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Real Estate Men Fight

(Continued From Page 1) non-farm residents, and the tenyear contract period provided for in the bill is "too long a time to tie up land that may cry for better usage We view five years as a poor compromise and would suggest no more than a threeyear. renewable contract period. Who knows what the future holds in terms of farming technology and production, population growth, land needs, and so forth? I'd rather be flexible now with short term contracts which can always be revised "

The three-year contract period Packer recommends is also the recommendation of the Pennsylvania Farmers Association In neighboring New Jersey, a preferential farm tax bill included a three-year contract period, which enabled land speculators to reap tax-sheltered profits over a space of a few years The New Jersey bill has been generally regarded as a failure

Packer went on to attack environmentalists by saying, "So what's all this promotional material about a 'Clean and Green Pennsylvania'? Do farmers want a green belt from one end of the state to the other? Or, are other groups pushing HB 1056 and other measures for less lofty reasons, such as its potential as a tool for exclusionary zoning?

"Contrary to what you might have heard from overzealous ecologists, environmentalists and conservationists, builders value open space highly both from an economic and aesthetic standpoint It is beyond dispute that intelligent use of open space results in maximum buyer appeal and that, ladies and gentlemen, spells more and easier sales and rentals!

" the housing industry doesn't trust open space advocates and we have good reason not to "

John Kelly, president of the Greater Scranton Board of Realtors, said of HB 1056, "It is customary in hearings of this type for witnesses to address themselves to the merits of this. or that partion of a proposal This I cannot do, for aside from possible well-meaning intentions, this bill is totally without merit.'

Kelly called the act a Robin-

assessment reform

He said that the mounting concern over the way land is used in the state is based on a myth "Despite representations to the contrary, there is no land shortage in the Commonwealth There is misuse, there is artificial scarcity arising out of faulty and inequitable assessments, but there is no shortage At four households per acre, a generous allowance, all Pennsylvanians can be housed on 1,302 square miles of land Less than three percent of our state's area As for farming, both the number and acreage of farms steadily declines There is nothing unusual about this. It has been going on for centuries as technology has steadily increased agricultural productivity Our problem has not been lack of farm area, our problem has been excess farm production. A problem which I might point out has brought farmers many subsidy benefits "

The complete text of HB 1056 appeared in the June 9 issue of LANCASTER FARMING. Below is a brief resume of the bill's contents:

This Act shall be known as the "Pennsylvania Farmland Assessment Act of 1973.'

It prescribes the procedure under which an owner may have a minimum of five acres of land devoted to agricultural use valued for tax purposes at the value it has for such uses.

Land owners must make application to the Assessor of the county involved on or before July 1, of the year immediately preceding the tax year The first tax year shall be 1974.

Each county will have a threemember county commission for agricultural tax assessment including the county tax assessor, a school board member appointed by the chairman of county commissioners, and a representative of the conservation district whose livlihood must reflect 75 percent income from agriculture

The term of each contract shall be ten years, renewed at the end of each year for an additional ten year period. If either land owner or county desires not to renew the contract, written notice must be served on the other party at least

a use other than agriculture, it will be subject to additional taxes equal to 100 percent of the regular tax not paid plus compound interest at 5 percent from the time of change up to the ten-year commitment on the amount not paid in each of the preferentially taxed years

Prior to change of use an environmental impact statement will be submitted to the commission to determine if the change of use would adversely affect the environment of the area and if so, the proposed change could be negated until the original contract expires

Accidents Kill, 2,200 **On The Farm**

CHICAGO - In 1972 an estimated 2,200 persons were killed in work accidents in agriculture, according to the National Safety Council.

Using a standardized survey format, the statistical and farm departments conducted oneyear studies of agricultural accidents in 10 states. The studies made by extension services and local volunteers show that an estimated 169,000 injuries occur annually to farm residents, workers and visitors in the states studied. Of the total injuries, the report indicates that more accidents occurred in farm structures than at any other location.

The survey area contained approximately 825,000 farms with more than 3 million farm residents. The results indicate that nearly two-thirds of the total injuries were work-related, and much of the remainder occurred during periods of leisure activity.



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