

## Genoa referendum to November ballot

### NEWS

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The Delaware County Board of Elections unanimously voted on Tuesday to certify a petition to have a referendum placed on the November ballot for Genoa Township.

The petition calling for the referendum contained over 1,600 signatures of residents opposed to the rezoning of approximately 43 acres of land at Tussic Street and Oxbow Road near Hoover Reservoir from Rural Residential to Planned Residential. The referendum offers Genoa Township voters the chance to overturn the rezoning measure approved by trustees April 9.

Board of Elections staff recommended that the petition contained 1,422 valid signatures, well over the 682 needed to place a referendum on the November ballot.

"We wanted to help all the residents to have a voice, particularly the adjacent residents, which didn't happen with the trustees," said Jim Carter Tuesday after the referendum was certified.

Carter is a resident of the township and has been instrumental in spearheading the petition for the referendum.

On March 12, the Genoa Township Zoning Commission voted 4-0 against the rezoning application, saying the proposed 64-home development for the Ravines at Hoover was a higher density than permitted in the township's Comprehensive Plan.

Trustees Chairperson Connie Goodman and Trustee Karl Gebhardt voted in favor of approving the measure, while Trustee Frank Dantonio voted against approval.

"In other words, it goes from the zoning commission to the trustees. The zoning commission said do not approve this, but the trustees said there was a legal situation where they had to," Carter said. "We're still trying to find out what that legal issue is."

"The next step was a referendum, a part of the American process where we got overwhelming support with 1,623 signatures," Carter added. "We'll see where it goes from here. It should go to the ballot, unless it is protested."

Carter said Genoa Township is a nice little community where the residents should be allowed to know what is going in next to or behind them.

“Often, it’s the little guy or a neighbor that needs some support,” he said. “We’re trying to help everybody out.”

Residents complain that the main issue is the density of the proposed housing.

According to the township’s zoning commission, the Ravines at Hoover would exceed the 1.35 home per acre density that is written in the township’s Comprehensive Plan, but the township’s zoning resolution allows a maximum density up to 2.2 homes per acre.

The majority view of the trustees was that there were no divergences with the zoning code, which takes precedence over the Comprehensive Plan, and rejecting the rezoning would open the township up to another lawsuit.

From past reports from The Gazette, the owners of the property, Benton and Katherine Benalcazar, bought the land near Hoover Reservoir in 2001. It was zoned as Rural Residential, and they sought to rezone it as a Planned Residential Development District. The Ravines at Hoover were originally going to be 67 homes, but sloping topography and zoning commission concerns lowered that number down to 64 homes.

The proposed development’s homes were in the \$500,000 cost range; would be built by Romanelli and Hughes; were geared toward empty-nesters, but there’s no deed restriction; would generate \$500,000 in tax revenue for Big Walnut Local Schools; add five students to the district; have three cul-de-sacs; 51 percent open space; retain 82 percent of the trees; and have fencing on three sides.

The Benalczars have said they would put a hog farm on the grounds if their proposed subdivision was rejected.