

Recommendations were forwarded to the County Commissioners on June 15, concluding the initial phase of the Blue Ribbon Commission.

An Implementation Team has been designated to study the suggestions and advise the Commissioners on appropriate courses of action. Named as leadership for BRC II are Marilyn Ware, Philanthropist and Business Woman; Noah Wenger, State Senator, 36th District; Scott Boyd, State Representative, 43rd District; Les Houck, Salisbury Township; Don Elliott, County Administrator; and, Dan Heller, poultry and equine farmer.

Working groups have been established in each of the five subject areas, and have broad representation from throughout the county. Each working group will recommend strategies for implementation.

## The Time for Action is Now

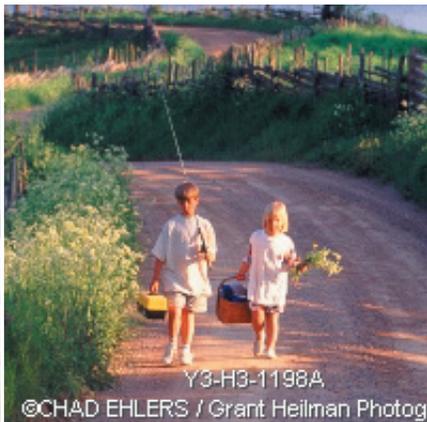
The timing of the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners is appropriate. As the County completes its updating of the Growth Management Element of the County's Comprehensive Plan, there is an opportunity for effective collaboration in ensuring that Lancaster County agriculture retains its fundamental value to the County.

Part of the update to the county plan is a Rural Strategy Concept which embraces increasing farmland preservation efforts, protecting natural resources, preserving both rural culture and farming as an industry. The rural strategy plan endorses the need for the county to support the vitality of the agricultural industry and the rural economy as a whole.

A healthy agriculture - including the infrastructure that supports it - is necessary for a healthy county.

The members of the Blue Ribbon Commission expressed support for reviving and enriching the towns and villages, encouraging growth within those areas which do not threaten the rich Class I and Class II soils which can never be replaced.

Through education, respect and mutual understanding, all segments of Lancaster's diverse economic landscape can thrive. Those who follow in our footsteps deserve our best efforts to "Keep Lancaster County Farming."



## Lancaster County Farm Facts

(from 2002 Census of Agriculture)

### EACH YEAR LANCASTER FARMERS FEED:

11.9 million people.....	eggs
10.2 million people.....	milk
3.3 million people.....	chicken
4.6 million people.....	pork
727,000 people .....	beef

*"With the richest soils in the United States, this is truly the garden spot of the nation...."*

—Amish Farmer

## 1 Economic Development

A healthy agriculture economy is essential to the prosperity of Lancaster County and should be supported and sustained.

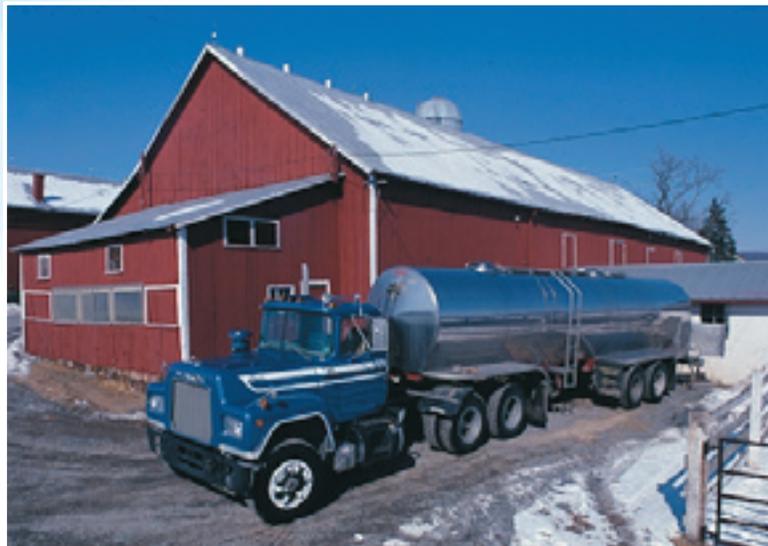
Agriculture is an industry that accounts for 11 percent of Lancaster County's economy and almost one fourth of its workforce, creating nearly \$1 billion in employment value. Farms, often viewed as ripe for development, are already fully developed economic enterprises and should be viewed as such. Agriculture needs to be recognized for its economic contribution and accorded the same level of business growth incentives and support as other industries.

