

## Development south of the Willamette stirs debate at Metro hearing



*Clackamas County wants to remove the 'rural reserve' designation from lands on and around Langdon Farms Golf Club south of the Willamette River near Wilsonville. The proposal has alarmed some, who want to see the river remain the dividing line between urban-level development and farmlands. (Dana Tims/Staff)*

**November 20, 2011**

**Dana Tims**

The agenda item before Metro councilors Thursday afternoon focused on the future of the Stafford area of unincorporated Clackamas County. Most of the fireworks, however, involved the county's desire to remove the 'rural reserve' designation now affixed to the lands on and around Langdon Farms Golf Club south of the Willamette River near Wilsonville.

About 60 people, including 30 from Wilsonville's Charbonneau district, attended the public hearing. It comes as Metro and Clackamas County try to address the issues that prompted the state Court of Appeals in early 2014 to remand back to the local jurisdictions a proposed plan for how and where to grow – and not to grow – for the next 50 years.

The county's Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 in August to classify the land as 'undesigned.' Metro has not indicated any willingness to go along with the proposal. For the foreseeable future, a stalemate between the two governments appears nearly unbreakable. Those on both sides say the standoff could remain in place until next year, when elections may or may not reshuffle the county board's majority.

The proposal has the support of Chris and Tom Maletis, who own Langdon Farms. They have long tried to get their land rezoned from exclusive farm use to a category that would allow development. Chris Maletis said prior to the hearing that he planned to testify, but was a surprise no-show. The brothers, along with four of the county's five commissioners, say the county's need for new employment lands should factor in to at least consider adding the acreage to the urban growth boundary for future development.

Clackamas County Commissioners Tootie Smith testified that a shortage of such sites warrants removing the 'rural reserve' tag currently affixed to areas south of the Willamette. Her colleague, Commissioner Paul Savas, noted that lands designated as either urban or rural reserves cannot be revisited for at least 20 years. "That is simply unfair," he said.

Charles Patterson, a Charbonneau resident, disagreed, telling Metro councilors, "Please dispense with the noise coming from the Clackamas County commission and the Maletis brothers." The Stafford area – the sole focus of the court's remand decision as it applied to that county and ostensibly the topic of the hearing – did get some attention.

West Linn Mayor Russ Axelrod and several Stafford-area residents called the decision to declare Stafford an urban reserve was a mistake. Area roads are not capable of adequately serving urban-level traffic loads, they said, and money for the considerable upgrades that would be necessary doesn't appear to be in the offing.

At the hearing's conclusion, Metro Council President Tom Hughes defended the need for long-term planning regarding which areas will develop and which will remain untouched by housing and industry. He said the council will hold a work session in December to consider further action.