, Penn-Mar Ethanol investors hope to begin construction in late summer or early fall, with operations beginning in late 2006.

Greene Township Solicitor Welton Fischer cautioned those at Tuesday's meeting that supervisors do not have the power to stop the plant if Penn-Mar Ethanol abides by township ordinances and it satisfies the state's requirements.

Supervisors aren't powerless in this matter or others, especially when safety is involved. They write the ordinances, after all, and interpret whether they are being met. They also have the ability to ask tough questions and get answers.

Plant opponents are concerned about accidents, fires, evacuations, pollution, truck traffic, noise, property values, water use and the impact on the business park's tenants and recruitment efforts.

Though they represent township residents, it's important for supervisors to recognize that the plant's impact will extend beyond township borders.

Greene supervisor David Jamison shouldn't have asked those at the meeting who are not Greene or Letterkenny township residents to leave the room.

No one left, an indication of just how important this matter is to them.

No one should be discouraged from participating in local government and learning more about it. Every one of the 300 or so who attended the meeting had a right to be there. The same goes for those who attend the April 28 meeting.

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