An agricultural economic development organization should be established as a central resource for financial incentives, new business opportunities and marketing support. Attention must be directed toward agricultural infrastructure to develop processing and distribution facilities, manure management solutions and renewable fuels opportunities. The value of Lancaster County branded products needs to be explored and new market niches identified to provide future outlets for agricultural products.

These recommendations will contribute to the health and longevity of Lancaster agriculture and the economic prosperity of the entire county.

### Highest Priority

- 1.1 An Agricultural Economic Development Authority or Council should be established to work specifically with agriculture and agriculture-related business to (1) provide low-interest loans and to recruit businesses/manufacturers (e.g., vegetable processors, chicken processors, milk processors) that would provide new contracts, opportunities for new agricultural markets; and (2) serve as a resource for farmers to take their ideas for innovations and, in appropriate cases, help them share their ideas or even turn them into financial benefit (e.g., patents). This entity should prepare and implement a vision for the county agricultural industry with county funding for operations and programs.
- 1.2 Develop a strategy for a long range solution for manure management issues that will be affordable to producers and may also generate profit.



### Very High Priority

- 1.3 The County Commissioners should work with the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council to recruit or establish regional food processing plants/stations/facilities that can help standardize Lancaster County products for value added opportunities in their respective markets.
- 1.4 Evaluate the creation of a Lancaster brand/label.
- 1.5 Provide an easily accessible, single clearing house for all regulatory permitting pertaining to agriculture.
- 1.6 Identify market niches or specialty products such as organics, aquatics, burley tobacco, etc., that would be viable options for Lancaster County producers and facilitate training for producers to make transition or diversification.
- 1.7 Investigate development of a renewable fuels market; have person or organization develop an alternative energy strategy for bio fuels, wind, etc.
- 1.8 Change Commonwealth Department of Transportation regulations to permit the movement of agricultural vehicles on state roadways.



### High Priority

- 1.9 State's business and tax incentive programs should be extended equally to production agriculture, including small business loans.



J5N-02-158B  
 GRANT HEILMAN / Grant Heilman Photography  
 Viewed by Guest on 9/15/2005

producers can better understand what they are dealing with.

- 1.15 Identify new solutions and provide education to help producers better address environmental problems. Investigate the feasibility of like nutrient trading programs.
- 1.16 Develop strategy and implement county-wide “buy local” “buy Lancaster” campaign.
- 1.17 Provide a county “Agricultural Web Page” for locals and tourists to identify roadside stands, agricultural tours, places they want to visit while in Lancaster County.

## 2 Communications/Leadership

Improved communication between producers, government and the general public will lead to a better understanding of the issues affecting Lancaster County agriculture and consensus on its future direction.

Despite Lancaster’s agricultural heritage, the farming industry and its importance to the county’s economy are foreign to many of its residents. This lack of awareness and understanding leads to disagreement, lack of support and sometimes, the enactment of poorly conceived ordinances and regulations. Progress would be possible if producers had the means to share their stories with their non-farm neighbors and display the positive attributes of farming.



A public education campaign, targeting residents and local officials, must be developed to increase understanding of the agricultural industry and its value to the county. The County should have an official advocate

- 1.10 Connect producers to market research, innovative ideas, training and resources to transform or improve operation to yield higher profit.
- 1.11 Seek grant money for agricultural development such as First Industries Fund.
- 1.12 Develop relationships with grocers, restaurants, and educational and health institutions to use and promote local products.
- 1.13 Compile a producer directory by categories like: roadside stand, desires to sell wholesale vegetables, desire to raise livestock, desires to raise fish, currently in a certain crop and desire to expand for wholesale and retail connections opportunities.
- 1.14 At the State level, streamline nutrient management and environmental regulations to simplify and make more consistent so

for agriculture who would act as spokesperson and overseer of farm related issues. County and local officials must pro-actively seek and respond to input from the farming community through the creation of agricultural advisory groups, respectful of different cultures. Producers need to step up and participate in local government and promote best farming practices within their industry.

