



Dear County Councilors-

Respectfully submitted
4/1/15 @ Hockinson
community open
house

I do not support Alt 4 and would like to see it removed as an option in the upcoming comp plan and associated environmental review. This alternative raises many concerns for me as a citizen of our community, a local farmer, teacher and mother.

I strongly oppose Alt 4 because it would decrease our community's agricultural production capacity and would add significant pressure on our current farm community and our future farm viability. Decreasing parcel sizes reduces the profitability of ag operations and also places increased burden on rural communities. Increased taxes will be needed for additional infrastructure such as roads, water, and electrical to name a few. Additionally, with more people living in rural areas on smaller lots, this increases the demand for groundwater in those areas, and could lead to loss of water for already established rural lots. I have personally worked with small acreage landowners who have experienced this during the height of the summer, and the costs and stress were enormous. Water availability is already a huge barrier to farms and rural landowners alike.

From a farming perspective, as farms seek to expand, continuous acres are ideal and allow easier entry to new farmers seeking to get started in commercial farming. Attempting to farm property with surrounding smaller parcels may lead to conflicts between farmers and their newly arrived neighbors, as they often don't understand the needs of farming (early rise, tractor work throughout the day, late to finish the day). Our county has provided us with the right to farm in all parcels - decreasing those parcel sizes will likely lead to an increase in these conflicts.

Smaller lot sizes increase land values, making it more costly per acre for a farmer to get started and making it more challenging to have a farm income adequate to pay for the land. This is where a transfer of development rights program would be beneficial. This is a tool that could be used by those very landowners who are upset they cannot subdivide their land. With the ability to sell the development rights for their land, they can still make a good retirement income off of the land without having the land subdivided up. It could then be sold at a more reasonable price to a farmer interested in farming it (including farm forestry properties).

Please consider carefully the future of our community as you move through the comp plan process and do not utilize alt 4 in the environmental review.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Erin Harwood
Farmer and Teacher