

Rural preservation efforts continue in New Jersey

FLEMINGTON, N.J. — terdon's rural preservation Freeholder-appointed task force. Study continues on Hun-

Buoyed by the two to one affirmative vote on the agricultural preservation referendum in early November, the Board of Chosen Freeholders extended the task force's life for an additional month, requesting the 12-member body to develop guidelines for implementing the program.

The group, chaired by Julia Allen, avid proponent of rural preservation in her own Readington Township, as well as, the state, recognized all too well the scope of the work to be done and requested more time.

The freeholders responded by resolution extending the term of the task force for six months. The job ahead involves the development of "detailed guidelines for the operation of the county's rural preservation program." It means taking those four general proposals and getting down to specifics.

Just how will they be implemented?

Julia Allen is proposing to her group on further

research and study on the four elements: agricultural districting, easement donations, assistance to municipalities, and easement purchases.

She will suggest sub-committees be assigned to study each in more depth, answering some of the questions being raised, and proposing guidelines for implementation.

Professional assistance has been offered the task force by Sam Hamill, Executive Director of the Middlesex-Somerset-Mercer Regional Study Council. Ms. Linda Bentz, Associate Director of M-S-M, will be meeting with the task force and its sub-committees.

She will be doing some of the much needed research and pulling together data for the group. She has been very active with the state's farmland preservation study. M-S-M staff served as consultants to the State Departments of Agriculture/Environmental Protection in developing their program: "Grassroots .. an agricultural retention and development program for New Jersey."

The county task force will keep its eye on the state program, which has recently been presented to the Governor and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee.

As Julia Allen put it, "we'd

like our efforts to be in concert as much as possible with the state program."

John VanZandt, Coordinator for the state program has been keeping us abreast of the progress at state level.

So, it is hoped that the state and county programs will complement each other.

Also of interest, the County Planning Board will soon be working on the agricultural element of its master plan. They, too, will consider county and state progress toward strong rural/agricultural preservation programs.

Much is to be done these next six months. Mrs. Allen suggests this to be an excellent time for inputs from the community. Farmers, land-owners, all county residents, should bring their ideas and suggestions to the attention of task force members.

It's an important part of the whole process .. a process that hopefully will result in an equitable program that moves toward the goal of retaining our farmland resources and related features and qualities of our countryside for the years ahead.

Written suggestions may be sent to the Rural Preservation Task Force, County Administration Bldg., Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822.

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