These steps would create a more harmonious and productive living and working environment for all of Lancaster County.



J5M-59-216A  
 ©FRED HABEGGER / Grant Heilman Photography  
 Viewed by Guest on 9/15/2005

## Highest Priority

- 1.1 Encourage townships (or regional township groups) to form an Agricultural Advisory Task Force (preferably regional) to advise those municipalities on issues dealing with or impacting agriculture before formulating ordinances, taxes, or policies. A document, with a template, should be created and provided to every township on how to establish such task forces. This document should include the necessary criteria to ensure their success such as a balanced cross section of the community (small producers, larger producers, ag business, farms with side-line businesses, varied cultures, etc.), and avoidance of terms like “committees” or “boards” so plain sects will participate.
- 1.2 Develop and execute a long term, pro-active public education/relations campaign using all available tools and resources to reach the public including, but not limited to: Farm-City exchanges, Farm Open Houses and Local Produce Days, strategies for increased and regular media coverage, agricultural reports, and working with schools to greatly expand agriculture/food education in curriculum.
- 1.3 Through education and training for producers, promote farming best management practices that maintain the quality of Lancaster County prime farmland and control agricultural runoff. Encourage producers through education, not regulation, to be good neighbors, good environmentalists, and active members of their community. Establish within the farming community an understanding that good farming practices are as important as all the regulations we can write to protect the farmer and all the educating we can give the public.
- 1.4 The County should have a “Secretary of Agriculture” or “Agricultural Commissioner” for the county to serve as spokesperson and advocate for the agricultural community on a variety of issues at all levels of government working to unify and organize the regulatory process.
- 1.5 Create an organization or Center for Agricultural Excellence that would serve as a “one stop” clearing house to provide access to tools and resources for producers and continuously seek innovative ideas and models from around the globe to bring to Lancaster County.
- 1.6 Require “Good Neighbor” language agreements be signed by new homeowners at time of real estate transaction for properties in or



surrounding agricultural zone or agricultural security areas confirming their understanding that they have moved into an agricultural neighborhood and that they will not impose non-agricultural nuisances on the business.

- 1.7 Encourage producers to run for elected positions of government.

### High Priority

- 1.8 Encourage and facilitate communications for a broader understanding of how local decisions impact different cultures. Work with Plain Sect leadership and encourage them to name regional leaders to serve as a liaison to local governments when issues arise and establish network of legislative and legal support that will support those cultural differences.
- 1.9 Provide agricultural educational ideas in the tool box for townships to use for their residences, in news letters, etc.
- 1.10 Start talking about agriculture in a way that the general public will understand by linking agriculture to the food that consumers buy and the environmental benefits of agriculture.
- 1.11 County Commissioners should hold semi-annual county-wide meetings, with outside facilitation, to listen to rural and agricultural people.
- 1.12 Encourage young people to get into farming and identify incentives to help young people get interested in farming.
- 1.13 Assign responsibility of public education campaign to recommended position of county agricultural development office or agricultural commissioner.
- 1.14 Encourage the Pennsylvania Department of Education to write “food systems” into the Pa. Academic Standards like Arts and Humanities; Civics and Government; History; Reading and Writing; Mathematics and WRITE MORE in: Family and Consumer Sciences; Health, Safety and Physical Education; Economics; Environment and Ecology.
- 1.15 State should partner with higher education to initiate tuition reimbursement program for PA Higher Ed for Ag Education outreach, similar to medical students...reimbursement for service.
- 1.16 Enable Plain Sects to participate at local government by using terms with which they are comfortable like task force instead of committee, etc.

- 1.17 Set up annual award recognizing townships for work in support of agriculture.

