

Oregon

Questions persist on urban farm tax relief

Lawmakers must resolve conflict over urban growth boundaries

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Legislation providing tax relief for urban farmers has progressed in the Oregon House but concerns about unintended land use effects continue to shadow the proposal.

House Bill 2723, which allows local governments to impose lower property taxes on urban farms, was recent-

ly referred for a vote on the House floor by a key legislative committee.

Despite voting 6-1 for a “do pass” recommendation, members of the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water said questions must still be resolved about the impact of “agriculture incentive zones” on urban growth boundaries.

Under HB 2723, urban farmers in these zones would be subject to lower property tax rates as long as they use their properties for agriculture for five years.

The Oregon Home Builders Association is concerned that landowners who make

such commitments will effectively exclude their properties from residential construction within cities.

The group wants local governments to consider the effect of agriculture incentive zones when deciding whether to expand their urban growth boundaries, but the Oregon Farm Bureau fears this will put development pressure on farmland in rural areas.

The bureau also wants lawmakers to impose a sunset on the program so that it can eventually be re-evaluated, said Katie Fast, OFB’s vice president of public policy. “We feel the need to have a check-back with the legisla-

Lawmakers have attempted to resolve the conflict with an amendment that specifies agriculture incentive zones are a factor in evaluating a city’s potential for future development.

However, state regulators think the provision may clash with other language in the bill that says these zones have no effect on a city’s inventory of buildable lands, said Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem.

Rep. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, said he gave HB 2723 a “courtesy no” so that the bill would not appear to have unanimous support, thereby signaling to the Senate that revisions are still necessary.



Submitted photo

Northwest Farm Mom of the Year Shelly Boshart Davis, of Albany, Ore., with her daughters Kyndall, Ashlynn, Sam and her husband, Geoff.

Oregonian named Northwest Farm Mom of the Year

By JOE BEACH
Capital Press

Shelly Boshart Davis, whose family operates a farm and trucking business in Albany, Ore., has been named the 2015 Northwest Farm Mom of the Year by Monsanto and the American Agri-Women.

Davis, 35, began working on her family’s farm when she was 14 and is actively involved in the operation’s management. The third-generation operation grows grass seed, wheat and hazelnuts on 1,100 acres in the Willamette Valley. It also operates a grass straw baling, trucking and export business.

The contest recognizes the contributions of women in agriculture. She will now compete with four other regional winners for the national title. Davis is involved with a variety of farm organizations, is active in lobbying for industry interests in Salem, and was in the forefront in drawing attention to the impacts of the West Coast port slowdowns on Oregon farmers.

She hopes to use the platform afforded by the award to further her work in bridging the gap between rural communities and urban markets.

“We need to do a better job in telling our story,” she said. “I don’t want to lose that battle.”

Davis is a graduate of Oregon State University. She is active with the Oregon Agri-Business Council, a member of Oregon Women for Agriculture and is on the board of directors of United Way of Linn County.

The farm was started by her grandfather, Merrill Boshart. She helps her parents, Stan and Lori Boshart, manage the business.

Online

Votes for regional winners to be named National Farm Mom of the Year can be cast until May 5 at:

<http://www.americasfarmers.com/recognition-programs/farm-mom-nominees-2015/>

Her husband, Geoff, is general manager of his family’s business, Davis Glass, in Albany.

“He keeps busy with that,” she said. “I’m the farmer of the family.”

They have three daughters — Kyndall, Ashlynn and Sam. Davis said she keeps them engaged in activities on the farm, and informed about the larger issues facing agriculture.

“They just love it, absolutely love it,” she said. “They want to drive equipment. They’re starting to ask questions about what’s being planted in the valley.”

Davis, along with regional winners from the Midwest, Northeast, Southwest and Southeast, were chosen by the American Agri-Women based on 300-word essays written on their behalf. The essays were judged on how they demonstrated the nominee’s support for her family, her community, her farm and of agriculture.

Davis said she was unaware of the recognition program until she was nominated. And while she is active in Oregon farming circles, it was friends and associates outside agriculture who made the nomination.

