

Should Farmers Sacrifice For Community Benefit?

LOU ANN GOOD

**Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)**

— "Should a farm family be expected to sacrifice financially for the good of the public at large?" Strasburg farmer Roger Rohrer asked participants attending the town meeting held last week in Lancaster.

Rohrer asked the question in regards to government regulations that create additional burdens on farmers and devaluation of farmland.

The town meeting, the second in a series called Lancaster County-The Next Los Angeles, was an opportunity for those in attendance to express opinions about property rights, zoning, and the future of agriculture in Lancaster County. The comparison of the county to Los Angeles stems from the fact that 50 years ago, the Los Angeles area was similar to Lancaster County in ag production but through zoning and government regulations, farming practices

could not survive in Los Angeles.

At the Farm and Home Center, last Thursday night, Rohrer, one of four persons participating in a panel discussion about property rights and zoning, presented three dilemmas farmers sometimes face in land usage.

These included a farmer who rents additional acreage to fill his grain bins and then is shut down due to noise level that occurs at late hours because he is accused of running a commercial operation.

In another situation, a farmer's land was used to supply water lines to a community at under market prices. About 15 years later, the community enacted a well-head protection law, which may limit future expansion of the farm because of environmental concerns and water consumption. It also restricts existing farming practices because it is deemed hazardous to store necessary chemicals and fertilizers in his barns. In addition the farmer's attorney thinks additional liability

insurance should be carried by the farmer in case of possible water contamination.

Rohrer also presented the case study of a farmer wanting to expand by building a broiler house to include a son in farming. Because they farmed in an ag security area, the farm family

assumed they could obtain a permit. Instead they were delayed months because the township supervisors were uncertain how to handle the request and required the farmer to produce more and more information, which should not have been necessary.

Ag zoning and regulations that

require higher operating costs for a farmer reduces his ability to compete with other areas of the country and a whole raft of other problems, said Rohrer.

In an effort to help the audience better understand the purpose of zoning and how it is determined

(Turn to Page A31)



Discussing zoning conflicts between the agriculture and the non-farming communities are panel members, from left, John Becker, ag law and economics teacher for Penn State; Roger Rohrer, Strasburg farmer; Stan Limbeck, Penn State professor, and Dr. John Schwartz, director of Lancaster County Extension.

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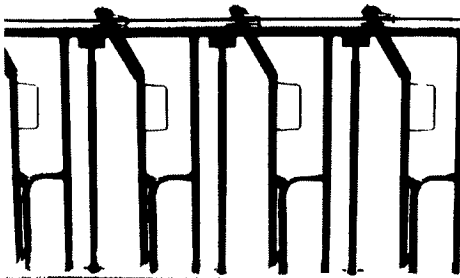
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