

PUBLIC INTEREST

Industrial lands zoning proposal controversial

by John Haakanson

A proposal to re-zone 200 acres of agricultural land for heavy industrial sites is turning into a land use and economic growth battle in Eugene-Springfield.

The site is known as the Awbrey-Meadowview area, situated just outside the existing Eugene-Springfield urban growth boundary approximately one mile northwest of Mahlon Sweet Airport.

Proponents of re-zoning say Awbrey-Meadowview's size and rail access make it highly desirable for recruiting new industries.

Opponents counter that there are plenty of vacant sites zoned for industrial use within the urban growth boundary, and that extending city services would cost tax dollars at a time when the city is facing major budget cuts. They also charge the development would take irreplaceable farmland out of production.

Extending city services to the area would require expanding the existing urban growth boundary, a line drawn around Eugene-Springfield to reflect the land-use needs projected in the Metropolitan Area General Plan.

Expanding the boundary to attract industry and jobs means amending the plan, a step Awbrey-Meadowview opponent Greg Shaver voted against recently in his role as a Springfield planning commissioner.

Planning commissions from Lane County, Eugene and Springfield must all make recommendations on amending the metro plan to the elected officials they serve. Then county commissioners and the city councils of both Eugene and Springfield vote separately on the proposed amendment.

All three elected groups must agree to any changes in the plan, and Shaver is hoping the Springfield council will veto the Awbrey-Meadowview idea, a move that could mean the land will never be re-zoned. Shaver says there is no compelling need for more industrially zoned land in the metropolitan area.

"If no growth means 'no wrong growth,' I'll wear the label with pride," says Shaver, responding to editorial criticism of his vote against the development.

Other opponents of the expansion, like Robert Emmons, see local attitudes about the need for economic development being taken too far.

"The town perceives itself as being down, so people want to go hell-bent-for-leather to get economic development," says Emmons, who works at the city of Eugene's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department.

Those in favor of adding Awbrey-Meadowview "claim it's enough of a plum that we have to have it in our inventory," Emmons says, noting that there are already 3900 acres zoned for industrial use within the urban growth boundary.

One group that would like to see the parcel added to that inventory is the Eugene Chamber of Commerce. Vice President Larry Douglas says adding 200 acres with rail access will let manufacturing firms know Eugene means business when it comes to recruiting.

"It's a very important signal," says Douglas. "It's not going to be the shot heard round the world, but it does address a long standing problem and postures the community to accept and accommodate growth."

Consultant Jim Saul represents the current Awbrey-Meadowview owners, including L.L. "Stub" Stewart, Ehrman Giustina, Robert Booth, Faye Stewart, Dale Fischer and Leo Rickard. Saul agrees with Douglas'

opinion that there are not enough large sites with rail access for heavy industry in Eugene. City planners say the average industrial parcel size in the current inventory is 2.3 acres.

There are five parcels ranging in size from 22 to 64 acres, according to the Oregon Natural Resources Council, but Saul says there is a need for more land with rail service.

"Over the past three or four years I've gotten inquiries for sites of 60 acres or more with rail access," says Saul. "This is not a daily occurrence, but there's enough interest to warrant a legitimate response."

Vicki Dietmeyer, executive director of the Eugene/Springfield Metropolitan Partnership, also sees a need for more land capable of attracting heavy industry.

"We are losing business prospects to other areas," says Dietmeyer. "They have medium to heavy zoned industrial parks with sewer, water, electric and gas service, and rail in place."

However, Eugene City Councilor Cynthia Wooten says some land now zoned for light industry could be re-zoned to attract heavy industry, and she is not convinced the metro plan should be amended to include Awbrey-Meadowview.

"The demand doesn't indicate the need for it," says Wooten. "We're not waiting to re-zone, and we could easily re-zone for heavy industrial."

Another issue that has opponents concerned is the cost of extending city services to the area. Nina Lovinger, who has represented the Oregon Natural Resources Council in its opposition to Awbrey-Meadowview says the move will be expensive.

