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September 9, 2015

Judge's ruling thwarts La Center's sewer expansion



Photo courtesy of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe

RECENTLY POSTED signs posted on southbound and northbound Interstate 5 near La Center direct visitors to the new Cowlitz Indian Reservation. The federal government approved the Cowlitz Tribe's 152-acre reservation west of La Center earlier this year but the tribe and the city have been thwarted in their efforts to enter into a \$14-million sewer agreement

Ruling says city's plan to extend sewer services onto Cowlitz Reservation violates county planning policies

KELLY MOYER
staff reporter

LA CENTER — A Thurston County Superior Court judge has knocked another hole in La Center's plan to expand its sewer

er lines onto nearby Cowlitz Indian Reservation land.

On Aug. 28, Thurston County Superior Court Judge Gary R. Tabor sided with the state's Growth Management Hearings Board, saying La Center's plan to extend its sewer lines past the city's urban growth boundary violates Clark County's planning policies.

"Clark County insists that its policy does not allow La Center to provide sewer service to the tribal reservation," said attorney Sarah Mack, who represented the city of La Cen-

ter at the Aug. 28 hearing. The city's argument was that the land is reservation land and is no longer subject to Clark County's (planning policies).

La Center Mayor Jim Irish and other city leaders had been confident that the tribal land's new reservation status would have a positive impact on the city's appeal. Last week, Irish said he was surprised by Judge Tabor's ruling.

The outcome was not in our fa-

See **LA CENTER** on Page A4

Reflector moves into Old Town BG



Photo by Mike Schultze

THE INTERIOR OF The Reflector Newspaper's new office in Old Town Battle Ground, featuring old timbers and red brick, is shown here.

Historic Dairymen's Co-op building is new home of newspaper

KEN VANCE
Editor

BATTLE GROUND — The Reflector Newspaper has a new home.

On Aug. 31, Reflector staff members completed the move

of the newspaper's operations to 208 SE 1st St. in Battle Ground's Old Town. The Reflector will occupy the south end of the building, which also serves as the home of Urban Basics & Company.

The office building is owned by Battle Ground resident Derek Huegel and family members Dan and Kari Huegel (parents) and Travis and Rebecca Huegel (brother, sister-in-law). It

once served as the home of the Battle Ground Dairymen's Co-Operative, which was established in 1923. Huegel spent the past few months completing a \$300,000 renovation of the portion of the building to be occupied by The Reflector.

With the help of Derek Huegel, the owner of Wolf Industries, the building has been

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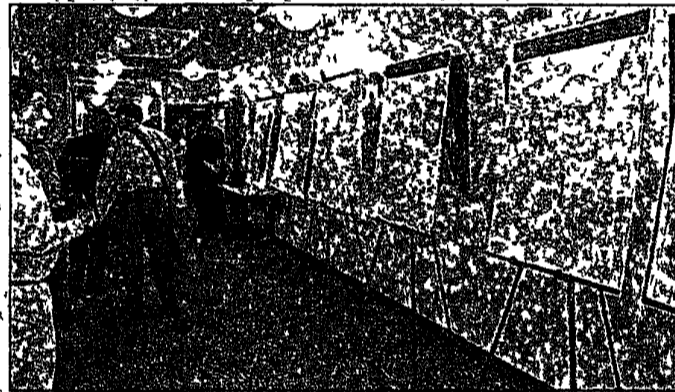


Photo by JC Cortez

A LINE OF MAPS illustrate the different alternatives to the county comprehensive growth management plan update for residents at a joint meeting of the Board of County Councilors and the County Planning Commission Thursday evening.

County hears comments on comp plan update

A dozen concerned citizens air comments during first of two comment period meetings

JC CORTÉZ
staff reporter

A dozen Clark County residents gave in-person comment on the four proposed alternatives to the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan during the first of a pair of joint meetings of the Clark County Board of Councilors and Clark County Planning Commission.

The meeting, which took place Thursday evening at the Clark County Public Service Center, hosted no debate or argument. The meeting and its Sept. 10 counterpart have been set aside specifically to allow citizens to inform policymakers of their concerns and feelings

about the proposed alternatives.

