

Statement of John Morgan concerning Damascus

The Oregonian published a short story several weeks ago about my resignation as Community Development Director in Damascus. I haven't made a public statement until the end of the four-week notice period I contractually had to give the City. That period and my employment formally ended February 7th.

I went to Damascus as the Community Development Director in January 2012 when the community was reeling from a failed process to create its first Comprehensive Plan. Working with an amazing group of citizen volunteers, a terrific staff, and hundreds of citizens who participated in an extensive citizen involvement process, we were able to successfully create a Comprehensive Plan and land use map, Development code, zoning map, Transportation System Plan, and Public Facility Plan. The work is based on balancing the many interests within the Community to create the framework for an extraordinary city. The City Council is still struggling with adopting those critical documents.

The short story is the work I went there to do is done, although the city still has work ahead of it. This is an appropriate time for me to resign. I am hopeful the citizens of Damascus will finally adopt the plan they created and completed last June and get it acknowledged by the Land Conservation and Development Commission rather than fighting with the state and each other. It is critically important to the citizens and property owners to adopt this work and get on with their lives. Failure to adopt the June plan means many more months of fighting, taxpayer expense, additional elections, and denying the citizens their property rights, which come with being a city.

But for me the time has come to return full-time to my consulting and teaching practice, and the leadership development work of the Chinook Institute of Civic Leadership. My time in Damascus was a huge success in helping the community create the plans for its future, and in my own experiences as part of an incredibly difficult and complex project. I wish the good people of Damascus the greatest of success.