

# Ag districts designed to protect farmland

**By DIETER KRIEG**  
**LANCASTER** - The first step towards good agricultural zoning is good planning, says David Schreffler, one of the architects of a land-use ordinance which is designed to protect farmers in Millcreek Township of Lebanon County. Although he is a social studies teacher, rather than a farmer, Schreffler is a strong and dynamic champion of farmland preservation. He voiced his concerns and demonstrated his persuasive style at a recent meeting on land-use at the Lancaster

County Farm and Home Center.

Schreffler declares that surveys and studies must first be conducted before an acceptable land-use plan can be implemented. Included should be economic impact statements, soil maps, an inventory of existing land uses, future land use projections, the topography of the land, suitability of the land for farm machinery, and other pertinent facts which might affect land-use in the area. Even the condition and use of a neighboring farm should be

considered when making plans, said Schreffler.

By using the proper procedures throughout the planning stages, and an input of ideas from the community, Schreffler maintains that agricultural districts can be more readily identified. Together, they form a basis for the proposed land-use ordinance.

One of the keys to having it all come out properly is to have farmers on the advisory boards, says Schreffler. Another important aspect is that the involved individuals carry out a strong and favorable public relations program. The support of the entire community should be solicited.

In Millcreek Township, some of the facts which were used to help the cause of agricultural zoning included:

Farms present fewer tax problems than residential areas.

Nuisance ordinances - centering on farm odors, noises, and debris - are kept to a minimum.

If housing developments were allowed to swallow up farmland indiscriminately, the tax increases would not support the necessary services. Also, scattered developments use more agricultural land than concentrated residential areas.

Water, sewage, and transportation problems would develop if agricultural zoning is not put into effect.

To get a land-use program off the ground, it's essential that farmers become involved, Schreffler em-

phasized. Ideally, the agricultural community should push to have itself represented by farmers. Also, they should seek a commitment from their supervisors to work for the protection of their lands and businesses.

Noting that Lancaster County has lost so much of its farmland over the past few years that it scares him, Schreffler pointed out that 66 per cent of the land in his Lebanon County township is used as cropland. Also, most people in the area are in-

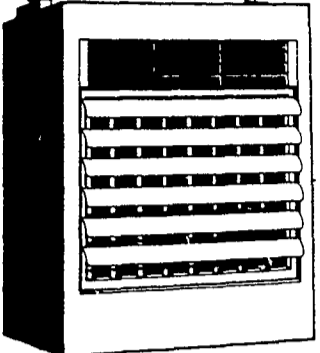

involved in farming and the soil is fair to excellent. In fact, 60 per cent of the farmland is considered to be excellent and a lot of the products from the township's farms stay in the area.

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David Schreffler  
 Millcreek Township  
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