

## Scio, Dexter to continue development talks

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Committee recommends boards look at 425 agreement

News staff reporter

Scio Township and Dexter officials agreed Tuesday to continue discussion at their respective boards about a possible agreement to allow development of 320 acres on either side of Baker Road between I-94 and the village.

A committee composed of board members from both communities and several county officials recommended the boards consider a so-called "425 agreement" that would allow the land to be transferred from the township to the village but also allow the township to continue collecting taxes on the land.

The land is south of and adjacent to the village.

The committee was formed after the Dexter Village Council voted in August to ask the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to hold a hearing on allowing Dexter to annex the land. That move followed more than two years of wrangling between the two communities after developer Jim Haeussler, owner of Peters Building Co. in Saline, proposed putting 800 housing units, plus industrial and commercial developments, on the land in June 2004.

Haeussler has since revised his plans and presented three concepts Tuesday for 681, 637 or 581 housing units, all with 50 percent or more of the land preserved as open space, including all of the land west of Baker Road. Two of the plans would make the open space west of Baker Road open to the public.

To develop the land at the density he wants, Haeussler needs water and sewer, which the village of Dexter could provide.

Originally called Harvest Valley, the project has been renamed Sloan-Kingsley Farm. The county board postponed the annexation hearing while the committee explored a possible agreement.

Several township board members indicated Tuesday that they still believe that Haeussler's proposal is too dense, but there appeared to be less unanimity against a proposal that included lower home numbers and a 425 agreement.

One board member who remains staunchly opposed to the proposal is Trustee Charles Ream.

"In Scio Township, if we would start to double our master plan, that is recall territory," Ream said. "I really doubt this is going to fly."

Township Trustee David Nacht was much more positive about the possible agreement.

"A lot of what we're trying to do with (purchase of development rights) is to preserve that sense of openness," Nacht said. "I agree that density has some advantages if you preserve open space."

Township Clerk Kathleen Knol said she would like to see lower density and wanted questions answered about revenue sharing and the length of the agreement, among other things, but she was not adamantly against the plan.

Dexter Village President Jim Seta, who has pushed hard for the development, said he was pleased with the progress and would wait to press the annexation issue.

"Let's see if we can come to some kind of an agreement with Scio and (Jim) Haeussler," Seta said.

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