## 3 Farmland Preservation

Farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource that is lost forever when paved over for housing, industrial, and other non-agricultural uses. Lancaster County has long been a leader in successful farmland preservation but it is one of the state’s fastest growing regions and the threat of development has intensified. Efforts to preserve Lancaster County farmland, its productivity and its heritage must also increase. New farmland preservation approaches have been identified that will both protect our agricultural resources and preserve their ability to remain viable farm business enterprises, not just open space.

Preservation benefits should extend beyond a one-time payment and contribute to farm operation profitability over time—even through successive generations. Farms should be protected in contiguous blocks that support intensive agriculture, with development directed toward cities and towns. Road improvements should not encroach on prime soils, and the County should allocate more money for preservation and identify other resources or tax incentives to promote further participation by landowners.

Preservation efforts, best management practices, effective stewardship and community cooperation will preserve not only the land, but the economic and cultural benefits of a vibrant farming community.

### Highest Priority

- 1.1 Preservation benefits should span several generations and not just one. This may be accomplished through “forgiveness” of the current year’s property tax each year or tax rebates.
- 1.2 Increase the efforts to preserve best farmland in concentrated areas (blocks).
- 1.3 The County should borrow and allocate more money toward farmland preservation.

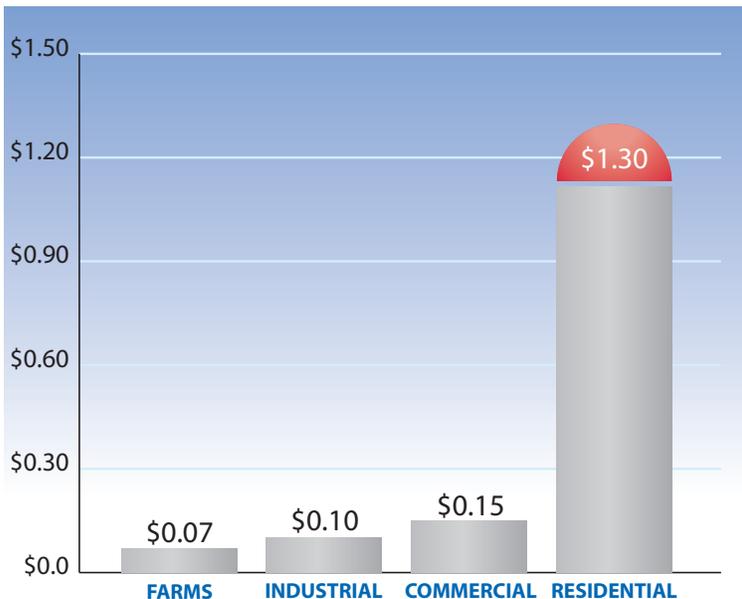
### Very High Priority

- 1.4 Road expansion proposals should be designed, whenever possible, to have the least negative impact on prime soils.
- 1.5 Implement multi-municipal TDR programs throughout county and seek changes to enable county-wide program.

## High Priority

- 1.6 Fund a study looking into making more benefits for agricultural preserve landowners such as a tax rebate, easy access to local markets for produce, more respect from the community.

### Value of Services Used for Every Tax Dollar Paid



*Farms use fewer services and get less return on every tax dollar they pay.*

- 1.7 Consider collecting donations from tourists and tourist attractions to generate funding for farmland preservation or agribusiness support.

## 4 Tax Equity

Lancaster County farms would benefit from more fair and equitable tax policies.

With the present system of real estate taxation, farms pay more than their fair share and reap much less benefit than other landholders. For every \$1 of local taxes paid, residential services use \$1.30; commercial services use \$0.15; industrial services use \$0.10; and farm services use \$0.07.

Reducing the tax burden on farms and farm buildings through lower assessments, an updated Clean and Green Program and other tax reform at the local, state and federal level would benefit Lancaster County production agriculture. Acting on

these recommendations will help keep Lancaster County farms profitable while encouraging further preservation of the farming heritage and landscape of the County.

## Highest Priority

- 1.1 Eliminate/freeze the real estate tax on preserved farms. These farms cannot be developed and should be taxed as such. Moreover, this tax incentive would encourage more producers to preserve their land either through easement sale or easement donation.

