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From boyntogs@aol.com
Sent Sunday, September 13, 2015 10:30 PM
To Cnty 2016 Comp Plan
Subject Comments on the GMA Alternative

Sept 11, 2015
La Center Farms
PO Box 958
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Dear Counselors and Planning Commission,

We support Alternative 1 and 3. Alternative 1 is consistent with RCW 36 70A, the Growth Management Act (GMA), is adequate for the 20 year projected growth and was the preferred option of the DSEIS. We suggest we retain Alternative 1 until all members of the council are seated next year to give better representation to the community. There is no reason to rush into a decision that will affect us all for the next twenty years. Any rush will indicate an attempt to steamroll cutting up our agriculture and timber lands.

We are against Alternatives 2 and 4 as it goes against the RCW 36 70A and the GMA. It will adversely affect our community. Counselor Madore appeared to have a bias in favor of the group supporting Alternative 4. He allowed about 4 people to testify twice at both the September 3rd and 10th meeting. We attended both meetings and Counselor Madore explicitly told the September 3rd gathering that a person can testify only once for both meetings and could not testify at each meeting. He also appeared to allow the group supporting Alternative 4 to continue on much longer than 3 minutes until there was an objection from the attending members.

RCW 36 70A 011 FINDINGS

Finally, the legislature finds that in defining its rural element under RCW 36 70A 070(5), a county should foster land use patterns and develop a local vision of rural character that will help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles, encourage the economic prosperity of rural residents, foster opportunities for small-scale, rural-based employment and self-employment, permit the operation of rural-based agricultural, commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses that are consistent with existing and planned land use patterns, be compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat, foster the private stewardship of the land and preservation of open space, and enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT PROTECTS OUR PROPERTY RIGHTS

What about our rights? Most of the land owners came here for the open space and we expect the RCW 36 70A and GMA to protect us from urban sprawl. We have a 27 acres farm that is zoned AG20. Our neighborhood would be changed to AG10 under Alternatives 2 and 4. This

will adversely affect us and our neighbors by raise taxes, increase congestion, increase traffic and threaten existing wells

We all knew the acreage limitations when we purchased our farm or forest lands. Now a small group of disgruntle landowners want to disregard the RCW, Growth Management Act and their neighbors in order to turn a quick profit. The few cases where a person's property rights have been hurt can be remedied on a case by case basis. There is no need to trample on the other rural land owners.

THE MAJORITY OF RURAL LAND OWNERS ARE AGAINST ALTERNATIVE 2 & 4

We believe most rural land owners are against subdividing the rural lands. I spoke to about 30 neighbors and farmers and almost all were against Alternative 4. I spoke at the La Center Grange earlier this month. The Grange was filled with local land owners. Their positive response to my comments showed they did not want agriculture land split into smaller parcels.

Clark County United representatives claim that they represent the vast majority of local land owners but they do not. We have never heard of them and neither have our neighbors. Any person can call themselves an organization and make unfounded claims. We suspect they represent a small group of landowners out to make a quick buck splitting up their lands. This is at the expense of the Growth Management Act and the local community.

ADVERSE AFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVE 2 AND 4

ELIMINATION OF AGRICULTURE, TIMBER LANDS AND OPEN SPACE

RCW 36 70A 011 states a goal is to "help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles" and "foster the private stewardship of the land and preservation of open space". It also states the goal is to promote "rural-based employment and self-employment, permit the operation of rural-based agricultural, commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses". These goals are in jeopardy for the following reasons:

1 Farm & Timber Lands Require Large Acreages

Farming and forest production requires large acreages in order to make it worthwhile and economically feasible. Farm equipment and activities are expensive and not cost effective on a small acreage.

A stand of Douglas Fir timber takes 40-45 years to grow until it is ready for harvest. Loggers require a minimum of 3-5 timbered acres to make it profitable due to move in, transportation and clean up costs. Therefore splitting timberlands into 20 acre parcels results in one harvest every 7-10 years. That is a long time to go between paychecks.

