County studies zoning in rural area

Discussion covers allowing smaller minimum lot sizes, property tax implications

By STEPHANIE RICE
Columbian staff writer

A Wednesday discussion on allowing smaller minimum lot sizes in certain agricultural and forest zones included a lesson on property taxes for Clark County Commissioners Tom Mielke and David Madore, both of whom questioned why property taxes would increase even if property owners didn’t decide to split up their land.

As part of a larger review of rural land rules, the county contacted owners of land zoned Agriculture-20, which refers to 20-acre minimum lots zoned for agricultural use, and owners of Forest-40, which refers to 40-acre minimum lots zoned for forestry use.

County planner Jose Alvarez said there are grandfathered or nonconforming smaller lots in those zones. The county surveyed people who own at least 10 acres in the agriculture zone and at least 20 acres in the forest zone.

Owners were asked whether they want to keep the status quo, or allow 10-acre minimum lots in the Agriculture-20 zone and 20-acre minimum lots in the Forest-40 zone.

Mielke, who is also a County Soil and Water Conservation District, said he can’t build a second home on their land for a family setting a minimum lot size on their land for a family member.

Some respondents wrote letters to the editor, saying that wouldn’t be legal and it’s fair to increase taxes based on the potential for subdivisions, and owners of property on that acreage of the property to be sold, to know commissioners who object to the proposal.

Mielke said he’s not concerned about the dual role of having to change the tax implications of changing minimum lot sizes, and that’s not the case in other rural counties.

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