

Ag Preserve Board holds seminar for professionals

LANCASTER — About 75 professionals gathered at the Brunswick Motor Inn in Lancaster last Friday for an Agricultural Land Preservation Seminar.

Sponsored by the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board and the Lancaster County Bar Association, the seminar was designed to acquaint professionals with the preservation board's work and to discuss the legal and financial aspects of farmland preservation in Lancaster County.

County Commissioner James Huber opened the morning session, noting that a recent citizen survey indicated that ag preservation is a number one priority in the county. Huber said that the preservation board has traveled "a long, hard road" since its inception in 1980.

Amos Funk, chairman of the preserve board, said that response to the deed restriction program has been good, with farmers voluntarily participating.

Preserve Board Director Alan R. Musselman, talked about the Preservation Deed Restriction Program. Under the program, he explained, farmers have four options to obtain deed restrictions on their farms. A farmer can agree to put a deed restriction on his land without receiving payment, or he can receive payment from the county for putting a restriction on the farm for a period of 25 years or more. Another option, Musselman said, is having the county purchase a farm, place a deed restriction on the land and then resell it. A farmer could also sign an agreement with the county giving the county first right to purchase his farm if it is going to be sold. That way,

Musselman said, the county could buy the land, put a restriction on it and resell it.

"Our hope is that the next generation will not opt to terminate deed restrictions," Musselman said.

Later in the program James H. Thomas, Esquire, from Wenger, Byler and Thomas spoke on the legal perspectives of farmland preservation; CPA Marlin Benedict from Simon Lever and Company spoke on taxes and estate planning; Clifford Huffman, ARA, spoke on preservation land appraisal; and Edward Thompson Jr., Esquire, from the American Farmland Trust in Washington spoke on preservation case studies.



Participating in the Agricultural Land Preservation Seminar for professionals held last Friday were from left, James Thomas of Wenger, Byler and Thomas; Alan Musselman, director of the Lancaster County Ag Preserve Board; Edward Thompson, from the American Farmland Trust; Amos Funk, chairman of the Ag Preserve Board, County Commissioner James Huber; Clifford Huffman, ARA; and Marlin Benedict from Simon Lever and Company.

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