“That means others are listening to what those of us in agriculture are dealing with,” she said. “That means we’re reaching a larger audience.”



Jan Jackson/For the Capital Press

Children pet a sheep April 25 at Oregon Ag Fest. The event attracted nearly 18,000 visitors to the Oregon State Fairgrounds.

Volunteers, sponsors make Ag Fest a success

By JAN JACKSON
For the Capital Press

SALEM — For the 28th straight year, hundreds of volunteers joined sponsoring businesses and 4-H and FFA members to help Oregon Ag Fest educate thousands of children — and their parents — about agriculture.

In addition to the usual hands-on agricultural experiences such as digging potatoes, planting marigolds to take home and watching chicks hatch, this year’s weekend event included an expanded petting zoo in the animal barn, an accredited llama show and sale and several new sponsors.

Sherry Kudna, past Ag Fest chair and executive assistant to Oregon Department of Agriculture director Katy Coba, spoke about the event April 25 at her station in the Information Booth in Cascade Hall at the Oregon State Fairgrounds. Between fielding questions from volunteers and the public and responding to other requests, she had praise for



Jan Jackson/For the Capital Press

Two-year-old Aubrey Morgan, left and her 5-year-old sister Rylee, learning to use tools in the Home Depot workshop at Ag Fest.

everyone involved.

“We are so grateful to our sponsors and were thrilled to add Franz Bread and Home Depot this year,” Kudna said. “One of the

most popular activities was Home Depot’s kids’ workshop program that first taught the kids about tools and led them through the process of building a miniature tool box.”

But volunteers remain the foundation of a successful Ag

Online

More information:
www.oragfest.com

Fest, she said.

“Among the more than 800 volunteers, we had an increase in Willamette Valley 4-H and FFA volunteers this year. They were a big help, and so professional,” she said.

Between the good weather and coverage from three Portland television stations, she said Ag Fest reached a lot of families.

First-time Ag Fest visitor Jessica Morgan and her husband brought their daughters and made a day of it.

“We are amazed at this event,” she said. “Our girls are 2 and 5. We started with the breakfast and then moved out to the hands-on activities and then out to see the animals. I can see that we are going to be here all day. It is definitely the best family value event around.”

Many of the nearly 18,000 people who attended Ag Fest got their first introduction to agriculture, Kudna said. The event is aimed at educating children but many of the parents learn, too.

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House committee approves \$2 million pesticide measure

Some lawmakers warn against changes to bill

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Farm regulators would receive an additional \$2 million for regulating pesticides in Oregon under legislation passed by a key legislative committee.

The House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources approved House Bill 3434, which funds increased pesticide rule enforcement, despite concerns by some lawmakers over how the money will be spent.

Numerous pesticide bills were considered by the committee this year, including bans on neonicotinoids and aerial spraying, before a work group narrowed down several concepts, including:

- Initiating a review of no-spray buffers by the Oregon Department of Forestry.
- Establishing standard operating procedures for investigating pesticide complaints by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.
- Increasing the maximum civil penalties for pesticide violations by two-fold.

During an April 21 work session, Committee Chair

Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, said these concepts would be taken up in a new bill before the House Rules Committee.

However, the funding component — House Bill 3434 — remained before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, said he was uncomfortable with approving \$2 million in funding for pesticide programs that may be changed by the House Rules Committee.

“They can take your ideas and chose to do whatever they want to do,” he said.

Rep. Gail Whitsett, R-Klamath Falls, said she also planned to vote against HB 3434 for the same reason.

“I don’t know what might happen down there,” she said.

Witt said he was assured the upcoming bill before the Rules Committee would reflect the one agreed upon by committee members and the pesticide work group.

Rep. Wayne Krieger, R-Gold Beach, and Rep. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, said they would give HB 3434 “courtesy votes” but may change their positions depending on what happens with the remaining pesticide legislation.

The committee voted 6-2 to refer the bill to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means with a “do pass” recommendation.