

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AND

THE YAMHILL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF YAMHILL

SITTING FOR THE TRANSACTION OF COUNTY BUSINESS

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF YAMHILL COUNTY (“the Board”) sat for the transaction of county business in special joint session with the Yamhill County Planning Commission on November 29, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 32 of the Courthouse, Commissioners Leslie Lewis, Kathy George, and Mary P. Stern being present.

Present from the Planning Commission were Daryl Garrettson, Alan Halstead, Michael Sherwood, Marjorie Ehry, Dan Armstrong, Michael Griffith, Matt Dunckel, John Abrams, and Marla Robison.

Also present were Mike Brandt, Planning Director; Nathalie Hardy, News-Register; Ken Wright, PO Box 190, Carlton; Chad Olsen, PO Box 1159, McMinnville; Jeff Lorton, PO Box 981, Carlton; Steven Iversen, 1033 SW Courtney Laine Dr, McMinnville; Matt Simek, PO Box 220, Newberg; and Wayne Webke, Carlton.

Commissioner Lewis and Planning Commissioner Daryl Garrettson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and opened the joint public hearing.

**LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Consideration of Planning Docket G-02-12, a request to amend the Yamhill County Transportation System Plan (TSP) to accommodate the Yamhelas Westsider Rail With Trails Project.

Staff Report - Mike Brandt provided the staff report. He reviewed the scope of the project and the proposed language changes to the TSP, as requested by the Board. Ms. Lewis stated that the county is preparing a Transportation Enhancement Grant application for this project, and that application is due December 13, 2012. She said that county also submitted an application on November 27, 2012, for another grant opportunity for this project through Oregon Department of Transportation’s Enhance-It Program.

Public Testimony - Ken Wright, provided background information on the rail right-of-way and development of the project proposal. He said that if the project is not included in the county’s TSP, the grant application will not carry as much weight. He discussed the importance

of the project to the county's transportation system and economic development.

Matt Dunckel stated that he finds it difficult to support the use of transportation dollars to develop a trail, which he does not consider to be a transportation enhancement. Mr. Wright stated that this project opens up the long-term potential for a completely new avenue to Portland, which is a much-needed transportation enhancement given the limitations of Highway 99W. Ms. Stern explained that these grant opportunities are specific pots of money designated for recreational opportunities and rail line, and aren't available for road improvements. Ms. Lewis emphasized the need for long-term planning in order to achieve transportation improvements, and stated that unless a public entity acquires the right-of-way from Union Pacific, it will be sold piecemeal and the opportunity to reestablish the rail line will forever be lost.

Chad Olsen, Carlton City Manager, shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the need for and benefits of this project, which has been broken down into four phases: 1) acquire and preserve the 17-mile corridor; 2) design the corridor improvements; 3) construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and 4) develop freight and commuter rail components. He stated that adjacent property owners are very supportive of the trail development and have mixed views about potential rail use. He said that construction costs will depend on the design and types of materials used.

Ms. Stern stated that Washington County Commissioners are very excited about this project as a connection to its transportation systems, and Washington County has a lot more money and support for these recreational trails than Yamhill County does.

Jeff Lorton showed a short video showing overhead footage of the entire proposed trail length, noting areas that would be well suited for stopping points. He said that transients are already using the corridor, and developing it for public use would make it safer. He discussed the national Rails to Trails program and stated that adjacent property values tend to increase after the trails are put in. He also discussed the history of the rail corridor. He said that the Galloping Goose Trail in Victoria is similar to this area and has been a great economic boon to the local communities there, as is the case across the nation wherever these trails are developed. He stated that he doesn't believe co-existing rail would be detrimental to the trail use, and would be an added draw for rail enthusiasts.

Steve Iversen stated that he is an avid bike rider and he supports the transportation improvements that this project would bring. He agreed that the trail would be a benefit to the tourism sector. He said that he is a member of Friends of Yamhill County, which strongly supports the project as well.

Matt Simek stated that he has been a long-time rail advocate in Yamhill County. He presented background information on this rail line and said that alternative transportation will become critical as the population continues to increase. He said that an intact corridor like this is rare, and the opportunity to acquire 17 miles of right-of-way for \$2.4 million will never be duplicated. He explained that new track would have to be laid anyway, so Union Pacific did a

tremendous favor by removing the old track. He stated that any use of the corridor, whether for a trail or for eventual rail, would be of benefit to the county.

