

## Farmland Preservation Board Description

The Augusta Charter Township Board of Trustees adopted the Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance on February 8, 2005 in order for the Township to be able to acquire property development rights in real estate within the township. This ordinance calls for the appointment of a Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board to do the work of the Ordinance and work under the authority of the Township Board of Trustees.

There are many characteristics of Augusta Township which make it a desirable place to live and work and a large part of the character and economy in the township are related to agricultural and natural resources. Many of the same things that make Augusta Township valuable for agricultural production, also make the Township desirable for residential development.

The Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance and creation of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board (Farmland Preservation Board) exist to protect the scenic views, agriculture, open spaces and wildlife habitat that are all considered invaluable natural aesthetic resources which provide unique, aesthetic and economic benefits to the citizens of the Township and are an important part of the Township's natural and agricultural heritage. Land suitable for farming is an irreplaceable natural resource with soil and topographic characteristics that have been enhanced by generations of agricultural use. When such land is converted to residential or other more developed uses a critical community resource is permanently lost.

The Farmland Preservation Board is 5 Township residents which includes a representative of the Township Board of Trustees, a natural resources professional, a citizen and two representatives who own agricultural land or operate agricultural businesses. Members serve a 1 or 2-year term but may be re-appointed at the end of their term.

The purpose of the Farmland Preservation Board is to identify and recommend properties where the Township may desire to purchase a portion or all of the Development Rights of the property, which the Township would hold in perpetuity, thereby ensuring that the land remains in agricultural production, as open space or substantially undeveloped. The Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance outlines the criteria by which land will be identified and prioritized for the possibility of development rights purchase and how the purchase price/market value of these rights is to be determined. These criteria include characteristics of the farmland, stewardship of the land, pressure for conversion to nonfarm use and long-range planning considerations.

The Farmland Preservation Board is also responsible for working to develop sources of funding for the acquisition of identified development rights. These sources may include general appropriations by the Township, grants, donation, bonds, special assessments, etc. All development rights purchase is on a voluntary basis through owner application to the Farmland Preservation Board.