

Business

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owners said. Evelyn Oswald, co-owner of the family-owned Lambertville Hardware, said she opted to become involved because the architecture, landscaping, and lighting ordinances are a clear and present danger to her family's livelihood.

"If a tornado came through, there's no way we could rebuild. We couldn't afford it," said Mrs. Oswald, who operates the hardware on Secor Road with her

three children.

Mr. Whitman helped form the business group after learning that the ordinances would not allow his business to expand without significant changes and costs. He said he'd be required to shield his inventory of cars with landscaping so that the cars could not be seen from the road, and he would have to plant several hundred large trees on his land. His building could not be rebuilt in its present form if it were demolished.

"The goal of our group would be to bring in the experts up front instead of fixing [ordinances] as you go," the auto dealer said.

Along with Mr. Whitman, Bedford School Board member and real estate developer Steve Lennex is also a founder of BICA, as is Chuck Fallor, the president of the Bedford Alumni Association. The business group includes representatives from businesses in the Bedford Industrial Park, as well as other retailers in the area, Mr. Whitman said.

In all, BICA has between 25 and 30 members, Mr. Fallor said.

"We haven't brought up [forming a Political Action Committee] yet. But we are going to be talking about candidates and issues," Mr. Whitman said.

Business owners said the usual avenue for addressing their concerns, the Bedford Business Association, was specifically prohibited by its charter from intervening in political matters.

Mr. Whitman said in an era of conflict about exactly what Bed-

ford Township should look like over the next several decades, businesses could no longer sit idly by without expressing some political opinions.

Township supervisor LaMar Frederick said if "BICA is willing to review the ordinances and point out the areas where they have substantive concerns, we will be the first at the table [to deal with them]." But Mr. Frederick warned that he would not put the interests of business owners above that of area residents.

"Every single person is equally important. There is no business today that has to change what they are doing," Mr. Frederick said. "The effect of this is intended to have our commercial buildings blend in and [compliment] our residential community."

Township trustee Joyce Hagen, the main proponent of the township's new architecture, lighting, and landscaping ordinances, said she and her fellow township board members have repeatedly stated that they were flexible in working out specific problems people might find with the ordinances.

Mr. Whitman said this is not the first time area businesses have been caught flat-footed by the aesthetic ideals of township officials. He said business owners have spent thousands of dollars trying to comply with the township's sign ordinance, which he said was nearly unworkable until it was amended later after businesses lodged complaints.

BEDFORD TWP.

New landscape rules focus of business group

By LARRY P. VELLEQUETTE BLADE STAFF WRITER

TEMPERANCE — The leaders of a new politically active business group in Bedford Township say a set of new ordinances regulating commercial properties has them feeling like they're looking down the barrel of a loaded shotgun.

The Bedford Industrial and Commercial Association, known as BICA, was still working to put together its bylaws last week, trying to recruit members and form a long-term plan to deal with what its approximately two dozen members feel is an economic assault on their ways of life.

"These new ordinances have the specifications for jet aircraft, when our buildings were built as single engine planes. To retrofit them just isn't going to work," said Jon Whitman, owner of Whitman Ford and one of the driving forces behind BICA.

"So what do we do? No one is against the intent of this. We know that there have been inappropriate buildings built in our community over the years, and not only commercial ones too," Mr. Whitman said. "This is simply a way for us to dialogue with the township officials; to be involved earlier in the process on things like the sign ordinance or these ordinances that affect us."

In August, the Bedford Township board passed a series of three ordinances regulating how future commercial developments will look, how they will be landscaped, and how they will be lighted. The

Rules don't affect PUDs

TEMPERANCE — Throughout more than an hour of comments over the merits of Bedford Township's recently enacted ordinances controlling commercial development, one sentence kept getting repeated.

"This isn't about Wal-Mart," residents were told, both by those on the township board that enacted the new architectural, lighting, and landscaping standards last month, and by those local business owners who have opposed them.

Turns out those groups are right.

The stringent new building requirements that limit the size of the township's biggest commercial buildings to roughly the size of Lambertville's Kroger store, probably don't apply if a project is presented as a Planned Unit Development, township legal adviser Tom Graham

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ordinances ignited a firestorm of controversy within the business community. Based on the laws, many businesses could not be rebuilt after a catastrophe without considerable added expense, business

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Who are 2 of the original founders of BICA? Jon Whitman and Steve Lennex, the 2 people who are selling the Whitman property right now.

Read what LaMar Frederick said here.