

SB708 Testimony Before the Senate Subcommittee April 9th 2013

Greetings chair_____ and senators,

I'm Steve Spinnett mayor of the City of Damascus,

I am a proponent of SB708

The Damascus area was brought into the UGB in 2002 and incorporated as a city in 2004 - that's eleven years and counting.

Unfortunately political realities have been ignored in Damascus for too long.

- For example; Last month council ignored our planning commission's recommendation to go with Metro's title three standards on development restrictions adjacent to streams. Council voted by motion for the 100' minimum stream buffer on all streams including seasonal creeks. This is a political stalemate which is a great hardship for the people of Damascus.

The 100' minimum stream setback was a major reason why the voters rejected the comprehensive plan by a 2-1 vote in May 2011.

- Council ignored the planning commission's recommendation, voting for a 25% open space policy on all employment lands - yes, one fourth of all new commercial and industrial lands must have a common area that cannot be used for the intended use of the business. But not to worry - the property owner can make a "payment in lieu of" to the city to develop the open space. Yes you heard it correctly - a property owner can make a "payment in lieu of" just to build on the property that's his or hers in the first place. Again ignoring the political reality of the community.

In 2004 the people voted to incorporate as a city even with the twenty five percent increase in property taxes believing we would have an acknowledged comprehensive plan within four years. But they didn't vote for some of the items I just mentioned.

The people of Damascus need some relief - SB708 gives that.

Perhaps the Damascus experiment also exposes flaws in our state land use policies, SB708 goes a long way towards correcting that.

Allowing the planning authority to go to Clackamas County until the City of Damascus achieves an acknowledged comp plan will also bring honesty to the process locally.

Most likely the ballot in November will include a measure to disincorporation the city, I believe SB708 will help in dissuading the voters to disincorporate.

Metro Title 11 precludes any subdividing below twenty acres, any increase in residential density and any increase of commercial or industrial lands from the time lands are brought into the UGB until an acknowledged comprehensive plan is achieved.

- One property owner has owned 245 acres since 1971, is in his late eighty's, has public sewer and water infrastructure on his property, is on a state highway but can't do a thing with his property.

- Another property owner who is near his ninety's owns 117 acres that has been in his family since the late 1880's, he can't do a thing with his property.

- Another citizen owns thirty acres, wants to subdivide and give his adult children land for development but nope - he can't touch it.

- Countless residential and business owners want to expand, but no, they cant do it.

- The Metro region is in desperate need of industrial lands - Damascus can help provide that.

SB708 is about liberating the citizens, dramatically improving the local economy and holding local policy makers accountable.

I urge you to vote for passage of SB708.

Thank you,