

Opposition to “Red Barn Amendment” to HB 4031A

Testimony to the Senate Committee on the Environment & Natural Resources

February 23, 2018

Submitted by Larry Walker

Thank you Chair Dembrow and members of the Committee. My name is Larry Walker. I’m a resident of Charbonneau, and a member of the Charbonneau Homeowners Association Civic Affairs Committee.

I learned late Wednesday about this hearing, and the potential for a so-called “Red Barn amendment” to HB 4031A that would change the designation of property located at I-5 Exit 282B from Exclusive Farm Use (EFU). **I’m here today to express my strong opposition to any zoning change to this EFU property that would allow for commercial use.**

I’m sure you’re aware that this zoning issue has already been considered by many other legislative bodies. **To date all of these have confirmed that the property is best suited for Exclusive Farm Use, and should remain zoned for that use.** Their judgment on this issue is sound, and to do otherwise would be a mistake.

Amending this bill to allow it to be developed for commercial use is not good legislative policy, especially not in a short session with only a few days remaining before the legislature adjourns. My question is this: Why consider an amendment added with little public notice, and that has already been rejected so many times by other legislative bodies? This seems to be a last-minute end-run to circumvent Oregon’s well-established land use laws, and it violates the spirit of openness and transparency in legislative decision making.

In addition, I have other serious and practical concerns about rezoning the affected property to allow for commercial use.

The entry and exit to and from the property at Exit 282B is on a dangerous, poorly-lighted blind curve on Butteville Road, in very close proximity to the I-5

southbound on-ramp to Salem. At many times, particularly in late afternoon and into the evening, a continuous stream of traffic exits the I-5 southbound off-ramp at Wilsonville Road, and then exits at the T-junction with Butteville Road, located very close to the blind curve where traffic often approaches at high speeds.

This traffic goes many different ways, including to Canby, a nearby boat ramp and marina, homes and businesses along Eilers Road, two golf courses, weddings and events at Langdon Farms, a church, Champoeg Park recreation area, as well as the large residential communities of Charbonneau and Prairie View. It all mixes with traffic coming around the blind corner eastwards to the I-5 southbound on-ramp to Salem, or to the also very busy northbound on-ramp to Wilsonville and Portland. This area is already described as the “I-5 squeeze.”

As if that were not bad enough, all this traffic meets with vehicles going west toward Butteville, or to the I-5 southbound on-ramp to Salem. **The bottom line is that a severe and potentially dangerous situation would be created if the frequent circulation of even more vehicles is added to this mix – and that surely is what would occur should commercial activity be allowed on the property.**

On top of that, development of the property at Exit 282B for commercial use would likely make the current traffic capacity problems on the Boone Bridge just north of the property even worse than they already are. **Those of us who live in the area need a solution to this problem, not another impact on it.**

Finally, the owner of the property at Exit 282B was well aware that it was designated for exclusive farm use when it was purchased. Knowing that, I believe it was acquired with the hope of securing a zoning change to allow for commercial activity, which I noted earlier has been rejected multiple times, and for good reason. There are other sites within the City of Wilsonville that could meet the landowner’s needs.

In this short session, with short notice to the public, minimal time and limited opportunity for public input, I'm asking you to not allow or approve an amendment to remove this one piece of real estate from the carefully developed Rural Reserves in our area. This land is properly zoned as Rural Reserves and should not be Amended in the land use bill you are considering today.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.