

# 52-home single-family subdivision to be built off Kuser Road

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By Erin Duffy/The Times

HAMILTON — After more than 10 hours of testimony spread out over three meetings, the township zoning board approved plans for a 52-home single-family subdivision to be built off Kuser Road.

The board's 5-2 vote Tuesday night was met with dismay from area residents, a dozen or more of whom turned up at each meeting to lodge their objections to the Sharbell Development Corp. project.

Concerned about increased flooding, the interconnecting of existing Edgewood Boulevard and the subdivision and lead contamination found on site, residents had repeatedly asked the zoning board to deny the application.

The development is slated to be built on 37.5 acres Sharbell acquired last year from the Italian American Sportsman's Club in an undisclosed deal. The company plans to build 52 single-family homes with \$400,000 pricetags. The 90-year-old Italian American club will keep six acres bordering the subdivision that house the organization's pool and recreational facilities.

While an attorney for Sharbell has characterized the project as a worthwhile tax ratable for the township, residents and a local open space group spent hours challenging the site's stormwater management plan and soil tests used to detect the presence of lead.

Members of the Italian American club are believed to have used portions of the property for skeet and trap shooting years ago, leaving lead bullets to be absorbed by the soil. Led by Bear Branch resident Mark Meara, neighbors have questioned whether Sharbell's testing was extensive enough.

While the developer has agreed to fully remediate the site per state regulations, residents fear that construction and soil movement will disturb the lead, sending it into local water sources or backyards.

"Both my neighbors to the right and left died of cancer," said Bear Branch Road resident Catalina Fleming. "I'm concerned about what I'm hearing about lead contamination."

Rich Williams, the township's engineer, said the developer had sampled numerous spots on the land, but failed to notify the township 10 days prior to testing, a requirement of the township. As a condition of the board approving the project, he advocated requiring Sharbell to undertake further on-site lead testing, a request the developer readily agreed to.

Jeffrey Schaumburg, an engineer with Dynamic Earth LLC, was in charge of testing soil. He repeatedly assured the board that testing was being undertaken in “absolute strict accordance with standards” and that Sharbell was willing to clean up the site.

Despite “nay” votes from zoners Tony DiStephano and Edward Arico, who expressed concerns about flooding and lot size related to nine homes due to be built next to wetlands, the board approved Sharbell’s plans.

That approval did come with a list of conditions, however, including provisions that further lead testing be completed.