



Lebanon County Commissioner Ed Arnold, front left, shares farm land preservation ideas with panelists, left to right, Amos Funk, president of the Lancaster County Agricultural Preservation Board; David Schreffler, chairman of the Millcreek Township Planning Commission; Chris Allen, Pennsylvania Farmers Association; Dan Cook, PDA; and Earl Meyer, Lebanon County Planning Department.

Lebanon County

(Continued from Page C33)

farm land, a prime resource not readily reclaimed, to maintain and protect the recharging and quality of ground water vulnerable to pollution because of subsurface limestone formations, and to provide aesthetic relief from urban development and open space for the recreation and refreshment of the citizens."

Development is prohibited in ag districts except for the building of homes for the farmers family. These homes would be built on non-prime farm land after the farmer has filed an appeal with the township advisory board.

"Ag districts encourage the farming business," concluded Schreffler, "by reducing the zoning restrictions, such as set back distances for buildings, and giving the farmer fewer hassles."

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Dan Cook, a farmer and director of the Pa. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Planning, Research, and Economic Development, refreshed the group's memories on the state legislation that has been passed to help save farm land.

The Clean and Green Law, Act 319, recently amended by Act 725; House Bill 1778, restricting foreign ownership, Senate Bill 756, exempting ag co-ops from certified audits; Senate Bill 276, setting up an agriculture review board for any ag land condemnation, and Senate Bill 1011, reducing the permit fee to \$25 for an ethanol still.

Cook said he understood the plight of the farmer. He said farmers begin to lose political control when the township begins to urbanize

"What brought the people to the country are the things they try to move out after they elect their own representatives to the local government."

Summing up the information program, Amos Funk, chairman of the Lancaster County Agricultural Preservation Board, told what is being done to save 278,000 acres of farm land in that county.

"Land is an important nonrenewable resource that should be used wisely," Funk stated. "But, it won't be preserved unless the farmers on the land want to keep it that way. And right now, I'm not sure many of them do."

Funk told the group that nine townships in Lancaster County have agricultural districts. "The farmers go along with the districts because they feel the zoning can always be changed—but the deed restriction idea is permanent."

He added the deed restriction plan is as voluntary as it can be and

still be effective. The farmers are given the chance to voice their opinions at public hearings before the township adopts the deed restriction policy.

Funk predicted that in 5 to 10 years the price of the farm land in the preserve areas will be sold for a higher price than farm land outside of the preserve. "The farms in the preserve will be assured the ability to farm."

This argument disputes the claims of many farmers, Funk said, who feel the deed restriction will lower the value of their farm because they won't be able to sell it for development.

With all of the information and comments to digest, the Lebanon County Planning Commission has its work cut out during the next six months.

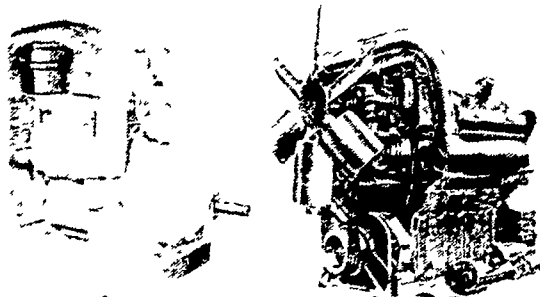
However, they are still looking for ideas and opinions from farmers in their county, and Commissioner Arnold said he encouraged public input in developing the farm land preservation program.

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Chester offers 4-H leader orientation

WEST CHESTER — Adults interested in helping boys and girls, ages 8 to 19, develop their abilities are invited to attend an orientation meeting for new volunteer leaders to be held Monday, April 28 at 7:30

p.m. at the Downingtown Savings and Loan Bank, 100 East Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown.

The role of 4-H leaders will be discussed, along with an explanation of the various 4-H activities and events

available to Chester County youth.

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