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10/21/14 Testimony

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What a busy time for you all. Elections are in full swing and you must be very busy with the absurd advisory vote and defeating the much needed home rule charter. But I'll move beyond all that to what will certainly be a very busy 2015. [The county is spending a lot of money on the Comprehensive Growth Plan Update. Staff is working plenty of hours, billable to citizens, to come up with the best way to anticipate the growth of our county and assume the needs of our community. Certainly it seems reasonable to some that we have plenty of space in Clark County to expand industrious enterprises as well as make room for everyone to have a view from their spacious living. Where could their possibly be a problem? *there*

Well for starters, the staff has had to entertain the ideas of certain special interest groups that goes above and beyond putting Clark County in the line of fire of appeals and law suits for years after the Comp Plan is implemented. There is an idea floating around that if we can reduce the size of rural parcels that we somehow gain. What we in-fact would lose is hundreds of billable hours, from consultants, from staff and from legal.

One thing that time and time again we see overlooked is water availability for our current rural land owners. These people may be farmers, ranchers, Christmas tree growers, vintners, or just folks with a couple acres with no intention of ever growing food for themselves or neighbors. What all these people have in common is a need for water. But if you take a 20 acre agricultural parcel and try to develop 4 – 5 acre parcels you quadruple the water usage on land that is suitable for food production. We pave over 4 times the amount of ground where water can infiltrate and replenish our aquifers. Now, 4 families have a view of rolling hills, well, for now, but nobody can water their gardens which provide fresh food for several months a year and canned goods for the rest. Their chickens don't get fed and they sure as shovels can't produce food for anyone else in the county. We create a community where food safety is in jeopardy. Where we must rely solely, ~~on food transported over a failing 1-5 bridge and our emergency food supply is reduced~~ to what's available for 3 days at the grocery stores. *in an emergency.*

Speaking of transportation, all this new buildable land has to have improved infrastructure. Sure that creates road jobs but does the county have the money to build new roads let alone maintain old ones? What about the expansion of the schools? Do we have a history of passing levies to increase schools while reducing class size?

Why on earth would we want to sprawl out our community all over the countryside, overdeveloping prime farmland, reducing our availability of water and putting ourselves at risk for years of appeals to the growth management board and lawsuits? No matter what contrived maps certain groups show you and no matter how many countless hours they consume of staffs time, what they are suggesting is illegal and will result in wasted tax dollars.

If you look back at the SEPA scoping comments that were submitted in September, 42% of comments were in support of preserving farmland. You're going to see petitions and more public comment in the coming two months. Don't think everyone wants to pave over Clark County, because, after all once you pave over farm land it's gone forever.