



Date: April 5, 2016

To: The Honorable Marc Boldt, Council Chair, Clark County Board of Councilors
And Councilors Jeannie Stewart, Julie Olson, David Madore and Tom Mielke
From: Heidi Owens, Clark County Resident
Subject: Saving Ag in Clark County; a creative consideration to the RILB

Dear Councilors,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Rural Industrial Land Bank (RILB). I hope this council would Last week, I testified on the importance of a food system in Clark County, and I asked the council to seriously consider some actions, including:

- Preserving farm land.
- Adopting TDRs.
- Looking at ways to build Clark Counties Agriculture, such as creating a food HUB or promoting valued-added AG-production facilities, like a cold storage facility
- Passing a resolution that this Council will follow GMA

One fact that I cut from my testimony, due to time, is that the American Farmland Trust estimates that America is losing 50 acres of farmland an hour! Tonight I am here to ask you, as individual council members – what do you want as your legacy? Do you want to be remembered as one of the council members that endorsed a significant loss of prime Ag-land in Clark County? As someone that contributed to food insecurity in our region? There will be winners and losers in this proposed de-designation of Ag-land, and I am of the firm belief that there will be more losers, and that if approved, the decision will hurt our county and rural agriculture, particularly in the Brush Prairie area. I invite you to consider there are other options, ones that allow you to enrich the food system in Clark County

What really troubles me, is that I am not convinced the county needs this industrial land bank, and I am not alone Looking around the UGA areas of our county, I see available land, particularly in Vancouver, but other cities too, both vacant land and land/parcels that could be redeveloped And what happened to discovery corridor along I-5. Ag Land along a major highway seems better suited for industrial uses, especially when it is closer to services and residential areas, than land smack dab in the middle of a concentrated Ag area A strong case has not been made that the county needs this bank In fact, it was not even the need for industrial land that brought this process forward was it?

No, this hearing to look at RILB is a reaction to an application by a particular land owner and that reaction is leading to a decision that does not best represent the use for ALL Clark County residents What about the industrial land owners inside the UGA who have been patiently waiting for the growth and development of their land? Doesn't adding over 600 acres of additional industrial land bring a surplus to the market, depressing prices? It seems to me adding this acreage violates the good faith promise made to those who are now inside the UGA.

And, I also worry about some of the permitted uses under light industrial that could allow for chemicals, heavy metals, or petroleum based products to get into the air or ground water and ultimately the soil which would dramatically impact the crops that are grown on adjacent properties

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But, mostly I worry about the loss of the ag-resource land and what it means to Clark County and our Food System. Did you see the article in the Seattle Times about how Costco's demand for Organic food exceeds supply? HMMMM? The opportunities are right here in our own back yard, and that of our neighbors. Clark County sits in the center of the I-5 Pacific NW corridor; we have productive farm land. Please be brave and save this ag-land! Plus re-a history of this parcel and rulings from both the growth management hearing board and the courts that a RILB on this property will make it through an appeal process? This proposal didn't start with a need, how can it be justified when there is no case for needing this additional land. A recent land inventory is in the works, I don't see how approval of this RILB can be defended without having a case that industrial land is in short supply.

That said, however, I think the council has an opportunity here to make a difference for Clark County while supporting Agriculture and our Food System and increase the odds of gaining approval from the Growth Management Hearing Board. Consider that RCW 36 70a 367(4)(a) highlights placement of an industrial land development that is "resource-based" near the resource lands it serves. This could be win-win for the County, its residents, and the industry.

What if this council recommends to staff and ultimately approves an overlay that focuses on the resource this application replaces, such as "FOOD SYSTEM" Overlay. Such an overlay and use would fit in the rural area supporting value-added agriculture in Clark County and bring product to Clark County for additional processing. This direction would bring jobs and fits with GMA. Your direction of focusing an overlay on our Food System would allow for many, many different types of businesses involved in the production, processing, support, distribution, manufacturing of food and/or Ag products. Some examples below would MORE than fill up the proposed land bank site, add many jobs to Clark County, promote the starting of small and micro businesses in the county, support our local food system, provide jobs for rural residents, increase the export of products from our county, and bring products to our county for processing. Some examples include:

- Businesses that process raw food commodities, such as bakeries, canners, creameries, frozen food processor, oil production, milling, etc.
- Beverage manufacturers
- Businesses that store food, including a badly needed cold storage site in the region
- Packers
- Dairy Waste recycler.
- Businesses that create labeling and packaging materials
- A land trust that can lease land to small farmers to grow crops or raise farm animals
- Businesses the focus on production and supply (feed manufacturing, equipment, seed packaging, green house manufacturing, bee keeping manufacturing, irrigation, organic farming supplies)
- Businesses that process other agricultural commodities, like fiber, dried flowers, basket weaving.
- Businesses that manufacture products for urban gardeners/food production
- A food/Ag-based Research Park, in cooperation with WSU that includes labs for Ag study, food safety research, nutrition, soil testing, etc.
- Professional kitchens for local microbusiness to lease and develop products.
- Business that support the marketing and distribution of products from Clark County

- Warehouse/distribution center.
- A business/organization that supports the sharing of farm equipment
- Businesses that support the Ag-industry (soil testers, consultants, insurance)
- Small scale meat processor.

I ask this council to please consider what this loss really means for Clark County residents. Sure people say it is just dairy and hay, but it is more than that – it is the long term potential of these lands should food security become an issue, it is about enhancing the food system in our county, it is about supporting our rural neighbors, it is about meeting demand locally for quality food. Please do not give this application a blanket acceptance that allows for the potential of pollutants and conflicts to impact our areas agriculture communities. Instead, look at how to support Ag in this county before you approve this RILB, and if and when you do approve it, do it in a way that is best for all residents and strengthens resource production in our county.

Thank you.

Heidi Owens

Schroader, Kathy

From: McCauley, Mark
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 1 28 PM
To: Schroader, Kathy, Orjiako, Oliver, Euler, Gordon
Subject: FW Comments for RILB Hearing April 5, 2016
Attachments: April 5 testimony pdf

From: Heidi Owens [<mailto:heidi.owens@comcast.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 10:59 AM
To: Boldt, Marc; Tilton, Rebecca
Cc: McCauley, Mark
Subject: Comments for RILB Hearing April 5, 2016

Hello Marc & Rebecca,

I would like my comments to be included for the record for tonight's hearing and forwarded to all council members

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

Regards,
Heidi Owens