

Township officials hear ag zoning plea

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

LANCASTER — Lancaster County took the need for the preservation of farmland directly on Wednesday to the group of people who are making and will continue to make the grass-roots decisions about continuing progress toward the saving of this basic natural resource

The occasion was an Agricultural Zoning Workshop attended by about 150 township officials in the Farm and Home Center. The officials primarily included supervisors and planning commission members from both townships already having ag zoning districts and those who may be considering them.

Speakers during the evening included officials from four townships — three of which have ag districts and one which is about to adopt a zoning code with them.

Officials from townships with ag districts were Aaron Stauffer, of Ephrata Township; James Witmyer, of Warwick Township; and David Garber, of East Donegal Township. Ed Goodhart, of Manor Township, explained that a revised zoning code with an ag district will likely be acted upon within the next couple of months.

Other officials included John Ahlfeld, of the Lancaster County Planning Commission; Tom Johnston, of the Conservation District staff; B. Kenneth Greider, of the Pa. Township Supervisors Association; Amos Funk, of the Agricultural Preservation Board; and Art Huber, of the Lancaster County Association of Elected Township Officials.

The program was moderated by Lancaster County Commissioner James Huber.

Huber set the tone for the meeting by explaining that he considers the preservation of farmland in Lancaster County second in priority only to the protection of people.

"But we're limited in what we can do as county commissioners," Huber said

"The real secret to agricultural zoning lies with you local officials — supervisors and members of township planning commissions.

"For this is where the real decisions must be made — at the local level."

Ahlfeld, as director of the county planning commission, gave a progress report on ag zoning in Lancaster County.

Since just early-1980, the number of municipalities with effective ag zoning districts have increased from only nine to the present total of 20, he said. Half of the townships containing land earmarked for farmland preservation by the county now have these ag zoning districts.

"Nothing is more basic to the preservation of farmland than ag district zoning," Ahlfeld said.

"This is a land use issue and zoning is the tool we have to control land use."

B. Kenneth Greider, of the Pa. Township Supervisors Association, reported on two recent legal and legislative matters which could have an effect on farmland preservation in the state.

House Bill 143, which would give townships the authority to create ag preservation areas, has been reported back into committee because of eight amendments added to the legislation.

Also, the Commonwealth Court handed down a decision declaring



Lancaster County Commissioner James Huber, standing at podium, opens workshop on ag zoning districts. Other officials participating in program include, from the left, David Garber, East Donegal Twp.; Art Huber, Lancaster County Association of Elected Township Officials; Amos Funk, Agricultural

Preservation Board; B. Kenneth Greider, Pa. Township Supervisors Association; John Ahlfeld, Lancaster County Planning Commission; Ed Goodhart, Manor Twp.; Aaron Stauffer, Ephrata Twp. and Tom Johnston, Conservation District.

zoning restrictions unconstitutional in Hopwell Township, York County, which place certain limitations on the amount of residential development permitted in agricultural areas.

Kreider explained that decision has just been handed down and will likely be appealed. Also, it is too early to determine how it might affect other ag zoning efforts.

Aaron Stauffer, of Ephrata Township, cited the zoning regulations just adopted on April 7 which contain ag districts. The regulations limit residential development to one home on a

farm in 25 years for either the retiring owner or people involved in the farming operation. A restriction is also placed on the deed recognizing the right to farm to protect against any nuisance complaints.

Ed Goodhart, of Manor Township, traced the process involved in establishing an ag district which is contained in the regulations which will be acted upon in the near future.

"Involve as many people as possible," he stressed, "particularly the farmers,"

David Garber, member of the

East Donegal Planning Commission and a poultry farmer, expressed his position:

"Farming is a way of life. We love it and want to protect it."

He stressed the need for reasonable regulations, such as setback requirements for livestock and poultry operations which will permit farming to continue on the limited agricultural tracts available.

Witmyer outlined Warwick Township's efforts which established an ag district in 1979. There has been no subdivision in

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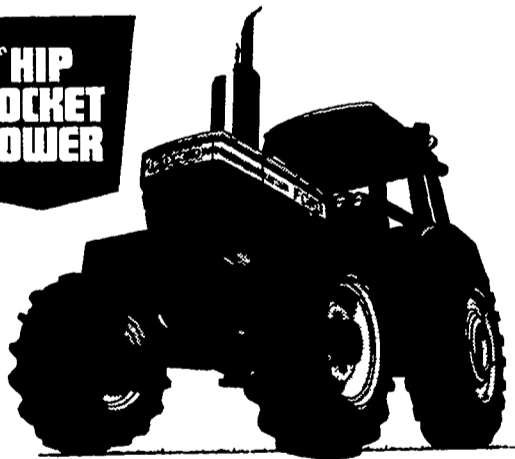
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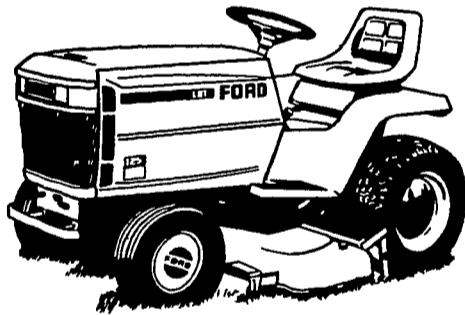
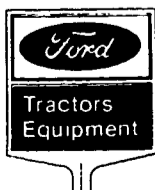


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