Ridgefield Mayor Ron Onslow spoke in favor of Alternative 3, which is a set of modifications to the current plan submitted by local city governments. They include expansions like extra room for an elementary school in La Center and a strip of low-density residential zoning north of Washougal.

He argued the impact of Alternative 3 would be similar to Alternative 1, the "do nothing" option that would keep the current plan in place unmodified. Both alternatives 1 and 3 would create about 7,000 new lots in the county. He also spoke against Alternative 4, which proposes the most extensive changes and frees up more than 12,000 new lots in the county. Onslow expressed uncertainty about alternative 4's possible unintended consequences.

"The division of large parcels immediately outside our jurisdiction will impact future economic development opportunities. We ask for a thorough economic

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The Reflector

Continued from page A1

transformed into a space that better fits our needs," said Laura Venneri, general manager of *The Reflector*. "We are keeping the old timbers and red brick inside and remodeling around it. I even took one of the old windows home and restored it so it can be used as an interior window."

Huegel was happy to welcome *The Reflector* back to Old Town Battle Ground.

"This will revitalize Old Town," Huegel said. "It was a huge job, much bigger than we thought it was going to be, but it turned out beautiful. We are very excit-

ed to get *The Reflector* into Old Town Battle Ground. The newspaper should be down in the hub of where everything is going on."

Huegel expressed excitement for a similar recent project nearby his building in Old Town Battle Ground, the relocation of Rusty Glamour, at 403 E. Main St. Huegel credits the cooperation of the city of Battle Ground building department for both projects.

"At first thought, the idea of putting office spaces in an old crusty building seemed impossible, even with my background in construction," Huegel said. "I made my next stop the building department at the city of Battle Ground. Mark Miller turned those thoughts on its head, mak-

ing the renovation possible." *The Reflector* Newspaper got its start in Ridgefield on Oct. 8, 1909 and was based in that city for the first 50 years of its existence before moving to Battle Ground in 1959. At that time, the paper's printing plant was located at 603 W. Main Street, where it would call home for 26 years.

Marvin and Anne Case became the eighth-owners of *The Reflector* Newspaper on Feb. 1, 1980. In 1985, the Cases constructed a new office building at 20 NW-20th Ave. in Battle Ground, and the newspaper's operations have been conducted at that location for the past 30 years.

The Reflector Newspaper

was purchased by Lafromboise Communications, Inc. in June 2010. *The Reflector* currently distributes more than 29,000 newspapers each week to communities in north Clark and south Cowlitz counties.

According to HistoryLink.org, the Battle Ground Dairymen's Co-Op dairy plant was the single largest cooperative in Battle Ground, handling 557,000 gallons of milk in January and February of 1928.

In the early 1900s, Battle Ground's farmers found that they could produce much more than the needs of the area's population. Farmers were allied through membership in local Grange chapters, and their mutual interests

gave rise to a vigorous cooperative movement in Battle Ground and surrounding communities.

The cooperative movement began with the dairy farmers. The cooperative dairy system proved so successful that it was later followed by others. The Battle Ground Dairymen's Co-Op was purchased by Wilco Farm Stores in 2002 and is still in operation today.

"*The Reflector* has a long history in the area, and we are proud to now be moving into a historic location," Venneri said. "The link to early Battle Ground through the cooperative building is a perfect fit, and we look forward to serving this great community from the heart of Battle Ground for the next 100 years."

C-Tran

Continued from page A1

Directors without interruption."

The three cities have always shared their seat at the C-TRAN Board of Directors, but not always with each other. In the past, Yacolt has shared a C-TRAN seat with Battle Ground while La Center and Ridgefield shared a seat. In 2014, the C-TRAN Board of Directors gave Battle Ground its own seat and dictated that Yacolt would share a seat with La Center and Ridgefield.

Carothers, along with the majority of the Yacolt City Council,

want all three cities to take turns on the C-TRAN Board. For instance, La Center has the seat this year, so if Yacolt had the seat in 2016, then Ridgefield had the seat in 2017, it would be La Center's turn again in 2018.