"It's going to be a taxpayer expense," says Lovinger. "To date we haven't heard much discussion of this from the proponents."

The estimated cost to run sewer service to the site is \$750,000, while city of Eugene transportation improvements would be in the \$750,000 to \$850,000 range.

Purchasing and remodeling the existing Lane Rural Fire protection sta-

tion would cost just over \$1 million, and annual costs for police and fire protection are in the \$1.4 million range.

City planners point out that police and fire services will serve a larger region than just Awbrey-Meadowview, so determining exact costs for that parcel is not possible.

Douglas counters the concerns about costs by stating many services are or will be in the neighborhood because of airport expansion plans. He says the city's tax base will also increase if the area is annexed in the future, and that will bring in more revenue.

Grass seed is now growing on Awbrey-Meadowview, and the area's agricultural use presents another hurdle to re-zoning, since taking farm land out of production requires an exception to statewide land-use planning goals.

"To take land out of farm use, you've got to have a need that says you're lacking other needed acreage," says Springfield's Shaver.

Shaver says the fact that grass seed has now eclipsed wheat as Oregon's number one agricultural crop should be considered in deciding whether to re-zone.

Douglas says the loss of 200 acres won't hurt Oregon's grass seed production capabilities. He argues that some loss of resource land is inevitable as growth occurs.

"It's a natural phenomenon in terms of growth of urban areas," says Douglas. "You're going to encompass some rural lands."

City planner Teresa Bishow says the Eugene Planning Commission's next step is to insure there is evidence that more industrial land is needed before making the re-zoning decision.

"There must be a clear, demonstrated need to amend goal three," says Bishow, referring to the state land-use goal that requires preservation of Oregon's farmland.

The next public hearing on the issue will be before the Eugene City Council on January 11.

City Living has great things:

- Christmas cards and ornaments
- Natural fiber clothing and fun jewelry
- Futons & frames
- Fun gifts

Formerly Paper Traders Annex ... Visit us in our new location!

Clothing Sale: • Paris Blues Denims • Holiday Sweaters
• LA Seats • World Apart Flannel

Christmas Hours
M-F 10-9
Sat 10-6
Sun 11-6

City
LIVING

164 W. Broadway (Downtown Mall) 343-3622



Wise birds do their gift shopping at Made in Oregon



We feature Oregon specialty foods—boxed, in baskets, or by themselves.

Open 10:30-5:30 Mon-Sat
295 E. 5th 343-5051
Daily UPS pickup

MONSTER COOKIE CO.



DECORATED CHRISTMAS COOKIES

- Gift Tins
- Sweatshirts & T-Shirts
New assortment
- Gift Certificates
1 & 2 Cookie
1/2 Dozen & Dozen



5th & Willamette 687-1064



WANTED—WRIST WATCHES

BUYING DEAD OR ALIVE

Gruen, Curvex, Patek Philippe, Hamilton, Rolex, Movado, Moonphase Wrist Watches

ANDERSON WATCHMAKING

1677 Coburg Road, Eugene, Oregon
Inside The Clock Shop—683-1349

Christmas from around the world

Unique gifts for everyone
... sweaters,
jewelry, hats & scarves,
bags, shirts & blouses,
wall hangings, toys,
ornaments and more.
Visit both stores this Christmas!

762 E. 13th
next to the
Excelsior
343-8667

5th St Market
downstairs
683-2204

FOLKWAYS IMPORTS
Natural Fiber Clothing and Folk Art from around the World

Have a ball.
Tai Chi reflex balls stimulate the acupuncture points in the hands and fingers, allowing the body's energy (chi) to flow freely. Get a set and have a ball! Great stocking stuffers.

1030 Willamette Street
342-1762

Hours: Mon-Fri 10-6/Th 10-7/Sat 10-5

NORTHWEST FUTON COMPANY