

Aurora wants to annex airport

City officials oppose expansion unless Aurora Airport becomes part of the city

Woodburn Independent
March 28, 2011

AURORA — As it ponders its future growth and expansion, the Aurora State Airport looks south. And staring back is the city of Aurora.

The city has kept an eye on the airport growth for years and especially recently, said Mayor James Meirow. He and former Mayor Nick Kaiser are members of the public advisory committee for the updating of the airport master plan. So is Fred Netter, president of the board of directors of the Aurora Rural Protection Fire District.

The state airport has grown to become Oregon's third busiest and is busting at the seams.

"It's a business," Meirow said. "It wants to grow."

The city supports airport growth within its current boundaries, he said. And that's where it needs to stay until the airport is annexed into the city. Both covet the land that lies between them. Aurora officials someday would like to see an industrial park at Ehlen Road and Highway 551.

But one of the three options for expanding the airport would push the runway buffer zone farther south, taking up that parcel and no one could build on it, he said. It also might open the door for larger aircraft to use the airport. The city supports the other two options, no building at all or a 600-foot north extension to the runway.

"The city does not want to stop the airport from growing, but until the airport is annexed into the city of Aurora, any growing at the airport needs to stay within the airport boundaries."

"We want to work with the airport," Meirow said. "We want to see them bring in more jobs. We also don't want the noise and the impact."

The city of Aurora receives no tax money from the airport, he said. Most of the generated revenue goes to Clackamas County. Not that much comes to Marion County or Aurora. Marion County is where the airport is located, but Clackamas and Washington counties are where the aircraft owners and workers live, he said.

Meirow said he has talked with Marion County, the Oregon Department of Aviation and business owners at the airport about the possibility of the city of Aurora annexing the airport at some time in the future.

"We've actually had some good responses," he said.

He also has spoken with property owners at the south end of the airport. They would like to see the city annex the airport as well as their properties, he said.

And Aurora wants a say in what types of businesses move in, Meiorow said.

"We want to make sure it's a lower impact type of business, creating a sufficient buffer between the city and the airport."

The advantages of annexation for the airport would be city services, water-sewer, leaf coverage, jurisdiction of streets and how streets are maintained, Meiorow said.

While the airport already has its own water rights, it has no water tower, he said. Its water system is limited. The city needs another water tower at that end of town.

The advantage for the city Aurora would be the tax base, all those businesses and all those properties that are developed.

"It's a win-win for everybody," Meiorow said. "It's a great opportunity for the airport and it's a great opportunity for the city of Aurora. It could happen quickly if everyone gets on board."