Proposal to rezone 710 acres moves forward

BY BRENNA VISSER CO Media Group

A proposal to rezone 710 acres of north Deschutes County farmland so it can be used for rural housing is one step closer to reality.

Earlier this month, a public hearings officer decided the proposal meets criteria to be rezoned, and recommended approval by the Deschutes County Commission.

The hearings officer ultimately agreed the majority of the soils on the land were poor enough to not be considered profitable farm land.

The 710 acres of land, which sits near Northwest Coyner Avenue, is surrounded by farmland, federal land and some nonfarm dwellings in rural subdivisions.

The applicant, 710 Properties LLĈ, is registered to Robert Turner and Charles Thomas III. They are seeking to change the land to RR-10, which means one home per every 10 acres.

The vision is to create an off-grid, solar powered community of 70 rural, residential homes, according to Mark Stockamp, a representative



for the project. The project is being financed by Dale Stockamp, Thomas, and Turner, who are all associated with 710 Properties LLC and Central Oregonians, he said.

Mark Stockamp said there is one home on the property, and that it is set up to be offgrid, which inspired the idea to make a solar-powered residential development. "We want to create a very low-impact community," he said.

The proposed zone change has drawn ire from groups like Central Oregon LandWatch and neighbors to the area, who fear whatever development the zone change allows would draw down groundwater amid a longstanding drought and disturb wildlife and nearby farming operations

Carol Macbeth, an attorney

with LandWatch, said the organization is disappointed in the decision and will request commissioners reverse the decision.

LandWatch argues the property is agricultural land as a matter of law and should be protected for farm use, not turned into "suburban sprawl." Macbeth said the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the Oregon Department of Fish

and Wildlife and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development all took the unusual step of opposing the proposal, explaining in detail why converting the land in this rural farming community to a subdivision is against the law.

"LandWatch is particularly disappointed in the Hearings Officer's decision because neighboring ranchers testified that they would be interested in purchasing the property or otherwise using it to expand their ranch, and explained in detail why the property is well-suited for ranching, an agricultural use. Speculation in farm and ranch land artificially increases the price of farmland until farmland is priced out of reach for actual farmers and ranchers," Macbeth wrote in a statement.

Stockamp said he and the team behind the project understand the concern about groundwater. Residential use, however, uses less water than an irrigation well would use for farming, which the land is currently zoned for, he said. An analysis the backers of the project have paid for showed

development will interfere with nearby wells by less than 1/2 foot.

"We're Central Oregonians...we are very aware of the water shortage and the current drought," he said.

If the zone change is approved, Stockamp said the team has a plan to improve the land to take out juvenile juniper trees, which dominate the landscape and crowd out food for mule deer, like bunch grass. A consultant also has advised ways to develop a wildlife corridor in conjunction with residential development to help mule deer migrate through the area.

"The public can generally think land is best if it's left alone and nothing happens to it, and I feel like with (the consultant's) recommendations there's a lot of ways to improve it," Stockamp said.

A work session to discuss the proposed zone change is scheduled for June 29, according to Deschutes County Community Development Director Peter Gutowsky.

A public hearing before the commissioners has yet to be set.

Travel

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Through October, Allegiant Airlines has suspended its nonstop flights from Redmond to Las Vegas or Mesa, Ariz., but there is one to Phoenix from Redmond, he said.

When visitors come to the airport they'll find a third TSA line to help move along travelers during peak early morning and mid-day flights, Bass said. In addition, during the pandemic, the airport added 500 more parking stalls.

TSA is looking to hire additional security officers to staff the screening lines, Dankers said. In fact, the TSA and WorkSource Oregon have partnered for a hiring event from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, according to a prepared statement. TSA is offering a starting salary of \$18.59 an hour and \$1,000 hiring bonus for successful applicants.

Nationwide, TSA screens



Andv Tullis

The sign that greets passengers at Redmond Airport. (Andy Tullis/ The Bulletin, file)

an average of 2.1 million travelers a day. Redmond averages about 1,500 a day, Dankers said.

