

Board of Commissioners Meeting
August 21, 2013

Present: Commissioner Mark D. Davidson
Commissioner Steve McClure
Commissioner William D. Rosholt

Chairman Davidson opened the meeting with all three Commissioners present.

City of La Grande Plan/Text/Map Amendment – Cont.

Hanley Jenkins II, Planning Director, explained that at the last Commissioner's meeting the County approved Ordinance 2013-04 which adopted the amendments to the City of La Grande's development codes that will affect the urban growth area. The Commissioner's tabled until this meeting the consideration of the other two Ordinances which deal with the exchange area for the Urban Growth Boundary property by the Airport and the amendments to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan as it relates to the exchange area. One of the outstanding questions from that meeting was whether or not the FAA had any concerns about the Airport Overlay Zone. The County's Ordinance currently prohibits any new water impoundments within the Airport Overlay Zone. There was a response received by the FAA indicating that there is an opportunity to apply mitigating measures rather than an absolute prohibition to water impoundments. Commissioner McClure talked to a representative of the FAA and they indicated that their agency is interested in working with the County on the issue and do believe that it is necessary for the County to update their Airport Master Plan that was last updated in 1998. There could be an amendment to the Airport Overlay Zone that would allow for mitigating measures for water impoundments under certain conditions. The conditions would be developed as a part of a new Airport Master Plan. Rewriting an Airport Master Plan will take some time. Grant dollars will have to be pursued and a contractor will have to do the Plan so it could take 2 to 3 years to complete the Plan. He explained that the Commissioners need to discuss what the reality is of a development being pursued on the exchange area occurring within that two year period. The area would require service extension in order for it to be developed at this point.

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, explained that there was a request from FAA to put together a needs list of projects for the Airport. From that needs list they noticed that the Master Plan was out of date. In talking about future projects the Master Plan needed to be updated first so that those projects would be identified and have a comprehensive plan to be able to ask for grants for projects at the Airport. They have gone out to bid for the overlay project on runway 12-30. During that project they did not have enough money to address the shoulders and drainage system that was at the location. One thing that came from those conversations was that they would put that piece into the Master Plan. It also ensures that the Airport is meeting requirements for the Tanker base and keep the standard as high as possible so they will keep the aircrafts coming in to fight

fires. It showed to him that the Master Plan is very important in the process. He asked FAA when the process can be started by writing a grant for funds to write the Master Plan. He was told to wait until the new fiscal year starts in October. He estimates the cost to write the Master Plan at \$250,000 to \$300,000. They could ask for some match dollars from Connect Oregon V. It makes sense to do the Master Plan at this point.

Commissioner McClure asked how long this process would take. Doug expects that the application process would start in October and then go out to obtain a consultant engineer that does planning around airports. He would estimate that it would take at least a year or two before there was a document in place. He explained that it needs to be done regardless.

Mike Boquist, City of La Grande Planning Director, explained that he would like to see the Ordinances go forward so if there are projects that want to locate there they have a plan in place. He feels that the water impoundments are not a large enough problem to delay the whole project over. He feels like two years is too long to wait. He explained that the industries that require impoundment areas are a small number of the targeted industries for this area.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he had a survey done of industrial parks around the Northwest that have larger manufacturing and processing plants in them. The survey found industries that do require impoundments. The industries found were metal fabrication and coating, wood products, chemical processing, petroleum processing, beverage production, food processing, electric energy generation and aggregate processing. Jill Miles from Business Oregon reported that she has found in her experience data centers and large distribution centers will shy away from locating close to general aviation airports because they are a risk in nature. He still has some reservations about whether it is a suitable site for a large lot heavy industrial zone given the restrictions that are in place. Even if they spent the two years developing a Master Plan to find a way of mitigating them they don't know what that will end up being and what the costs will be associated with the mitigation. They do not want to move ahead without having FAA on board. There is no way the County can maintain the service and level of development at the Airport without the funding of the FAA.

