

# W. Hempfield farmer fights Lanc. Sewer Authority plans

BY SHEILA MILLER

CENTERVILLE — B. C. Brubaker owns a farm in West Hempfield Township, Lancaster County. He's been the proprietor of that 90-acre farm since 1960. Now, Brubaker, like many other farmers before him, has come face to face with a "higher power" and stands to lose 1.6 acres of land to a public utility through condemnation. That "higher power" is the Lancaster Area Sewer Authority.

Brubaker, who has been fighting LASA over the proposed sewer line during the past several months, said he learned of LASA's plans to cross his farm with a 1,300 foot forced main sewer line only eight months ago. After numerous telephone calls and a personal appearance at last week's monthly meeting of the LASA Board, Brubaker says he has decided to retain an attorney to represent his case.

What is the case? According to West Hempfield Township zoning officer Don Kauffman, the Lancaster Area Sewer Authority is buying right-of-ways in the township in order to install a main trunk line to carry sewage from an undersized pumping station to a new sewage treatment plant. He says the new forced main is necessary since the old, undersized pumping station's inadequacy allowed raw sewage to sometimes flow into nearby Stricker's Run.

The location of the proposed main is within roughly a 40-foot area along an active Conrail railroad track which dissects Brubaker's farm. Although the LASA acquisition would vary in

width, it basically snugs up against the railroad right-of-way and involves a portion of Brubaker's field that is brushy and overgrown — where old, unused equipment serve as trellises for weeds and vines. Bordering this idle strip, Brubaker's cultivated fields butt up against a field access road which separates brush from crops.

Brubaker contends that the \$2,011 he will receive from LASA is not a "fair price" for the condemned 1.6 acres, pointing out a neighbor received \$3,000 an acre for "killdeer land" — land where nothing will grow, he explains — when the real estate was privately sold. Brubaker claims LASA will save considerable sums by coming through his property rather than following the road.

A LASA spokesman counters, saying the engineers "selected the most practical route with the least amount of inconvenience."

The Brubaker farm is used for cultivating corn and tobacco, with only 5 acres tillable. About one-third of the farm is prime agricultural land, and part of the property falls within the county comprehensive plan for an agricultural preserve area.

The farm is leased out to a neighboring farmer.

But Brubaker is not so much concerned about the loss of prime farmland as the loss of revenue from the sale of his land to LASA. During his hearing before the LASA Board, Brubaker emphasized the utility was "taking property rights away" and that the sewer line installation would hamper future housing development.

Being zoned rural agriculture,



West Hempfield farmer B.C. Brubaker stands next to a tobacco field on his 90-acre farm. Brubaker is fighting the Lancaster Area Sewer Authority, trying to receive a "fair and just price" for a 1.6 acre right-of-way the Authority wishes to purchase for \$2,011. The

area in question lies to the left of the picture, along the banks of the Conrail railroad bed. When the sewer line is installed, underground, removing the trees and brush that presently line the field, Brubaker will be able to farm the land free of charge.

Brubaker would be limited to only one lot for every 25 acres unless he requested a zoning change. "I can't do with the land what I want to, but the sewer authority sure can," Brubaker admonishes. He says the farm was his "retirement" — "selling building lots."

Although Brubaker concedes he will be able to farm the land taken by LASA at no charge, and with no interference to field operations since there are no manholes located on his property and the pipe will be buried underground,

he states his reason for fighting the sewer authority is because he "objects with the price and tactics offered by LASA."

He points out that he has to pay yearly fees to people on whose property he erects billboards to advertise his campsite (located

across the tracks from the crop fields), referencing the "once and done" payment he'd receive from LASA.

"A billboard can be taken down," he says. "You can't do away with a sewer."

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