

## **Brothers mulling sale to Klamath**

### ***Maletis brothers, Tribe remain coy about future of Landon Farms***

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**By Patrick Johnson**

The debate about development of land south of the Willamette River is heating up again, only this time, two options for future development have popped up.

As Metro has started an expansive study on the possible expansion of the Metro urban growth boundary, the French Prairie area is once again part of the growth debate. Meanwhile, brothers Chris and Tom Maletis, owners of Langdon Farms Golf Club in Aurora, are reportedly in discussions with the Klamath Tribes about selling approximately 400-acres of their land, including the golf course.

After the dust-up that occurred in 2006, parties currently working with the Klamath Tribes to acquire the Maletis property are all pointedly staying away from the word “casino.”

“At this point there has been no discussion about a gaming operation,” said Jack Isselmann, a Portland-based attorney that represents the Maletis family. “We look at this property as perfect for industrial development at a time when that land is at a premium.”

Isselmann produced a June 17 letter from Chairman of the Klamath Tribes, Joseph Kirk, to Carl Artman, assistant secretary for Indian Affairs that said the tribes, “appreciate the willingness for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to expedite the transfer from fee to trust of lands soon to be acquired by the Tribes in Aurora, Oregon ... The Tribes intend economic development activities other than gaming on the property.”

Klamath tribe’s council member Jeff Mitchell said he was not at liberty to disclose what the discussions were, but that there had been discussions about acquiring the property.

Scott Aikin, acting regional director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Portland said no application had been filed, and would not discuss the trust issue.

City officials and Friends of the French Prairie have both said the Klamaths are trying to use the Klamath Indian Restoration Act, a 1986 federal law that would allow the tribes to claim the lands.

Wilsonville Mayor Charlotte Lehan said she felt it wasn’t right that the tribes could claim land so far away from their historic reservation near Klamath in Southern Oregon.

“If they are going to do that, why not just claim lands in downtown Portland,” she said.

City officials say talk of the land being put into trust are just a negotiation tactic to pressure opponents of the UGB expansion to back off.

Friends of the French Prairie officials agreed. “What we are hearing is that if the tribe does put that land into trust, they won’t have to follow local or state land-use laws,” said Benjamin Williams, an organizer for Friends of French Prairie, a group with nearly 400 members.

“The stated purpose is commercial development,” he added. “But one wonders if there is enough return on investment and some other longer term goal might be considered.”

Isselmann was quick to dispute that idea. “I’m not a treaty lawyer, but I doubt that would be the case,” he said.

Discussions with the Klamath, Isselmann added, are not intended to put pressure on Metro to add the land into the UGB, nor are there plans afoot to shut down Langdon Farms. At the same time, he said, the brothers are not likely to spurn a generous offer.

“We are not going to turn away someone who wants to talk about how to develop the property,” Isselmann said. “The tribe is interested now, and there is no guarantee they are going to be interested in the future.”

The Maletises, he said, continue to be interested in developing industrial and mixed use projects on the approximately 260 acres that don’t involve the golf course. With \$53 million in improvements to the highway 551 interchanges and the possibility of purchasing the rest area freeway access, Isselmann said, the property was ideal for these uses.

### **Metro UGB Expansion**

On top the potential Maletis sale, talks are currently underway taking across Metro’s myriad jurisdictions regarding an expansion of the urban growth boundary, as well as urban and rural reserves, a new designation created during the last legislative session under Senate Bill 1011.

Under SB 1011, Metro and its individual counties can establish urban reserves for development and rural reserves that will be protected from development for up to 50 years. Metro has since run into opposition to plans for expansion.

Marion County expressed opposition to being involved in the process last April, when Marion County commissioner Sam Brentano urged Metro to look elsewhere.

“Look elsewhere to feed your monster,” Brentano wrote to Metro Council President David Bragdon in a letter recently made public.

But land south of the Willamette River to Arndt Road, between Interstate 5 and Airport Road is in Clackamas County, and is still being considered for designation.