

July 5, 2013

Re: SB 845

Please reject Senate Bill 845 (the "Azalea" bill")

I've been involved in the reserves process over the past four years. I have to say that as a citizen of Washington County, it has been discouraging to see how Washington County and City of Hillsboro has the money to pay lobbyists to go to Salem and Washington D.C. to persuade legislators to vote special legislation in for special interests, overriding the wishes of their residents and citizens in the process.

Washington County and City of Hillsboro officials are very good at lobbying for more land for industrial use. They pay for special studies that purport to show that more farmland is needed to set aside, or land bank, for potential industrial sites. They are good at claiming that they are losing potential companies because they don't have enough land ready and waiting for these unknown but potential buyers.

So I asked the City of Hillsboro Development Department for the reasons why companies gave for NOT siting their companies in Hillsboro. I received a list of about 36 companies (all code-named) for a recent three-year period. And when I delved into the detail, I learned something interesting: **the reasons given for not coming to Hillsboro had nothing to do with land availability.** The top reason given was not enough tax subsidies, the next reason was the economy (the company decided not to expand at that time, or the company did not get the funding it wanted, or it wasn't doing as well as expected). A few companies said they wanted land next to a railroad for ease of loading their goods.

An example of this is Spectra-Watt, in which Intel was a lead investor. Intel GAVE Spectra-Watt 20 acres of land on the north side of US-26 with easy access to the freeway. Spectra-Watt chose NOT to stay in Hillsboro/Washington County/Oregon because they received more tax incentives from the State of New York AND because it cost too much to develop raw farmland. They ended up going to New York into existing facilities there. They had FREE land here but the lure of greater tax subsidies took priority in their decision. Having land doesn't necessarily mean they will come.

Please don't approve SB 845, which will gut our land use process and appears to eliminate citizens' ability to appeal land use decisions. Hillsboro and Washington County are doing quite well by infilling their vacant land with server "farms" and repurposing their vacant manufacturing plants with other companies. Doesn't Washington County have a lower unemployment rate than most of Oregon? How will SB 845 help other cities and counties in Oregon? Why destroy a key feature (land use law) that distinguishes Oregon from the rest of the country only to satisfy a city and county that are already doing quite well attracting businesses?

Respectfully,

Cherry Amabisca, President  
Save Helvetia  
13260 NW Bishop Road  
Hillsboro, OR 97124