

May 11, 2007

To the Editor:

On Tuesday, May 15th, Lancaster County voters will choose nominees to represent their parties in the general election for County Commissioner. How encouraging it is to see farmland preservation at the top of every candidate's agenda!

Lancaster County leads the nation in farmland preservation. The citizens and the elected officials of the County have, for over 20 years, supported the protection of our precious farmland, recognizing that agriculture contributes to the superior quality of life in Lancaster County and to the thriving economy.

Because Lancaster County enjoys such a wonderful quality of life, development pressures continue to press in from all sides. The next 10 years will be critical to Lancaster County's future and the challenge for the next Board of Commissioners will be figuring out how to welcome new residents and new employers, while maintaining what is so special about the county.

One of the ways to do this is by preserving the most beautiful farmland in the world!

Everyone worries about the impact government programs have on taxes, and funding for farmland preservation is no exception. But, farmland preservation is an investment – an investment in the future of the county. Land values will continue to rise and the ability to preserve large amounts of farmland will diminish. As more and more development occurs, taxes will rise because development doesn't pay for itself. The purchase of easements for preservation is a fiscally sound way to ensure a quality community environment and help manage rising costs of public school systems. It's almost inevitable, particularly in rapidly growing communities, that taxes will go up to provide municipal and school district services. People can choose to pay for these ever increasing school costs, or they can choose to spend the money, in part, to preserve selected areas of their communities and thereby reduce the need for higher taxes to provide these additional services.

By using today's dollars to preserve farmland, Lancaster County is making an investment that will last forever.

Lancaster Farmland Trust commends the current County Commissioners for their commitment to preserving our precious farmland. They have a record that will be hard to match. But, it must be matched. It is imperative that our next Board of Commissioners maintain this commitment to farmland preservation and maintain the funding necessary to keep Lancaster County a leader on this most important issue.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Martynick
Executive Director
Lancaster Farmland Trust.