

French Prairie still needs rural reserves

August 3, 2016 12:26

Citizen's View submitted by Ladd Hill Neighborhood Association

As a recognized Clackamas County Community Planning Organization (CPO), Ladd Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA) takes very seriously its standing in the community to function as a planning organization and also seeks to represent fairly the concerns of all the private citizens and businesses both in and around our large neighborhood area. Our neighborhood area stretches approximately eight miles wide from the western edge of the city of Wilsonville toward the eastern edge of the city of Newberg and extends approximately 2.5 miles wide north of the Willamette River between these two cities.

Seeking firsthand information regarding the above BCC proposal, two members of the LHNA Board of Directors attended the June 28 public meeting and reported back to the LHNA membership on July 6 at a special LHNA meeting held to discuss the proposed removal of "Rural Reserve" status from the above mentioned 800 acres of the "French Prairie Rural Reserve."

A summary of the June 28 BCC meeting was presented, followed by a brief review of the 2010 decision and original reasons for creating the "French Prairie Rural Reserve." A general discussion by the membership then occurred and a vote was taken on whether or not to support the proposed removal of "Rural Reserve" status from the affected 800 acres. In a unanimous vote, the LHNA has chosen not support a change in status.

Contrary to the Nov. 10, 2015 claim by Clackamas County to METRO that: "The facts on the ground have changed dramatically since the original reserves adoption, prompting the need for corresponding changes to reserve designations..." LHNA contends that NO such dramatic change has occurred in the 800 acres of French Prairie Rural Reserve within the last six years to warrant an elimination of "Rural Reserve" status. While the County's general claim may apply to other reserve areas the BCC is considering for designation change, it absolutely does not apply to the French Prairie Rural Reserve.

The LHNA further notes that a nearby city must be willing to prepare a concept plan for addressing the future expansion of transportation, water, sewer and storm drainage systems and accompanying land use of a reserve area before development can occur. We note that the City of Wilsonville, the nearest city that could develop this area, also strongly does NOT SUPPORT the elimination of "Rural Reserve" status of these 800 acres.

There are currently within Clackamas County several other areas closer and adjacent to existing urban areas already within the urban METRO area that can much more easily be provided with the necessary transportation and urban utility improvements needed for future commercial and urban land use development. These areas include the 400 acres east of Canby, the 425 acres south of the Clackamas River along Springwater Road and the 4,200 acres area of the

Stafford Triangle, each already under consideration for urban development by Clackamas County.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has gone on record stating that the Interstate 5 Boone Bridge crossing the Willamette River at the southern edge of the City of Wilsonville is already at capacity, as is Exit 283, the main exit into Wilsonville. There are currently well documented, almost daily, traffic slow-downs and stand-stills at this bridge crossing. As the only link between the existing urban Portland METRO area north of the Willamette River and these 800 acres of “Rural Reserve” south of the Willamette River, adding significant north-south industrial, commercial and residential traffic will only make matters worse.

There are no current funds or even

future funds under contemplation at the federal, state, county or local city levels to widen the Boone Bridge or provide a new bridge crossing.

All the original reasons from the 2010 designation of “Rural Reserve” approved by seven state agencies over a two-year public input process still apply to these 800 acres of the “French Prairie Rural Reserve.” These include:

- Threat of urbanization of high value farm land
- Very significant local and regional transportation limitations
- Poor suitability for urbanization due to lack of public utility infrastructure and distance from existing urban populations
- Allowing urban sprawl to extend down the I-5 highway corridor, permanently destroying some of the best documented high-value farmland in the western United States.

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