## Very High Priority

- 1.2 County needs to take measures to ensure fair tax assessment of agricultural production buildings, particularly when they are not in use.
- 1.3 Expand and update the Clean and Green Program and include farm buildings.

## High Priority

- 1.4 Encourage real tax reform at the state level.
- 1.5 Adopt a tax structure that directs new residential construction to be kept within the urban growth boundaries.
- 1.6 Support Congressional proposal for capital gains bill to benefit beginning agricultural producers and encourage the same action at the State level.

## 5 Zoning

Effective zoning is critical to ensuring a healthy agricultural economy. The local zoning process in Lancaster County needs review and improvements to support a strong agricultural economy.

Farmers have lost their voice in many of Lancaster's township and borough governments. This often results in new ordinances that place an unusual burden on farms and inhibits their ability to operate effectively. Sometimes, zoning is adopted that appears to help the farmer in the short term, but leads to the long-term permanent loss of farmland, a little at a time.

Lancaster County needs to develop and protect areas that allow intensive agriculture to flourish. Subdivision in these zones must be limited. The County should educate and encourage local

officials to keep residential and non-farm industrial development off of agricultural land and channel it into existing growth areas. The County's Rural Strategy should be adhered to. Most importantly, farmers should be encouraged to participate in local elections, actively work with local leadership, and reclaim a stake in the government they helped found.

The following recommendations will contribute to a farm-friendly environment, while helping to keep Lancaster County a beautiful place to work and live.

## Agricultural Zoning

### Highest Priority

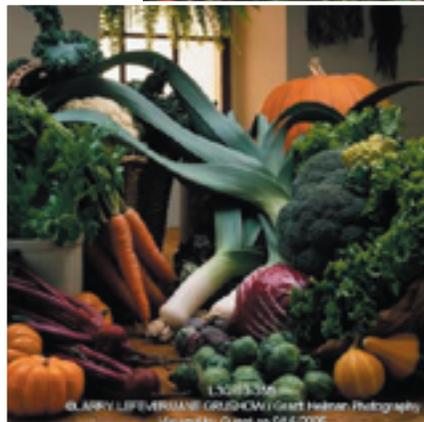
- 1.1 County should encourage townships to adopt an intensive Agricultural Zone that limits residential homes only for farm family members and hired workers and provides for agriculture-related building expansion, night time farming operations, moving of oversize farm vehicles, etc.

### Very High Priority

- 1.2 County Commissioners and supporting organizations should lead effort to galvanize farmers to give strong voice to the need for effective agricultural zoning.
- 1.3 Provide sample ordinances and right to farm language for townships to adopt to protect agriculturally-zoned areas and landowners.
- 1.4 The Lancaster County Planning Commission should create an agricultural planning division with designated "agricultural planner(s)" on staff to work with the farming community on planning issues.
- 1.5 County should fund municipalities in their efforts to strengthen zoning and regulations and provide cost-effective infrastructure to promote the redevelopment of existing urban growth areas, villages, crossroads communities and brown fields.
- 1.6 Endorse the draft of the County's Rural Strategy document, as written and sent to the BRC.

### High Priority

- 1.7 Permit, when possible, small ancillary businesses on farms that are related or support agricultural business.
- 1.8 State Government should reform the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code (MPC) to support stronger agricultural zoning and urban redevelopment.
- 1.9 LCPC should reaffirm the Urban Growth Boundary (not Area) concept to all municipalities.



## Voting Members

---

James L. Adams  
*President and Chief Operating Officer*  
*Wenger's Feed Mill, Inc.*

Rob Barley,  
*Star Rock Farms, LLC*

Ted Bowers  
*Vice-President/Agri Finance Department*  
*Fulton Bank*

Luke Brubaker  
*Brubaker Farms*

Phil Calhoun  
*Executive Director*  
*Ferree Foundation*

Jack Coleman  
*Cherry-Crest Farm*

Tom Daniels  
*University of Pennsylvania*  
*Matthew Espensbade, Master*  
*Elizabethtown Grange #2076*

