

May 20, 2019

House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use

RE: Opposition to SB943

Chairman Representative Clem, Representative McLain, Representative Post, Representative Boshart Davis, Representative Helm, Representative Brock Smith, and Representative Williams,

We urge you to not move SB943 forward. We are currently the petitioners in a Douglas County LUBA case involving a parsonage. We believe that the case should be allowed to go through the legal process before any changes are made to the Oregon statutes to better identify what changes might be needed.

Things are not always as they seem. While the idea of allowing a parsonage outright may seem to be a good idea, there are unintended consequences that need to be considered when locating on exclusive farmland (EFU).

In our case the proposed parsonage is close enough to our vineyard that it is likely to impact the way we farm. Parsonages are not activities like weddings or funerals. A parsonage on EFU is a nonfarm dwelling with nonfarm activities 24 -7. It is relatively simple to schedule farm work around church activities, but the odor from spraying, the dust from tilling, the noises from bird alarms and air cannons used to scare off birds in the daytime and elk at night, as well as wind machines for frost control, are sure to bother the inhabitants of a parsonage. It only takes one unhappy neighbor to create problems for a farmer.

Perhaps the potential for conflicts is the reason that ORS 215.283 and ORS 215.213 only allow churches and cemeteries in conjunction with churches, on EFU lands.

There are other options for the placement of a parsonage without changes to the statutes. If a church wants to locate a parsonage on EFU land, it can apply for a nonfarm dwelling or an exception to Goal 3. Both these processes take into consideration the impacts of a nonfarm use on adjacent farming neighbors.

SB943 would create a loop hole that would allow the siting of a church on EFU simply for the purpose of placing a dwelling that otherwise did not meet the criteria for a nonfarm dwelling. Likewise, there is nothing in SB943 that finds there must be a justification for a parsonage dwelling. For example, it could be a church with only two members that does not hold regular church services and only has congregants from out of the local area that travel miles to a country church.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.



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