

York Swine Operation Advances

(Continued from Page A22)

homes to the east.

Metzler said he would be willing to consider resituating the barns if plans showed it to be feasible. He also said he is committed to carrying out all possible best management practices to help eliminate odors.

The facilities are designed for six to eight months of manure storage in concrete pits underneath the hog floors. Metzler said he would need to spread manure two or three times a year. Seventy percent of the manure will need to be "exported" to other farms, as required by the Pennsylvania Nutrient Management Act.

A natural ridge between the hog site and the homes will be built up higher, and Metzler said he is willing to plant trees on top of it to further buffer odors.

"Basically, I have told the township that I will commit to doing all the best management practices that I can," he said.

According to Gilbert Malone, the 90-acre farm will allow for adequate recharge of the groundwater supply to compensate for the 12,000 gallons a day used by the hogs.

Shelly Dehoff, a York County

resident and public liaison with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Lancaster County Conservation District, reported after the meeting on conversations she had with local real estate appraisers and lenders regarding the effect of CAFOs on property values.

"Overall, they seemed to indicate that there may be a brief drop in property values, based on the perception that there could be problems stemming from the CAFO," Dehoff said, "although, of the six appraisers I talked to, no one would even comment on a percentage or amount."

"They seemed to indicate that as long as the CAFO is well-maintained and well-operated, there will not be a long-term problem from the operation, and there will not be a long-term negative effect on residential property values in the area surrounding the CAFO."

A number of farmers and other supporters of the Metzler's plans spoke on the importance of large-scale livestock operations to the future of agriculture in the township.

"There seems to be many powers destroying the good image of the family farm," said Bonnie

Hushon, a dairy farmer in the township. "What is a farm if it's not going to be a viable operation?"

Dave Gemmill, a farmer and Peach Bottom Township resident, also supported Metzler's plan to build the hog houses.

"What (Metzler) is preparing to do, very few young men have the opportunity to do," Gemmill said, noting that the average age of U.S. farmers is 54 years.

Robert Scarborough, a Peach Bottom Township resident and an assistant to Pennsylvania Senator Mike Waugh (R-28), defended the Metzlers' plans and asked that the CAFO ordinance be dropped.

"I'm concerned that the driving movement behind this is a national movement against progressive agriculture," he said. According to Scarborough, operations such as that proposed by the Metzlers are needed to provide food to the nation.

"I contend that we will remain free as a country only so far as we are able to feed ourselves," he said.

The proposed ordinance would also limit dairy and beef operations, capping mature dairy cow numbers at 200 and cow/calf beef

herds at 300.

Scott Cooper, a local dairyman with a herd of 60 cows, said the ordinance would put too much of a squeeze on farming in the township.

"For agriculture to remain viable, these numbers are not acceptable," he said.

None of the residents speaking at the meeting said they had any worries about odors from large cow herds. Many of them expressed support for farming in general while also airing their fears of having a hog CAFO near their homes.

"I have a lot of respect for farming," said Donald Vaughan, a township resident for eight years. "But this (proposed hog operation) is not just a farm — it's a plant."

Dave Stewart, chairman of the board of supervisors and a farmer himself, said he was originally opposed to the hog barns, but is now supportive of the Metzlers' plans.

Stewart, along with other township officials and several residents, recently toured several area hog CAFOs in a trip put on by the York County Farm Bureau. Stewart said he was impressed with the low level of odor he found on the sites.

"Everything has been getting better over the years with odors in pig farming," Stewart said.

"It's seems to me like every-

body's disgusted and the only thing that stinks is pigs."

Supervisor John Johnson suggested that CAFO issues be studied further before voting on the ordinance. Supervisors Stewart and Joe Ailes agreed.

Several residents expressed the wish for greater cooperation between farmers and community residents.

"We've wasted a lot of time and emotion tonight," resident Sam McConnell told the board. "Make an ordinance that allows everybody to work together."

Denise Cable, a Susquehanna Trails resident, said that large-scale hog producers should be required to do water testing, pay manure shipping fees, and have setbacks greater than 300 feet (as proposed in the ordinance) with consideration of prevailing winds.

Penn State and other universities are working to develop more improved technologies to handle odors. These technologies are part of the planning process before any facilities are constructed.

"We honor the noble profession of farming," Cable said. "Bottom line, we just want to know if Mr. Metzler is going to be a good neighbor. What kind of middle ground can we come to?"

About 100 people attended the meeting.



Option
CORN HERBICIDE

not your future.

It's yours. The first post grass herbicide for corn that puts you in control.

OPTION herbicide controls all your major grasses, including many perennials and key broadleaves. Plus, it gives you the ability to rotate to any other crop in 60 days or less. Use it on virtually any field corn, in any program, and get back to work on your farm and your future. OPTION. Grass control that puts you in control.



Craig and Jennifer Metzler with sons Benjamin, 3, and Jere, 3 months.



Scott Cooper, a dairy farmer in Peach Bottom Township, spoke against the ordinance that sets limits on livestock numbers. In the background is Gilbert Malone, Peach Bottom Township solicitor.

Lancaster Farming
Check out our Website!
www.lancasterfarming.com