"The contract proposed in January was based on the premise that the C-TRAN Board seat is owned and shared in equal and undivided fashion by the three communities," Carothers stated in his letter. "I believe this is also the position of C-TRAN itself and the opinion of C-TRAN's legal counsel."

According to Carothers, La Center Mayor Jim Irish, a 12-year member and current chair-

person of the C-TRAN Board and Ridgefield Mayor Ron Onslow have blocked this three-way equitable divide. In his letter, Carothers accused the other city mayors of wanting to leave Yacolt in the lurch.

The La Center and Ridgefield mayors, Carothers stated in his letter, have ignored Yacolt's request for a more equitable three-way split "in favor of convenient, self-serving rationales designed simply to exclude Yacolt."

Carothers states that an agreement proposed by Ridgefield and La Center would base the C-TRAN representation on population and would push Yacolt, the

smallest city, out of the mix.

"Instead of a basic rotation for the Board seat, the contract (proposed by Ridgefield and La Center) said that all decisions would be by majority vote," Carothers stated. "The voting would be weighted arbitrarily by population with Yacolt to have one vote out of six."

In the end, Carothers asked members of the La Center and Ridgefield city councils to delve into the eight months worth of back-and-forth amongst the three

cities' mayors and find a reasonable and equitable conclusion.

"Yacolt does not want the Board seat to be vacant for even a single meeting," Carothers stated. "Yacolt wants our three communities to work together with honesty and in good faith to find a compromise."

"As far as Yacolt is concerned (the three-way split) is still on the table, having never really been considered by the Ridge-

See C-TRAN on Page A4

Comp Plan

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analysis of this potential impact to urban areas resulting from parcel fragmentation."

"New parcels outside of Ridgefield UGA will have an impact on our transportation network," he said. "The (draft supplemental environmental impact statement) states infrastructure costs would be prohibitive for alternative 2 and alternative 4 has cumulatively greater impacts. So more impacts and more expensive to the city with those alternatives."

Vancouver City Councilwoman Anne McEnerny-Ogle called for coordinated planning between the county and city governments and cautioned that water infrastructure should be considered in the decision.

"Although adequate water can be found in most parts of the county, aquifers capable of providing large amounts of water for long periods of time are few," she said.

The principal aquifers lie beneath the southern parts of the county. Surface water is a less desirable water source because it requires more extensive treatment, and some current county water infrastructure is already failing

or inadequate, she said. She also spoke against alternative 4 due to potential impacts and the increased development may allow

"It allows for the creation of more than 12,000 new lots throughout the rural area," she said, "almost twice as many as the current zoning allows. It increases zoning densities on over a hundred square miles of land Vancouver is 50 square miles."

Jim Irish, Mayor of La Center, also spoke in favor of Alternative 3.

"It will help us create jobs and it will assist La Center school district in providing space for an increasing number of children in their elementary school. Alternatives 1, 2 and 4 do not directly help La Center in creating new jobs, and will not prevent the city from falling short on the county-wide jobs-to-housing balance."

Chuck Green, a C-TRAN transportation specialist reiterated a request he first made in April that any decision to adopt an alternative be delayed until two new Clark County Councilors are seated next year. Green is a candidate for County Council place 2, which is one of the two positions he is requesting be allowed a vote.

He also warned that alterna-

tive 4's could create heavy traffic that could overload transportation infrastructure, and suggested the current plan be re-adopted for up to two years while a fifth, more palatable "value-based" alternative is cobbled from parts of the existing four.

Carol Levanen and Susan Rasmussen of Clark County Citizens United spoke in favor of alternative 4, repeating the core argument of alternative 4 supporters that previous comprehensive growth management plans have stripped rural landowners of their rights and options and alternative 4 is the best chance they have at regaining some of that freedom.

Residents will have one more chance to speak before an identical joint meeting of the Board of Councilors and the County Planning Commission at 6 p.m. on Wed., Sept. 10, on the sixth floor of the Clark County Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver.

Comments may also be submitted online at compplan@clark.wa.gov or through peackdemocracy.com/2963, or by mail to Clark County Community Planning, Draft SEIS Comments, PO Box 9810 Vancouver, WA 98666-9810.

The comment period will close at 4 p.m. on Thu. Sept. 17.

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