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Building trust

New Building Industry Association president believes public has been misinformed about group's stand on farmland. He'll work to change that.

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With all the controversy over smart growth that has erupted since the sudden resignation of chief county planner Ronald Bailey in late November, it's not an easy time to be the incoming president of the Building Industry Association of Lancaster County.

But Dave Pusey is ready for the challenge. The secretary/treasurer of Pusey & Raffensperger Builders Inc., Lititz, he wants to dispel some of the negative press the BIA has received and make clear its commitment to farmland preservation and smart growth.

"We bring a different point of view" to the discussion, he said. "As a builder, I'm very concerned about preservation. ... There has to be a balance between [farmland] preservation and the need to build places to live."

A Chester County native, Pusey moved to Lancaster County to attend Millersville University, graduating in

"I do not believe in sprawl."

Dave Pusey

1968 with a degree in industrial arts. He taught woodworking and drafting for a year at what was then Conestoga Valley Junior High School, after which he spent two years in the Army.

Following his discharge from the military, he was a teacher at Unionville High School in Chester County and at Cedar Crest High School in Lebanon County.

He decided to enter the building profession when he and his wife, Judy, were getting ready to start a family. "Teachers weren't paid as much then," Pusey said.

Home construction was something he was familiar with because his father was in the building materials business, he said. "I grew up with it."

In 1977, Pusey started Bi-David Builders with partner David Fake. He then went into business for himself and eventually teamed up with Al Manmiller to form Manmiller Pusey Builders.

In 1984, he and Fred Raffensperger established Pusey & Raffensperger Builders. For the last 14 years, the company's been at 100 Front St., Lititz.

Pusey said he considers himself a small-to-medium-size builder, constructing about 25 homes a year. Currently, Pusey & Raffensperger, which has five full-time employees, is building town houses in the Landings at Eagle Heights, a Manor Township subdivision.



Blaine T. Shahan/SUNDAY NEWS

Dave Pusey, 2005 president of the Building Industry Association of Lancaster County, stands in front of town houses his company, Pusey & Raffensperger Builders Inc., is building at Landings at Eagle Heights.

Around 35 percent of his business is remodeling and additions, he said.

Both of Pusey's children are following in their father's footsteps. Scott, 26, is office manager of Pusey & Raffensperger, and Andrea, 24, works in marketing and special events for the U.S. Green Building Council in Washington, D.C.

"She has a strong interest in conservation, green building and smart growth," he said.

His wife is a learning support teacher for Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13, and Pusey serves on the Warwick School Board. He's a former member of the Warwick Township

Planning Commission.

A member of the BIA for about 24 years, Pusey chaired the Parade of Homes committee in 2004 and was instrumental in starting the Parade in the 1980s as a response to a sluggish housing market.

Smart growth

As BIA president, he said his major priority in 2005 is cutting through public misinformation about the organization's position on smart growth.

Other goals include increasing membership; focusing on ways to help members control burgeoning costs,

such as health care; and educating builders and subcontractors on the regulations of the statewide building code that went into effect last year.

Since planner Bailey announced his resignation a month and a half ago, citing an antagonistic relationship with county Commissioner Pete Shaub as the reason, questions about the BIA's commitment to smart growth have been raised.

"I do not believe in sprawl," said Pusey, who grew up on a farm. He said building should be done "around current communities."

Cluster developments that provide open space and preserve more of the natural setting are growing in popularity, Pusey said.

Housing demand remains steady because the county population grows an average of 5,000 annually, he said. "We need to accommodate those who want to live here."

Redevelopment of properties in Lancaster city and the county's boroughs and towns is something he strongly supports as well, Pusey said.

Work force housing, for people who aren't high on the income scale, needs to be affordable, and that's an ongoing concern the BIA is focused on, he said.

In Lancaster County, the BIA estimates there are 26,000 people directly or indirectly involved in the building industry, Pusey said, which is more than 12 percent of the total work force.

"We feel like we bring a lot of expertise" to decisions about farmland preservation and planning issues, he said. "It's important we work together to develop good, meaningful use of the land."

"We'd like to be a viable part of the future of this county."