

Schroader, Kathy



From: Cnty Board of County Councilors General Delivery
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 9:50 AM
To: Mielke, Tom, Madore, David, Stewart, Jeanne, Olson, Julie (Councilor), Boldt, Marc
Cc: McCauley, Mark, Tilton, Rebecca, Schroader, Kathy
Subject: RILB Testimony

From: John R. McCrow [<mailto:bigjohnr2@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 8:55 AM
To: Cnty Board of County Councilors General Delivery
Subject: RILB Testimony

Dear Council Chair Boldt and Councilors Stewart, Madore, Olson and Mielke:

I planned to testify at tonight's hearing but am instead taking care of an ailing parent. I trust you will consider this testimony in the same way you would verbal testimony and prior to taking a vote.

There are many reasons that this proposal for the 625 acres now operating as a dairy should not be adopted:

1) Farmland near urban areas has long been shown to benefit the communities to which it is contingent. As discussed in "Preserving Prime Farmland in the Face of Urbanization" by Arthur C. Nelson, public good is served in the capacity of farmland to filter water, cleanse the air and provide open space protection. If good farmland is sacrificed to pavement it has to be replaced. That replacement land is typically of poorer quality requiring more inputs of energy for the output.

2) This farmland has been in production for decades. It has received constant fertilization courtesy of the dairy herd. It qualifies as "agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance." In that capacity it helps, again, to serve community needs as in (1) above and in providing a near-by food source for the community.

3) Agriculture plays a significant role in the economy of Washington State and deserves to be considered as the job creator and income generator that it is. It has had a long-term commercial significance in the county and has been growing rapidly over the past decade.

3) There are other available properties within the urban growth boundary that would be suitable for light industrial development. It is not necessary, nor legally viable to take 625 acres of fertile farmland out of production just because it has been preserved as a large parcel and is therefore a developer's dream. Reclaiming "brownlands," as cities have had to begin doing, is a costly process with less than satisfactory outcomes.

4) This is not in keeping with the requirements of the Growth Management Act. The county can ill afford yet more lawsuits because of bad planning or poor decision making.

5) To be a sustainable community we need to produce food locally. This is likely to become increasingly important in the years to come. Locally produced food is more nutritious, in addition to being more available, without huge inputs of energy transporting it from countries all over the globe. It simply makes more sense to produce it here. Congress recently was forced to remove Country of Origin labels from our meat. I personally want to know where my food is grown and under what conditions. Without COO labels I will only purchase meat from local producers. I am not alone in that thinking. It is ill-advised for the leaders we elect to formulate long-range plans to ignore the long-term needs of the community for nutritious food, clean air and clean water.

6) I suspect there is some aspect of a county owned railroad looking for a purpose. Food production on this land, including greenhouses, and with cold storage facilities, could make use of that railroad, provide jobs for existing residents and be a model for a sustainable community.

I urge you to study this issue carefully, review the GMA requirements, consider the testimony that supports keeping this land in agriculture and also consider establishing a community committee versed in food production and distribution to come up with possible options for using this property as an "Agricultural Land Bank " Perhaps a public/private partnership scenario could be worked out. The important thing is that the land not be removed from agriculture and time be spent in thinking creatively about how to use it and then how to purchase it, if necessary.

Thank you for your careful, reasoned, cautious approach to this very important issue

Respectfully,

Dianne Kocer
diannekxm@gmail.com
Brush Prairie