

“A Work in Progress”-Maletis brothers article Letters to the editor 6-10-09

Be careful in following plan of Maletis brothers

The beneficence of the Maletis brothers never ceases to astound. Two years ago, in public meetings, it was their church in northeast Portland that was to be the recipient of their goodwill and financial gain from a Langdon Farms development proposal. Obviously, their highly paid PR and legal staff came up with a more convincing idea: to open their hearts to include all of those future citizens of our greater community by providing the wherewithal to buy food from South America and other far away places. The Amazon forest comes to mind.

Unfortunately, it would appear that their thoughtfulness and generosity has no end. The scary part of the Spokesman piece is the fact that some uninformed or avaricious individuals might whole heartedly agree to their plan.

But are we really so naive to buy into their sugar-coated unselfish ideas in exchange for making further inroads into the treasure that is the prime agriculturally-rich land south of the Willamette? Land that will become ever more essential for our sustainable future? The increased traffic and the negative impact on infrastructure and the environment, that would result from commercial development of the Maletis holdings? I'd like to believe, not!

Janet Olmsted

Wilsonville

Urban/rural reserve process moving along as it should

Regarding last week's article in the Spokesman, the Maletis brothers' smooth charm and their claim to be acting in the best interests of the community mask the fact that they are determined to turn a swath of Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) land into a personal fortune. Several of us attended a meeting with them about two years ago where they admitted they had bought the golf course as a speculative investment, hoping to change the zoning and cash in on an industrial development.

How many real golf aficionados would want to turn a beautiful golf course into acres of warehouses in an area designated foundation land, the top grade given out by the Oregon Department of Agriculture? But more importantly, a state-mandated process has been underway for about a year to determine which parts

of the tri-county area, outside the current urban growth boundary (UGB), should be designated rural or urban reserve.

The process is progressing very successfully and ordinary citizens are very much involved. The Clackamas County Commission, after a recommendation from the Clackamas County policy advisory committee of citizens, has designated the area south of the Willamette River at Wilsonville, including the Langdon Farms Golf Course, a rural reserve candidate area. And the reason they did that is because the area meets the factors set out for a rural reserve designation, detailed in the legislation. As if all that were not enough, we citizens need to be aware of two other points: ODOT states that I-5, north and south of the Boone Bridge at Wilsonville, is at capacity.

It can't cope with more development-induced traffic and those of us who live in the Wilsonville area know that very well. And who would pay for the huge cost of infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) for such development? We taxpayers would be on the hook of course. So let's not reward speculators who feign having the community's best interests at heart. Let's let the rural and urban reserve participatory process continue on its present path, hopefully leading to a rural reserve south of the Willamette at Wilsonville.

Tony Holt

Wilsonville

Maletis' goals may not be what they appear

I read with great interest Patrick Johnson's article on the Maletis brothers and their aspirations for the 385 acres they own south of the Willamette River.

It is a good thing to give the Maletis brothers an opportunity to put their position forward in a public setting, and doing so provides a service to the citizens of Wilsonville and the residents of north French Prairie. Hopefully this airing of their views is understood for just what it is: a specious series of arguments and contorted reasoning centered on self-serving profit goals.

As the maxim goes (which we heard a lot of in the past political season): Saying it is so doesn't make it so. The incontrovertible facts of the matter are: they purchased a golf course that received the last conditional use permit on ag land for such a use in Oregon. They then continued to buy up more ag land. Whatever they now wish to define and describe that land as, it is still all zoned EFU for a reason: it is part of French Prairie and comprised of high quality soils – soils that grew great stuff for centuries before the Maletis brothers arrived on the scene. Making the declaration that it will never return to agricultural usage is a form of

self-fulfilling prophecy – the kind they would like to achieve to enable them to pursue commercial development.

All of their PR lingo, designed to make them seem like “local nice guys,” which ends up by saying this land would never qualify as rural reserve in the Metro urban /rural reserves process is simply trying to shape public opinion to get their way. Telling a lie doesn’t make it so, either.

Benjamin Williams

Friends of French Prairie

Aurora

Taxpayers should not subsidize industrial development

The interview with the Maletis brothers last week was one more attempt to persuade the public that their intentions to develop 385 acres of prime farmland at Langdon Farms is strictly in their best interests.

They flaunt the Oregon land use laws that were thoughtfully put into place by former Gov. Tom McCall, believing they would have no problem changing the “conditional use” designation for the golf course to “industrial.” But if the golf course was abandoned, the law would require that the land be returned to “exclusive farm use.”

The land mentioned, that once was a nursery and now has “broken glass sprinkled across the site,” is due to their lack of proper cleanup while demolishing the green houses.

Their claim that there are limited farming operations around Langdon Farms is so outrageous. There are all kinds of lands growing nursery stock or fruit orchards, berry farms, hay and seed farms as well as tree nurseries growing our future forests.

The Langdon Farms land was bought for pure speculation purposes, and it was no accident that the land they bought was just across the road from the Aurora Airport, which would serve their industrial purposes very well.

And “theft?” They are throwing out some very nebulous statements that have nothing to do with the value of the land. The Maletis’ seem to have no respect for farmland that has been designated “foundation lands” by our own state government, and are denigrating the term “French Prairie” as not applicable to their land holdings.

One of the most important prehistoric events, the Missoula Floods, deposited layer upon layer of loess in the Willamette Valley, creating what is termed “the richest farmland in the world.” We cannot afford to build on and pave over any more of our farm lands. It would take another Ice Age to replace them.

Once the developers use up the farm land, who is going to feed all those people for whom they are “creating jobs?” Too much of our food already is coming from other countries.

It has already been stated many times that I-5 and the Boone Bridge is at capacity. So having an industrial site at the Langdon Farm area would generate more congestion and more trucks on the roadways.

Wilsonville has stated it could not afford to furnish sewer, water and roads to that area. And as a tax paying resident of Wilsonville, I do not want to subsidize any industrial development at Langdon Farms. There are many other areas that want to develop and already have infrastructure in place.

I vote for the rich farmland south of the Willamette River to remain “rural reserves.”

Kari Muldrow

Wilsonville