

State Grange Calls For Changes

HARRISBURG, (Dauphin Co) - The Pennsylvania State Grange strongly opposes delays in the implementation of last year's amendments to the Clean and Green program

Following a joint news conference called by state representatives Stanley E. Saylor, R-York, and John Gordner, D-Columbia, the Grange and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, a Grange member from Montgomery County gave testimony before the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, which was holding a hearing to consider requests for delays in implementation of Act 156.

Act 156 was designed to allow Clean and Green to apply to a farm's entire acreage, including the land under the farmhouse, agricultural buildings and driveways, and more consistency in assessment across the state

through an exact formula for determining assessments. The impetus for Act 156 was born in Montgomery County, where Grange members went to battle over unfair assessment of farm lands

Hiram Hershey, a Montgomery County licensed real estate broker and Grange member, said the Grange was instrumental in enacting the original law, and now seeks immediate implementation to ensure it works for the betterment of the farming community and the environment.

"Farmers and their representatives have worked hard to have the Clean and Green Law clarified. We have gone through the legislative process to ensure that the original Clean and Green Law continues to be implemented as it was written," Hershey testified to the committee. "In fact, the amendments

presented and passed by the General Assembly, Act 156 of 1998, were just that - clarification of the current law. The amendments did not significantly change the law, but stopped abuses by local governing bodies who discovered loopholes in the original language. I see no reason to delay implementation or change the amendments passed last year."

The Clean and Green program (Act 319 of 1974) is designed to preserve farmland, forest land and open space by taxing it according to its use value rather than the prevailing market value. It has been nearly seven months since the amendments to Clean and Green were signed into law as Act 156 of 1998.

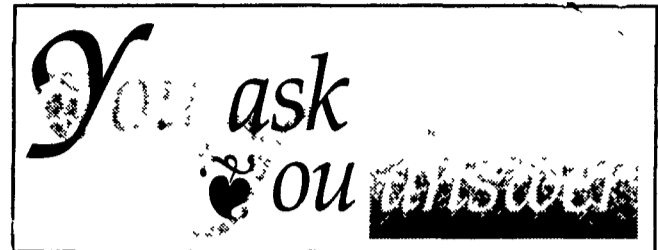
Hershey said the amendments in Act 156 of 1998 are important for farmers throughout the state, but particularly in Montgomery County where land under farm buildings is being assessed at \$40,000/acre, the value of acreage used for development. Under the Act, the value of land under farm buildings is \$600/acre.

This change in assessment is a significant reduction in real estate taxes, and the reduced

taxation will assist and enable farmers to continue to be productive," Hershey said. "It is ironic that the state and many counties, including Montgomery County, are supporting farmland preservation by providing millions of dollars to purchase developing rights, but at the same time is considering changing or delaying a law that is

intended to assist farmers to continue farming"

The Pennsylvania State Grange is an agricultural/rural organization with over 30,000 members and is dedicated to improving life for all rural Pennsylvanians through grassroots legislative policies, community service work and offering member services



This column is for readers who have questions but don't know who to ask for answers.

"You Ask—You Answer" is for non-cooking questions. When a reader sends in a question, it will be printed in the paper. Readers who know the answer are asked to respond by mailing the answer, which will then be printed in the paper.

Questions and Answers to this column should be addressed to You Ask—You Answer, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Attention: Lou Ann Good.

Or, you may e-mail questions and answers to lgood.eph@lnpnews.com

Please clarify what question you are answering when responding.

Do not send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a reply. If we receive the answer, we will publish it as soon as possible. Please include your phone number because we sometimes need to contact the person to clarify details. We will not publish your phone number unless you request it.

QUESTION — Frank Cerami, Ottsville, is looking for the company that manufactures wood paving blocks like those used in the Philadelphia Historic District.

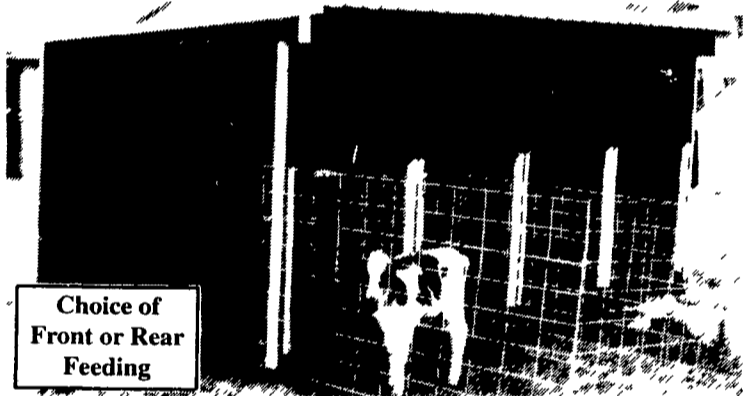
QUESTION — Calendars are needed to help mentally handicapped people with a project. They can be used calendars with notes on the dates, etc. Please send calendars to Matthew Stephens, R.1, Box 1069, Starrucca, PA 18462-9703.

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