John Fry, President  
*Franklin and Marshall College*

Lamonte Garber  
*Environmental Consultant*

Michael Gepfer  
*Parts Return Coordinator*  
*Forklifts, Inc.*

Steve Graybeal  
*Graywood Farms*

Dan Heller  
*President*  
*Flintrock Farms*

Gene Hemphill  
*Manager*  
*Industry Affairs*  
*New Holland North America*

John Hershey  
*Crop and Swine Producer*

Don Hoover  
*Sales*  
*Binkley and Hurst Brothers, Inc.*

Gordon Hoover  
*Director*  
*Land O'Lakes Board*  
*Dairy Producer*

Peter Horvath  
*Marketing Consultant*

John Howard  
*Attorney/Farmer*

Harlan Keener  
*Swine Producer*

Chris Landis  
*Member*  
*Cloister FFA*

Christ Lapp  
*Amish Poultry Producer*

Mark Lovette  
*Live Production Manager*  
*Tyson Foods - New Holland*

George Mann  
*Landowner*

Eugene Martin  
*Farmer*

Russ Montgomery  
*President*  
*Regional Economic Development District Initiatives*  
*Of South-Central Pennsylvania*

Bernie Morrissey  
*Morrissey Insurance*

Wendy Nagle  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*  
*Pennsylvania Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau*

David Nickoloff  
*Executive Director*  
*Economic Development Company of Lancaster County*

Audrey Nissley, Herdsman  
*Riverview Farms*

Mike Peachey, Director  
*Miller & Miller CPA, LLP*

Dave Pusey  
*Pusey & Raffensperger Builders, Inc.*

George Rettew, Jr., PE  
*Chairman and Chief Executive Officer*  
*RETTEW Associates, Inc.*

Don Robinson  
*Consultant*

Jared Rottmund  
*Vice-President*  
*Agriculture Relationship Manager*  
*Union National Community Bank*

Alice Sanders  
*BASE, Inc.*

Cynthia Shaffer  
*Executive Director*  
*Coalition for Smart Growth*

Edward Shane, PhD  
*Millersville University of Pennsylvania*

Steven Stettner  
*Farm Consultant*

Sam Stoltzfus  
*Amish Farmer*

Robert Walker  
*Consultant*  
*The Wexler Group*

Marilyn Ware  
*CEO*  
*Ware Family Office*

Sonia Wasco  
*President*  
*Grant Heilman Photography, Inc*  
*Thomas Yobe, General Manager*  
*Hooper, Inc.*

Matt Young  
*Red Knob Farm*

Len Zvorsky  
*Worley and Obetz, Inc.*

# Blue Ribbon Commission

## Ad Hoc Members

Representative Gibson C. Armstrong  
*PA House of Representatives*

Senator Gibson E. Armstrong  
*PA State Senate*

Representative Roy E. Baldwin  
*PA House of Representatives*

Representative Scott W. Boyd  
*PA House of Representatives*

Senator David J. Brightbill  
*PA State Senate*

Representative Thomas C. Creighton  
*PA House of Representatives*  
*Representative Gordon Denlinger*  
*PA House of Representatives*

Rich Doenges  
*Director*  
*Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board*

Gary Heckman  
*Executive Director*  
*Center for Dairy Excellence*

Representative David S. Hickernell  
*PA House of Representatives*

Karen Martynick  
*Executive Director*  
*Lancaster Farmland Trust*

Don McNutt  
*Director*  
*Lancaster County Conservation District*  
*Steve Miller Site Director*  
*Landis Valley Museum*

Mike Pechart  
*Executive Assistant to the Secretary*  
*PA Dept of Agriculture*  
*Representative Joseph Pitts*  
*United States Congress*

Leon Ressler  
*Director*  
*Lancaster County Cooperative Extension*

Scott Sheely  
*executive director*  
*Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board*