Mr. Dunckel stated that the rail line was abandoned for a reason, and people prefer to use the highways now. Mr. Simek agreed that that was the case in the 1930s as traffic became more highway-oriented, but now the trend has started to reverse because the roads have become too crowded, and people are looking for alternative, lower-cost means of transporting themselves and freight. He emphasized the importance of planning for the future.

Wayne Webke explained that the rail line was abandoned because it would have required new track to be laid to accommodate the freight, and the cost could not be justified.

Mr. Garrettson closed the public hearing for the Planning Commission.

Staff Recommendation - Mr. Brandt recommended approval of the request.

Planning Commission Deliberation - Mr. Abrams stated that he sympathizes with Mr. Dunckel's concerns, but will support the staff recommendation. He said that the opportunity for a direct route between two points is not a reality in today's world unless something like this can be acquired.

Ms. Robison said that she supports the request and appreciates the informative presentations that were given.

Mr. Armstrong stated that about 3/4-mile of his property line abuts the corridor, and while he is enthusiastic about the rail opportunity, he feels that a trail would affect him detrimentally; however, he is supportive of looking ahead.

Mr. Dunckel stated that he would not vote in support because the current TSP already has the necessary authority. He said that he can't justify spending transportation money on a trail, especially not knowing what the construction costs would be. He said that he would prefer to see Ken Wright buy the property and have a private organization run it and keep the profits. He said that there isn't enough funding for real transportation improvements because it gets spread out to include projects like this.

Mr. Griffith supported the staff recommendation and agreed with the need to plan for the future.

Mr. Halstead stated that short rail lines like this one were divested, not because they weren't profitable, but because they weren't profitable enough. He said that the Springwater Trail in east Portland has generated much more public use than problems, and this is a worthwhile project that he strongly supports.

Mr. Sherwood stated that the Springwater Trail has no destination, whereas this trail has exciting possibilities for connectivity. He said that it will be a challenge for the Planning

Commission, as population continues to increase, to preserve agriculture in the area, but he feels strongly that this concept would allow Yamhill County to keep its quaintness and still bring in sorely-needed business and continue to grow.

Ms. Ehry stated that she believes this would be a great asset to the county, and freight rail would help take some of the trucks off the roads. She said that she sees the scope of the project growing beyond what has been presented, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but the long-term possibilities do need to be considered and the support of adjacent property owners is important. She said that she is in favor of the request.

Mr. Garrettson stated that it bothers him that the government originally gave this land to the railroad company and now has to buy it back, but this is an opportunity to preserve an important transportation corridor.

Planning Commission Motion - Mr. Halstead moved to recommend approval of Planning Docket G-02-12; Mr. Sherwood seconded the motion. The motion passed, Commissioners Abrams, Robison, Armstrong, Griffith, Halstead, Sherwood, Ehry, and Garrettson voting yes and Commissioner Dunckel voting no.

Board of Commissioners Deliberation - Ms. Stern moved tentative approval of Planning Docket G-02-12, with findings to be adopted December 6, 2012. She noted that this is aspirational language about what the county wants to do in the future with its plan, and the Board is not approving the project at this time. She said that there is a long way to go, but it is an exciting concept and now is the time to acquire the property. She reviewed two language changes suggested by Suzanne Dufner, Council of Governments, who is writing the grant application for the county.

Ms. George stated that this is a tremendous opportunity and she appreciates all the work that has gone into it so far. She said that the trail would provide benefits to local families as well as visitors, and when the need for rail comes, it would be good for the county to have this corridor available.

Mr. Brandt stated that if the county doesn't plan for this now and preserve the existing right-of-way, there will be no way to get it in the future under the state's land use system. Mr. Dunckel agreed.

Ms. Lewis expressed support of the request and stated that the commuter rail study proved that if the county is to have viable commuter rail and better freight rail, this is the corridor to use. She said the TSP is a 20-year document with its purpose being long-term planning, and a future rail line would be able to connect with the county's planned multi-modal transit center in McMinnville. She said that she is also excited about the trail for bikes and pedestrians, which is also a transportation opportunity because it would connect the communities of Carlton, Yamhill, and Cove Orchard and provide a safe route for students and commuters.

The motion passed, Commissioners Lewis, George, and Stern voting aye.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Anne Britt  
Secretary

YAMHILL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Chair LESLIE LEWIS

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Commissioner KATHY GEORGE

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Commissioner MARY P. STERN