

# Northville Township residents protest timber harvesting

By Pam Fleming • STAFF WRITER • January 22, 2009

It's all about "the trees, the trees, the trees," said Northville Township resident Steve Emsley at last Thursday's trustee board meeting.

Although it's perfectly legal, residents are still protesting developer REIS' decision to begin timber harvesting on the former Northville Regional Psychiatric Hospital property on Jan. 9. REIS is a partnership between Real Estate Interests Group and Schostak & Brothers Company.

Emsley said a soil erosion expert from Wayne County contacted him since he heads up the group Citizens for Public Accountability and Responsible Development (CPARD) to say that a soil erosion permit had not been obtained by the developer for the property.

It's not yet known at this point, however, how much, if any, removal of trees will affect the soil.

The Michigan Department of Environmental staff said the township should contact them if there's a problem on the property. But, REIS has assured township officials that no contaminated sites will be disturbed in the logging operation.

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

Frank Carlsen, who lives across the street from the property, said several hundred residents called township hall about the "cutting issue" and passed out copies of photos taken of logging trucks leaving the site, calling the action "horrific."

"The key thing we have failed at in this township is communication," he said. "We want to know what's going on."

What's going on is a legal timber harvesting operation that is legal under the consent judgment signed by REIS and township board members last summer. The developer does not have to adhere to the township's woodland ordinance as far as tree replacement under the agreement approved by a judge.

Carlsen suggested a study session on the issue.

Resident Steve Lomske talked about the caliber and size of the trees being cut on the site, saying that the harvesting operation was "quite substantial." (See Lomske's letter to the editor inside.)

He asked why the brownfield redevelopment plan hadn't been discussed yet at township hall. "We're losing valuable time," Lomske said.

Mark Abbo, township supervisor, said because REIS is not ready to talk about the plan yet.

"The developer is pushing it (the brownfield) back, not the township," Abbo said. "Until they're ready to deal with it, these issues can't be addressed. We need some foundation of data before we can move forward."

Trustee Mindy Herrmann suggested a study session on brownfield redevelopment plans.

Resident John Miller suggested that the township facilitate a meeting between REIS and members of local tree conservancies who have expressed interest in purchasing the wooded areas in question.

But Todd Fink, attorney for REIS, and Grant Trigger of REIS have reportedly not returned calls yet from local conservationist Janet Bernardino or the Northville Record. Trustee Marjorie Banner said REIS has been given the phone numbers of local tree conservancy members as well as Bernardino's.

"We can't force them to make those calls," Abbo said. "All I can do is bring the parties together. I can't force REIS to make a decision."

"We have been calling them (REIS)," said Sue Hillebrand, trustee/clerk, "But, they're personal property owners."

Banner said there are a lot of dead trees on the property, and that if REIS is removing some of those trees that that would actually be a service to the community.

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