

Metro Council debates Clackamas development

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Round Two will take place this week in the debate over whether more land in Clackamas County should be left open for development in the next 50 years.

One landowner is expected to testify that possibility should be made available for the area around the Langdon Farms Golf Club south of Wilsonville. He is backed by a majority of Clackamas County commissioners, who want that and two other areas considered as urban reserves.

But Thursday's public hearing by the Metro Council is likely to focus on a broader question: Whether the council should reopen a years-long discussion of urban reserves, or simply gather more evidence in support of its 2011 decision to designate the Stafford Triangle for potential development. Urban reserve areas are outside the urban growth boundary, but can be considered open for development within 50 years.

The urban-reserve issue is back before the council — and Clackamas County commissioners — as a result of an Oregon Court of Appeals ruling in 2014 and its return by the state Land Conservation and Development Commission. At the council's initial hearing Oct. 8, virtually all those who testified opposed reopening the urban-reserve discussion and supported a previously agreed-on designation only for the Stafford Triangle. That is the name for 6,230 acres bounded by Tualatin, Lake Oswego and West Linn, and north of Wilsonville.

The lone dissenter was Chris Maletis, who with his brother Tom own Langdon Farms Golf Club, and who said he would offer formal testimony at Thursday's hearing. In a 2009 interview with the Wilsonville Spokesman, Chris Maletis said the property already has defined boundaries: Miley Road to the north, Boones Ferry Road to the west, Airport Road to the east, and Arndt Road — the boundary with Marion County — to the south.

"We are committed to this process, because we think anyone looking at this property objectively will come to the conclusion it should be an urban reserve," Chris Maletis said at the time. "It doesn't mean it's going to be developed tomorrow, but it means in the next 50 years. It only makes sense, where its location is and the infrastructure and the transportation that it would be part of an urban reserve."

But landowner groups and Wilsonville city officials, who say they do not want to extend utility lines and other city services south across the Willamette River, opposed his position. "It seems to me the elephant in this room is an attempt to scuttle the process by Clackamas County commissioners," Tony Holt, president of the Charbonneau Homeowners Association, said at the Oct. 8 hearing.

A letter filed with the council from John Ludlow, chairman of the Clackamas County commissioners, lists two other areas they have asked their planning staff to study for potential designation as urban reserves. Neither area, however, was specifically mentioned during testimony at the Oct. 8 hearing. They are 400 acres east of Canby and an area of unspecified size on Springwater Road southeast of Carver. The same letter says that the commissioners will not act on reaffirming the Stafford Triangle as an urban reserve until the study is completed — and the letter specifies no date for the latter.

Although most of the attention has focused on Clackamas County, the Metro Council and Multnomah County also must agree on designation of reserve areas within that county. Oregon lawmakers stepped in after the 2014 Oregon Court of Appeals decision to resolve the designation of Washington County's urban reserve areas, although some local officials want even more land held open for future development.