

Ephrata Twp. considering farmland preservation

EPHRATA — Assistance in forming the first agricultural preservation districts in Lancaster County formally was extended to Ephrata Township officials Monday by the newly organized Agricultural Preservation Board.

The offer of help was made at a meeting of the Ephrata Township Planning Commission by Amos H. Funk, chairman of the county board.

The commission said it would "take the matter under consideration and work with it."

General support for the agricultural preservation concept was expressed at the session by members of the township's board of supervisors and several attending farmers whose land would be located in the

proposed district.

"It's important that we get started in Ephrata Township with farmland preservation as a demonstration project," Funk said.

"Other farmers can then look to Ephrata Township. I believe that a lot of fears of people won't materialize."

"I hope and pray that Ephrata Township will give us a chance to try it."

Funk further explained that the role of the county board would be to make suggestions and share information, but the planning commission and supervisors would have the final word.

He suggested that the next step for the township might be the scheduling of a public hearing on agricultural preservation.

The county would be willing to bear the cost of holding such a hearing and the sending of certified

letters to property owners in the proposed preservation district, according to Funk.

Of particular concern, Funk said, is the future of farming in "fringe areas," located near residential developments.

"There are 29 miles of fringe areas in Ephrata Township," he said.

"The question is how these farm owners can be protected from the complaints of neighbors."

Funk explained that the agricultural preservation program would provide that the county make payment to property owners who agree to 25-year deed restrictions to keep their land in farming.

The payment would either be a percentage of the agricultural valuation of the land or a flat amount per acre.

The example he cited was five percent of a 100-acre farm valued at \$400,000, or a payment of \$20,000.

After the 25-year agreement, the deed restriction would be reopened for possible change.

Such a program would require that the township's zoning ordinance be strengthened to preserve farmland and protect farming.

The township's present zoning ordinance permits single-family house development on lots of 60,000 square feet in agricultural zones.

Under the county preservation program, development would be restricted to a quarter-acre lot for every 25 acres of farmland. Thus, four lots could be developed on 100 acres. Such development could be limited to members of the farm family or employees.

Among farmers expressing approval for farmland preservation were Lloyd Sensenig and Ivan Martin.

"If you'd contact farmers in Ephrata Township, more than what you'd expect would be in favor of it," Sensenig said.

"It goes against the grain to sell for development," Martin said.

"This is top-notch land and should be kept for farming."

Approval was also given by township supervisors Earl Hagy, chairman, and Aaron Z. Stauffer, who serves as both vice chairman of the township board and the county preservation board.—DA

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Montgomery sheepman's clinic

SOUDERTON — The Montgomery County Extension Service invites all new and potential sheep producers to participate in a sheep mini-clinic to be held on Saturday, May 10, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Souderton area.

The clinic is aimed at those persons relatively new to the sheep industry.

Six basic management skills will be taught, including taking temperature of the sheep, handling, proper use of dose syringe in worming, determining age

of the animals, intramuscular injections and making an instant halter for emergency handling. These management skills will be taught to enable shepherds to be competent in performing approved sheep management practices. Each skill will be explained, followed by a laboratory session allowing each participant to practice the skill.

An evaluator from Penn State University will be on hand to score each person and enable them to receive a

certificate dependent on their newly-learned skills.

Enrollment will be limited and advance registration is required. Contact County Agent Nancy M. Kadwill at 215/277-0574 or write to 400 Markley Street, Norristown, 19401 and leave your name, address, phone number and a brief background or plans of your involvement with sheep.

Those persons enrolled will receive details on location and equipment to bring.

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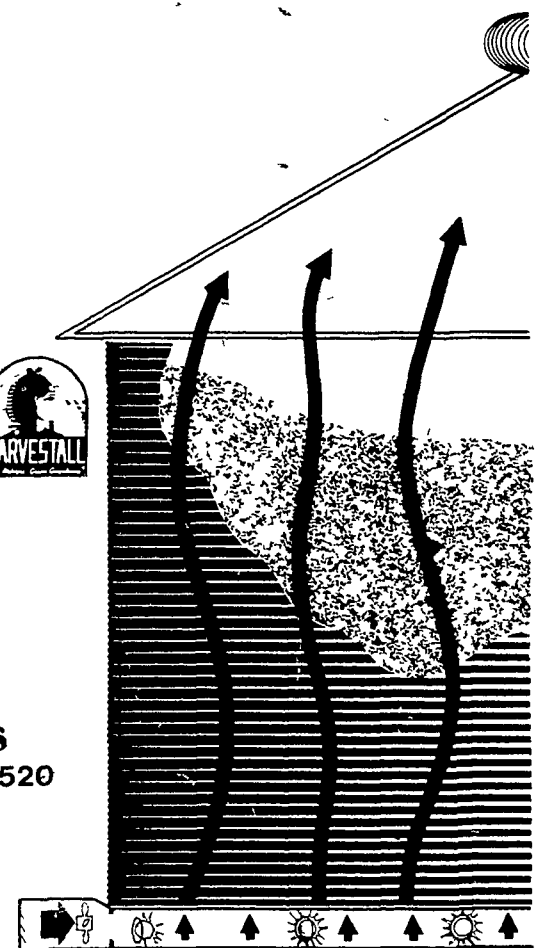
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