

**OCTOBER 27, 2005 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING – AG LAND PRESERVATION**  
**BALLOT REFERENDUM:**

The Mount Joy Township Board of Supervisors and the Agricultural Land Preservation Board met this date for a Public Information Meeting, as publicly advertised, at 7:30 p.m. in the Mount Joy Township Municipal Building, 902 Hoffman Home Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325 with Board Chairman James Waybright presiding. Others in attendance were: Supervisors William Chantelau, Samuel Dayhoff, George Scott; and Secretary Brenda Constable; Ag Land Preservation Board members Beau Ramsburg, David Kehr, Alden Reese; and Robin Crushong.

Citizens in attendance were: John & Pam Roman; Jack & Betty Myers; Frank Schfield; Bob Gitt; Jack McLatchy; Tom Titus; Sidney Kuhn; Dave Reese; and Charles Schellinger of *The Evening Sun*.

Mr. Ramsburg explained that a referendum would be on the upcoming general election ballot asking the voters if they would favor the borrowing of \$2 Million dollars for Round II of the Ag Land Preservation Program. Mr. Ramsburg then gave a background of the program, from its beginning, noting that the Township has preserved five farms with a total of 668 acres to date. The fifth farm would be finalized in January of 2006. He explained that the Township started with \$1,004,000 for Round I, received \$100,000 from County grant, \$133,000 from US Department of Agricultural, and actual expenditures of \$772,000 or 1,155 per acre was used, leaving a balance of \$279,000 remaining after January 2006 for the end of Round I. He noted that the Preservation Board's goal is to preserve 5,000 acres in the Township.

Mr. Ramsburg announced that Round II just closed. The Preservation Board is revising its program, with the intent for eligible landowners to not have to apply to the County Preservation program prior to applying to the Township's program. He pointed out that there is not a big need right now for purchasing easements but the time is right. Easements will get more expensive so the Township has to prepare for this.

Mr. Chantelau read the ballot question to the public, noting that the borrowing would be no cost to the Township because it would be using a line of credit. This would allow the Township to procure easements over a three-year period. The payback would be from income the Township receives from property transfer taxes and with all of the development coming, this would generate enough income to offset the cost. He pointed out the benefits, which would be: permanent preserved land; decrease land available for developers; enhances the rural quality of life; and it is paid for by the real estate transfer taxes from ongoing development.

Mr. Waybright asked for public comment at this time.

Mr. Jack McLatchy asked if the second round monies would be paid back the same way the first round was. Mr. Chantelau responded yes, there would be no cost with a line of credit. The Township could borrow the money and pay it back on only what is borrowed.

Mrs. Pam Roman asked when the first million from Round I would be paid off. Mr. Chantelau stated that this was a 20-year loan and would be paid off in 2023. The second million would be another 20 years to be paid off by 2026. She asked what an acre would cost in the next round. Mr. Ramsburg responded that the Ag Board is projecting approximately \$2,000 per acre. The average cost per acre in Round I was \$1,500.

Mr. McLatchy asked what would happen when the Township reaches its goal of 5,000 acres. Mr. Ramsburg responded that the program would keep on going with purchasing easements as long as people apply.

Mrs. Roman asked if the easement would be forever. Mr. Chantelau responded yes, in perpetuity.

Mr. Chantelau commended the Lake Heritage Property Owners Association for preserving, i.e. funding, to preserve a farm that borders the Lake, so that that community would always have open space next to them.

Mr. Scott pointed out that Township residents were having problems with preserving their land through the County program. Many landowners take less than what an acre is appraised at just so they have the satisfaction of knowing their land is preserved forever. Mr. Ramsburg pointed out that the most paid for any easements was 80% of the appraised value; the least was 30% to 40%. Mr. Dayhoff noted that there is a tax benefit for the landowner when taking the discount.

Mr. Bob Gitt asked if the payback comes solely from transfer tax. Mr. Chantelau responded yes. He added that since the program started in 2003, the amount collected was \$78,000 and was used to pay back debt.

Mr. Tom Titus asked if zoning already restricts development, then why is this program needed. Mr. Chantelau explained that zoning doesn't restrict development, it controls it. Mr. Dayhoff explained how zoning is not permanent, but agricultural preservation is.

Ms. Sidney Kuhn, coordinator of the Land Conservancy of Adams County, commented that the Land Conservancy Board supports this initiative and it is a very good move by this Board of Supervisors to preserve areas in the Township.

Mr. Jack Myers stated that he thinks this drives up the price of land for landowners' kids, making it difficult for them to keep the family farm. Mr. Chantelau responded that the price of land is going up without the program.

Mr. Dayhoff stated that development is coming either way. The area could be built up and it would drive the land prices down. Open space is desirable and people would pay more for it.

Ms. Roman commented that she appreciated the public meeting and now has a better understanding of the program.

Mr. Scott commented that it is fortunate in our Township that with some of the development occurring, the Township can save some money because the developer and not the Township maintain the road maintenance.

With no further public comment, the Public Information Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. this date.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Constable  
Secretary