Senator Arlen Specter  
*United States Senate*

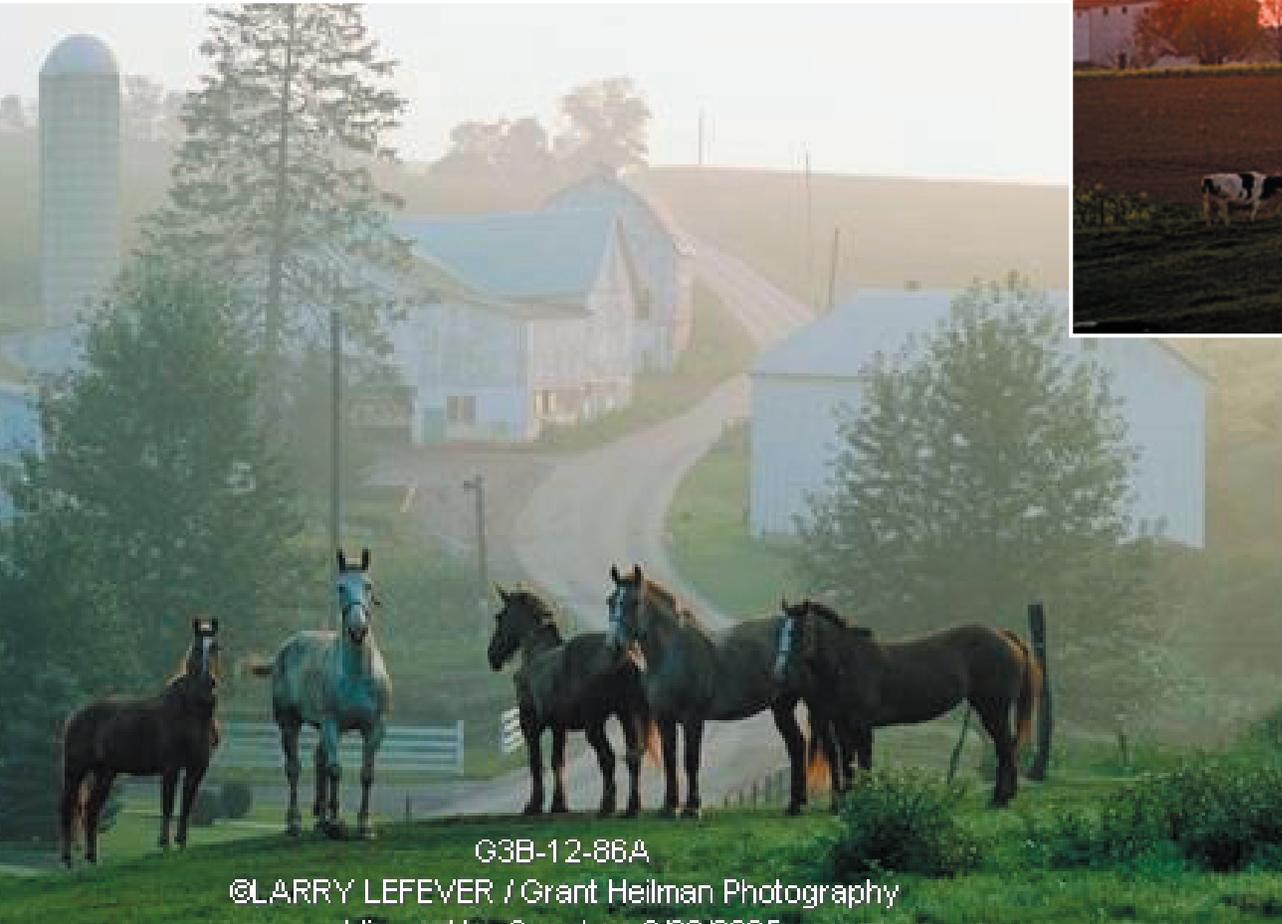
Standish, Scott  
*Director*  
*Heritage Planning*  
*Lancaster County Planning Commission*

Dennis Stuckey  
*Lancaster County Controller*  
*Representative Katie True*  
*PA House of Representatives*

Senator Noah W. Wenger  
*PA State Senate*

Nancy Williams  
*Director*  
*Long Range Planning*  
*Lancaster County Planning Commission*

Gary Willier  
*Ag Services Manager*  
*The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry*



G3B-12-86A

©LARRY LEFEVER / Grant Heilman Photography

Can you believe it....we have  
an blank page!

...or did i forget info?

How about a quote that was  
not used yet in the center,  
with a beautiful scene behind  
it?