HEIDELBERG TOWNSHIP
LEHIGH COUNTY PENNA.

This map shows the proposed zoning divisions being considered by the Lehigh County's Heidelberg Township to insure their farming community is safeguarded. Heidelberg Township has a total area of 15,835 acres of which 12,623 acres are in agriculture or vacant (1978 census). There are 1,595 acres of prime farmland and 9,270 acres of additional farmland of statewide importance.

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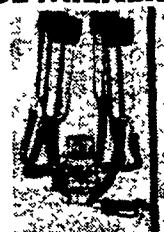
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(Continued from Page A1)

Permitted uses include agriculture, single family detached dwellings and certain community facilities, such as churches, with a minimum lot size of one acre.

Village Center - the existing villages of Germansville and Pleasant Corner. Permitted uses include stores and offices, non-nuisance industry, and certain community facilities with minimum lot sizes of 20,000 square feet; and single family detached dwellings with a minimum lot size of 30,000 square feet.

Overlying all these zoning definitions is an environmentally protected area designation. This would include areas of high water tables, flood plains and steep areas. Here the minimum lot size would be three acres.

What was the public's reaction to these proposals, seemingly in the farmer's favor?

Comments and questions were primarily negative. Several testimonies received rounds of applause from the audience:

Here are some of the statements:

* "Who's going to pay the development rights for keeping this land in agriculture? The farmers are the ones who are going to pay because their land will be zoned agricultural and won't qualify for payment?"

* "Let farmers do with their land as they please. It's our only pension when we get old."

* "Who's going to farm all that land that's in the agricultural zone? We're getting too old and the

farmers are already experiencing."

young farmers won't want to farm it all."

* "You're taking away the farmer's economic base. If a farmer's most valuable asset is eroded, you erode his equity and he won't be able to get loans."

"The state and federal government assess agricultural land lower than residential land, so the land will be worth less if it's zoned specifically for agricultural uses."

"What is your hurry? There is a move to pay farmers for their development rights, as they are attempting to do on Long Island. But, if the farmer doesn't have any development rights, he won't get paid."

"The effect of this ordinance is exclusionary. What you are trying to do is preserve the status quo. What you want to do is preserve that corn field across the street as open space at the sake of the farmer."

* "The whole thing is unfair. By zoning almost everything agricultural, you'll be adding to the surpluses and lower prices farmers are already experiencing."

* "When you pay taxes on your land, you should have a choice in what you can do with it. Our land is our pension — we must rely on it."

* "How can anyone start farming today with prices the way they are? It's tough to get started without collateral. If you devalue the property by zoning it agricultural, there will be no collateral."

* "Three acres per home is a lot of waste."

* "The state of Iowa, one of the nation's most productive farming areas, is losing acres of farmland through erosion caused by farmers. There land, which used to have topsoil several feet thick, now has only a few inches of topsoil. This loss is worse than losing farmland to development."

"Here in Heidelberg Township, the soil is shale and gravel. What you have is a terrific lobbying effort to save a few small farmers."

* "We're not against the concept of preserving farmland. The danger here is dealing with the problem on the local level with local farmers paying the price."

"Farmers shouldn't have to volunteer their land. It's not our farmland — it's everybody's farmland."

"If a farmer wants his land to stay in farming, let him sign a voluntary deed restriction. And Right to Farm legislation will take care of nuisance ordinances so that a farmer doesn't need the ag zoning to protect him from

neighbors complaining about noise and smells."

Also testifying were representatives from two York County townships who have had a similar zoning ordinances in effect for the past five years.

Clarence Nace of Shrewsbury Township, York County, farms about 400 acres of land, raising grain, and also serves on the township board. He shared with the group that their biggest concern — the devaluing of farmland after zoning it agricultural — hasn't happened in Shrewsbury Township.

"There is increased competition between farmers for land. And now there's an incentive for young people to get into farming — something they didn't have before zoning. Zoning gave farmers the incentive to expand their operations, knowing they would be protected against development pressures," Nace said. "Since land prices increased, farms were actually worth more — as farms — after zoning."

York County dairyman David Stewart told the group about Peach Bottom Township's experience with this type of zoning. He pointed out this type of zoning keeps good farmland intact, not chopped up by development on the best land since it restricts housing to areas unsuitable for farming.

"Our farmland value went from \$600 an acre for farming to about \$3,000 an acre for farming since this zoning was enacted six years ago," Stewart recalled.

Adding his comments was York County attorney Gilbert Malone. He reviewed a study conducted by the county's board of realtors to study the impact of ag zoning on property value.

"What we found was property in townships with ag zoning increased in value equally with land in townships without ag zoning. The major difference was that the people who were buying in ag zones were farmers whereas those buying in non-ag-zoned areas were speculators," reported Malone.

"The loss of ag land is a serious national problem — three million acres are lost each year. If this problem is not dealt with at the local level, the state or federal government will step in as they did before with our over-flowing septic tanks and safety at work by forming DER and OSHA."

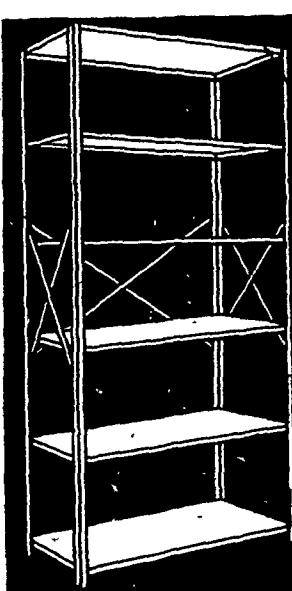
As a result of the public comment and questions, the planning committee agreed to look into the problem of what happens if a farmer wishes to keep a four or five acre lot for himself when he sells the farm; and clarifying the requirement that 50 percent of a product sold at the farm be homegrown.

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