Commissioner McClure feels that the County has to have the cooperation of the FAA for the County to continue to operate the Airport. If they suggest that the County do the Master Plan he would be concerned to approve the industrial zone and think that the only issue with them is going to be the water impoundments. He thinks that the FAA would like to include that so if there are any other issues that come up such as building heights, radio frequencies, or lighting they haven't spoken to in their reply. His experience with the FAA is that when they ask you to do something they are really instructing you to do it. If he had to vote today he would vote to postpone it until the Master Plan is done. The only other

suggestion is that maybe they go back to the State and explain the issue and see if another site can be looked at for large lot industrial and he would support that plan.

Commissioner Rosholt explained that to keep the Airport viable in the future the County has to maintain a good relationship with the FAA. He doesn't feel that making any decision or changes will maintain that relationship.

Commissioner Davidson asked Hanley if DLCD would consider another site location for this zone if this land was deemed unsuitable because of the Airport restrictions. Hanley explained that the process that has to be followed is prescribed by statewide planning goal 14 which allows cities to expand their Urban Growth Boundary and the first step is to go through a needs analysis. The need for this area is 200 acres of large lot heavy industrial land. There is a hierarchy of lands that can be considered. The first lands are the ones available within Urban Growth Boundaries; if there is not land available then areas to look at are exception areas that are no longer zoned for agricultural utilization. If those aren't adequate to meet the needs then other alternative lands can be looked at. The least productive agricultural lands must be looked at first. This site is not high value farm land so it was chosen. To get to higher value farm land they would have to have justification as to why the lower value land is not being considered. He explained that there is an opportunity to explore that option but the question will be if there is still an opportunity on the 200 acres of exchange land that is identified west of Pierce Road and all that is preventing the County from identifying that is going back and redoing the Master Plan which would be time and he is not sure how that would be received. It is something that can be explored.

Commissioner McClure stated that the City of La Grande has put a lot of time and investment into this plan. He doesn't think that it is fair to the City that the site continues to move and the cost is on them. He feels that the cost of doing another site has to be put on the table and discussed before it is considered. A lot of the work has been done but he thinks that the cost needs to be considered as well.

Commissioner Rosholt can appreciate what Commissioner McClure has stated and all the work that has been done but he is still concerned about the fact that the County needs to keep FAA on their side in every aspect because they don't want to stay status quo with the Airport.

Commissioner Davidson stated that he couldn't support exchanging the land and adding the land on Pierce Road to the Urban Growth Boundary prior to the Master Plan being completed because he has to see what the restrictions will be and what mitigation would be required before he could say whether the site could be suitable. He thinks that a lot of the industries that the County would be trying

to locate there are compromised by those restrictions and the proximity to the Airport. It would be his goal for the community to be as successful as possible by having land that is appropriately zoned for this type of development with the least amount of restrictions on it as possible. It gives the best opportunity to be successful and that is what he is looking for.

Mike Boquist explained that he feels that question would be better received from the Council to not ask them to start the process over but to wait until the County has done the Master Plan and has the FAA input on the issue. It has been an expensive effort and he would hate to go back and look at a different area if it isn't needed.

Hanley explained that the only concern he has if the decision is postponed on the Comprehensive Plan and on the Exchange Ordinance is that under the Comprehensive Plan Mike has added the City Parks Master Plan as an element of that. Hanley stated that he assumes there is a need to deal with that portion of the Ordinance so it can be applied in the Urban Growth Area.

Commissioner Davidson stated that the County needs to take some time to review that Ordinances and see if they need to be modified to be able to approve the components that the City of La Grande need approved in order to operate at this time and separate the area in question. Hanley explained that they can segment out what is applicable to the expansion area versus what is applicable to what are other needs that the City asked the County to address in the Ordinances.

This hearing will be continued to the September 18th Board of Commissioners meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Wilhelm
Sr. Department Specialist II