

November 15, 2018

Hunterdon County Holds Right to Farm Information Session

Elected and municipal officials joined Hunterdon County residents to pack the room early in the morning on Wednesday, November 7, at the Hunterdon County Route 12 Complex for an informative talk on New Jersey's Right to Farm Act.

Sponsored by the Hunterdon County Planning Board, the talk was part of a continuing outreach program aimed at educating the public on policy matters. Led by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) Chief of Legal Affairs Brian Smith and Right to Farm Specialist Alison Reynolds, the presentation was geared towards getting the latest information to the public officials who are often the first contact in Right to Farm issues. As New Jersey reaches full development, the traditional barriers between farmland and residential areas are disappearing, leading to a rising number of conflicts statewide. This is compounded by the rise of agritourism as an income stream for family farmers. The act was written in 1983 to aid farmers by giving protection from certain municipal ordinances under limited circumstances.

The SADC is promoting mediation as a vital first step between farmers, neighbors, and municipalities before lengthy and expensive litigation becomes necessary. The breakfast was part of an effort to disperse knowledge about who the act protects and how. Farms must qualify by meeting certain minimum criteria as Commercial Farms before any protection is granted and go through a public hearing process via the County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) to gain that protection. It is an open process that can be appealed to the SADC.

PBS39 Broadcast News aired a segment on the event, available at <https://www.wlvt.org/blogs/hunterdon/right-to-farm/>. Materials from the event will be posted on the County website.

Further details can be found via the SADC at <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/> or by contacting CADB Administrator Bob Hornby at bhornby@co.hunterdon.nj.us.