

Langdon Farms development rages on ... and on

Politicians, Friends of French Prairie, gather for town hall Thursday in Hubbard

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By Patrick Johnson

HUBBARD — Political candidates, a lawyer and a not-for-profit group teed off Thursday night debating whether industrial development – or a casino – was a good idea for 400 acres near the Langdon Farms Golf Course.

To a room of more than 100 people, Molalla area farmer Jim Gilbert, a Democratic candidate for Oregon house district 18, Rep. Brian Clem (D-Salem) and Wilsonville Mayor Charlotte Lehan, a candidate for Clackamas County Commission position 4, debated with Mark Cushing, the attorney for the Maletis family, who owns the property.

For years the debate has continued whether property south of the Willamette River along Interstate 5 should be developed. The town hall meeting brought up many of the old arguments, the only difference this time being the interest of the Klamath Tribes to put the land in trust.

Gilbert, Clem and others are concerned that although the tribes have told the Bureau of Indian Affairs they have no interest in a gaming complex, as recently as May the tribe had yet to provide the BIA with a detailed plan of what it will do with the property. Opponents claim this leaves the door open for a casino. They also note that once the land is in trust, state and local land use laws are no longer applicable.

“The thing to keep in mind is that we have a governor who has approved another gaming complex off reservation in the state,” said Clem, who has been involved in the Warm Springs tribes casino debate. “This could still happen on the Maletis property.”

Cushing rejected any notion that the tribes, or the Maletis family, had any intention of placing a casino on the property. He also questioned why he wasn't notified of the meeting, and asked why no member of the Friends of French Prairie had called the Maletis family or his office to ask firsthand about a possible casino.

There have been no discussions, whatsoever, of a casino going on that property,” Cushing said. “I am the person negotiating with the tribe, and the chairman has advised the BIA that, should this land go forward and be put in trust, there would be a condition that would not allow a casino. Period. You can oppose development, but do not go home with fear there is going to be a casino on that site.”

Lehan pointed out that to put any development directly south of the Willamette River, would require a large project of more than 400 acres to make the numbers pencil out.

“We have no capacity across the river to serve sewer or water service south of the Willamette,” Lehan said. “We have a 12-inch water pipe hanging off the Boone Bridge that is at capacity for Charbonneau. To serve an industrial park we would have to run a whole new pipe and make it a circuit so it didn’t just dead-end.”

Lehan used the Villebois housing development as an example of how development wouldn’t work on the site.

“When Villebois originally came in they wanted to use 100 or 200 acres,” she said. “The numbers just didn’t work out to provide it services, so they came back with 500 acres. The same thing would happen here. If development is going to happen, it’s going to have to be large.”

Ben Williams, president of the Friends of French Prairie said he was happy with the turnout and urged people to stay informed about the Klamath Tribes negotiations. He also asked that attendees fill out form letters to their state senators and federal representatives asking for an investigation into this proposed land deal and asking to limit the Klamath to only acquire land within 100 miles of their traditional tribal areas in Southern Oregon.

“The question is why are they so interested in lands that are so far away from their tribal lands in Southern Oregon,” Williams said.