Agriculture lands also require large acreages as usually irrigation is not feasible. It is very difficult for a farmer to be granted water rights. Production per acre without irrigation goes down so only large parcels are economically feasible. An example is haying. A person will charge you money to "mow" your 1-2 acre lawn but may hay it for free if it is over two acres. That same person will be willing to pay you to hay larger acreages.

2 Property Values Rise Making Farming Unaffordable

Changing the zoning creates the potential to develop the land. Property values rise for the potential to build even if you do not divide the land. Most of the cost of a parcel is for the building site. Instead of buying 20 acres with one building site, you would have to buy four 5 acre parcels and a total of four building sites at a much higher price. This makes it economically unfeasible to use this much higher-priced land for either farming or timber production.

3 Property Taxes Rise Making Farming Unprofitable

Increased taxes make farming economically unfeasible and farms close. Rezoning and creating small 1-5 acre parcels often results in creating mini "estates" thus raising property values and property taxes of adjacent parcels.

In addition, smaller acreages must show a larger income from farming to have agriculture deferred property taxes. Twenty acre parcels do not have the burden of showing a profit whereas five acre parcels must produce \$7,500/yr to qualify for deferred taxes. The five acre scenario is hard to do with dry land farming.

4 Rural and Urban are Incompatible Forcing Farms Out

Urban people move to the country for the open area but often do not understand nor want what comes with adjacent agriculture and timber operations. Complaints include noise and dust from logging operations, odors from livestock and soil improvement activities and concerns about using herbicides for crop production. These complaints put pressure on farmers and foresters and force them out of the area.

5 Pressure to Reduce Parcel Size Will Result In The Urbanization of the Rural Area

Pressure is placed on local government to keep reducing the size of parcels eventually leading to the loss of farms, timber and open space. Farming resources such as farm labor, tractor rentals and farm equipment become increasingly scarce as farms close. Farmers can't get the resources they need to make a living and are forced to sell. Homes then become the last "cash crop" as productive farm soil becomes covered in cement, asphalt and mini-estates with expansive landscaping.

It took 50 years to cover much of the crop lands in southern California. Oregon's Washington County has been covered in the past 30 years. Clark County will soon look like these places if Alternatives 2 or 4 are adopted.

PROPERTY TAXES WILL RISE FOR EVERYONE

RCW 36 70A 011 states one goal is to "encourage the economic prosperity of rural residents." Higher property taxes are detrimental to the communities' economic prosperity.

Rural Residents Subsidize the Urban Areas

Rural areas pay for much of the urban area's services. Rural areas receive 51 cents of service for each \$1 paid thereby contributing to a 49 cent subsidy for the urban areas of the county. Urban areas received \$1.25 in public services for every \$1 paid in taxes. Taxes will rise as urbanization increases. Loss of taxes from agriculture and timber activities will have to be made up from the existing tax payers.

Smaller Zonings Increases Property Taxes

The County's tax assessor has stated the properties will be taxed on their potential use. As an example, rezoning Ag 20 into Ag 10 increases its potential development value and therefore the property tax. Peter Van Nortwick, our tax assessor said "The potential is what people are paying for. People buy lots because of the potential to buy a home. If the market value of their land increases, under state law we have to (assess) it at 100 percent of market value."

Government Expenses Increase To Pay For Services

Keeping urban areas small allows the cities to concentrate their resources and keep the cities vibrant. Subdividing the rural lands spreads county services throughout the county which is inefficient. New roads will have to be built and existing ones must be improved to handle the increased traffic. Additional school and services will need to be provided and maintained.

ELIMINATION OF OPEN SPACE AND LOSS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE

RCW 36 70A 011 states the goals of "preservation of open space" and "enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life." These will be lost.

People are attracted to our area due to the open spaces we enjoy. With more homes in rural lands there will be less open space for both urban and rural people to enjoy. Congestion will increase along with increased traffic and commute times. Look at what has happened to Washington County in Oregon.

