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Cooper shares big farm plans

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Cooper Farms is moving forward with plans for a new breeding facility in Defiance County's Mark Township.

Cooper officials shared their plans Thursday morning at Defiance County commissioners' meeting.

The 7,100-animal facility will be located on Farmer-Mark Road, just north of Ohio 18 and Mark Center, and will be called Pheasant Run.

Cooper's Eric Ludwig said construction will begin on June 1 providing the company has received a permit from the Ohio Department of Agriculture by then. Ludwig said the facility would take about a year to build.

When finished, its production staff will total 20 full-time persons with an annual payroll exceeding \$500,000. Some 2,300 weaned baby pigs will be produced per week, according to Cooper officials. Ludwig said these will then be finished for meat production at Cooper's other facilities in northwest Ohio and Indiana.

In addition, Cooper officials said the facility will use 140,000 bushels of locally-produced corn.

All three county commissioners welcomed Cooper's plans Thursday.

"We're glad to have you," said Commissioner Tom Kime. "We've had good luck with the two other (large-scale) farms."

The comment refers to large dairy farms in Farmer Township and on Breining Road, just north of Ohio 18.

"We've heard nothing but good things (about Cooper's) from other commissioners," said Commissioner Jim Harris.

"We really try to be a proactive company," said Cooper's Bud Koenig. "We like to let everyone know what's going on ahead of time."

Cooper officials said they met with Mark Township trustees Monday night. The one concern raised by trustees, they said, was the impact on roads.

But the main road which Cooper will use, according to officials, is Farmer-Mark. They described Farmer-Mark as a "pretty good road already," but Defiance County Engineer Warren Schlatter said it could be improved in the future if necessary.

Although Cooper owns 600 acres adjacent to the planned facility, officials said only 16 acres will be used for constructing five buildings.

Cooper Farms has several facilities in northwest Ohio counties such as Mercer, Paulding and Van Wert. There is also an operation in Indiana's Jay County.

In other business Thursday, commissioners:

-- held three executive sessions on imminent and pending litigation. County prosecutors attended each meeting while Schlatter was on hand for the first session and emergency management director Julie Rittenhouse attended the third.

-- hosted a quarterly investment advisory committee meeting to review the county's third quarter portfolio. The landfill closure and post-closure portfolios were also approved.

-- held separate executive sessions to discuss personnel with Howell and Defiance County Job and Family Services director Jack Graf.