THREAT TO THE AQUIFER & WATER SOURCE

More homes and wells will threaten the public's drinking water. There could be 12,400 new wells tapping into the Troutdale aquifer which supplies drinking water to 95% of Clark County population. Each well increases the chance of contamination. New wells may compete with neighboring wells causing one or more to go dry. North County, particularly in the foothills, already tends to have more than its share of low producing wells. Sometimes these wells must be supplemented with 1,000 gallon holding tanks in order to make the home site usable. In some areas such as La Center the water is heavily mineralized. With these limitations we need to be careful with the impacts of Alternatives 2 and 4.

The aquifer will not be replenished as urbanization occurs. Rain water will be diverted into storm drains rather than be absorbed through soil.

INCREASE FLOODING

The potential for flooding increases as soil is covered up with cement and asphalt. Urban areas have more flooding than rural areas. I responded to massive flooding in 1996 in Tualatin as a fire fighter and in Portland as a Coast Guard reservist.

ALTERNATIVE 1- SUPPORT AGRICULTURE, TIMBER AND OPEN LANDS

LONG TERM ECONOMIC IMPACT

RCW 36 70A 011 goals includes "help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles, encourage the economic prosperity of rural residents, foster opportunities for small-scale, rural-based employment and self-employment, permit the operation of rural-based agricultural, commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses " Alternative 1 does these things whereas Alternative 2 & 4 adversely affects these goals

Long term wealth requires money to flow from outside sources and into the community Splitting and developing the land only produces short term income and long lasting maintenance issues Government services do not produce wealth as it takes from local resident's taxes to pay for itself Longer term wealth is created through timber, agriculture, tourism and manufacturing We will loose the first 3 income and tax sources if we cut up the farm and timber lands

Timber is a significant source of income and jobs in Clark County Timber is Washington's second largest manufacturing sector 79% of Washington's timber is on privately- owned lands and 20% is on state and federal lands About 80% of the timber supplies local sawmills thus providing local jobs and products 20% of the harvested timber is exported primarily to Japan

Agriculture products alone contribute \$50 8 million to the local economy We produce Christmas trees, hay, wine and other crops Livestock include goats, sheep, chickens, horses, cattle, mules, alpacas, llamas and other animals Products include wool, mohair, milk and eggs Farming also supports other businesses related to farming

Agriculture tourism is also a large contributor to the local economy We have wineries, Pumpkin Patches, and U-Cut Christmas Trees farms to name a few

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

Planning small cities surrounded with green space of farm and timber lands between each city allows for long term stability Cities are limited in size and are self- contained for housing & jobs Keeping cities a manageable size allows for a more efficient use of resources Farms and timber lands provide cities with local sources of food, timber and recreational opportunities It also protects the valuable farm soils

PROTECT DRINKING WATER AND AQUIFER

Fewer wells mean less chance of contamination The aquifer is replenished as rain is absorbed through the soil rather than running off into storm drains Creeks and streams are protected since they are not the direct recipients of storm drain water that is potentially contaminated with road oils, herbicides, fertilizers and other contaminants This allows for a better habitat for fish and wildlife

QUALITY OF LIFE

RCW 36 70A 011 states it's goal as the "preservation of open space" and to "enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life " These are maintained with Alternative 1 Open space provides for less congestion, recreation and a higher quality of life These qualities are why

most of us came here Local farms and forests allow people to get away from the cities easily and enjoy the country

ENVIRONMENTAL

Wildlife Habitat- RCW 36 70A 011 goals include to "be compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat " Most wildlife need open space to survive Cutting up the parcels into small areas will destroy their habitat, ability to migrate and eventually cause their elimination Our farm is the home of deer, rabbits, fish, beaver, porcupines, raccoons, coyotes and various birds Our farm is also on the Pacific Flyway which makes for some wonderful wildlife viewing!

Flood Control- Flooding is reduced as water percolates into the soil

Moderate Weather- The trees and vegetation moderates temperatures with their shade, help block the winds and filter the air of particulates This is one reason people enjoy going to parks, forests and rural areas

Please call us at 573-8965 if you have any questions or comments

Sincerely,

Stephen and Lissa Boynton