"Over the past several months, we have been preparing for a busy summer travel season. We are looking forward to providing a topnotch screening experience for passengers — both in terms of excellent customer

service and delivering the highest level of security," said TŠA acting Federal Security Director Kathleen McDonald in a prepared statement. "Every traveler can help us carry out our responsibilities by arriving early and prepared for the security screening experience." Reporter: 541-633-2117.

sroig@bendbulletin.com

Wilson

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Wilson claimed self defense, saying the trio initiated the violence and at several points called him a racial epithet. One of the victims, Bates,

can be heard on police body cam footage calling Wilson the N-word. A number of bar patrons

and police officers testified at trial last month, as did Wilson and the three victims.

In arguing for a lighter sentence, defense attorney Katherine Griffith noted the victims' injuries were much less serious than in a typical Measure 11 assault case. The victims received cuts in various places, but none of them required hospitalization: they testified to treating their wounds at home with bandages and super glue. One of them, Gannon, spoke of a scar remaining on his right arm, which Griffith said was far from disfiguring.

Griffith argued the melee was essentially one act, not

three separate violent acts for which Ŵilson should be punished separately.

None of the victims attended the hearing.

At sentencing hearings, judges have more latitude to hear about a defendant's prior criminal behavior. The infamous case of Michelle "Misty" Largo was discussed by prosecutor Alison Filo.

'This is a defendant who out of custody has engaged in extraordinarily violent conduct," Filo told the judge.

In 1992, Wilson and four other men were arrested in the death of Largo, 18. Prosecutors say she was tied to a wheelchair with speaker wire and tortured before being stabbed to death and left in a culvert.

In his first trial, Wilson was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. That conviction was overturned on appeal, and the next trial resulted in a hung jury. On the eve of Wilson's third trial, he accepted a plea deal involving admissions of guilt

to manslaughter and kidnapping. He was released from prison in 2013.

Griffith countered that Wilson's initial conviction for murder was overturned on appeal because the charge did not accurately reflect Wilson's role in the incident, which she said is closer to that of an "assistant."

Filo asked the judge for consecutive sentencing, arguing that each victim deserved recognition.

On Monday, Miller opted to run Wilson's three assault sentences consecutively.

Reporter: 541-383-0325,

gandrews@bendbulletin.com



Ukraine

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What shook her into action is when her father called in a panic and told her to pack a bag and leave Chernivtsi at once.

"He was so scared, because he heard the bombs and he saw the war planes...he was so scared. I was not," Kristina said.

Heeding her father's words, she grabbed documents, electronic devices and anything she knew she couldn't live without, knowing she may never return.

Soon afterward, her uncle picked up her and her sister and took them to a family home in a small village called Nedaboyivsy, about a half an hour from the Romanian border.

The sisters knew their family home was the safest place to be, at least then. The village was far enough from where most of the war was taking place and there was no major infrastructure, airports or military bases for the Russians to

target. "They don't have reason to attack our village," Kristina said. "It is a more safe place, and we have a basement in our house."

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Months of I

Their journey to Redmond

took them first to Poland. After a delayed flight in Poland due to a blizzard, they were able to fly out 24 hours later, reaching the Netherlands. From there the group flew across the Atlantic to Bogota, Colombia. From South America, they flew to Mexico City and then to Tijuana near the border with California.

Because of the sisters' visa status they were not permitted to fly directly to the U.S., so the group had to find a different flight path, and then cross into the U.S. at the border with Mexico. At the time, it was common for Ukrainians fleeing the war to cross into the United States via Mexico, and the group figured they would take their chances before it was too late.

In late April, the United States announced Ukrainian refugees were prohibited from crossing from Mexico as part of a new policy to cut down on the number of Ukrainians seeking to enter the country via the informal route on the southern border, the Associated Press reported.

After masquerading as tourists and then making contact with volunteers stationed in Mexico to assist refugees from Ukraine, the sisters crossed into California via

Calexico.

Once successfully in the United States, they were able to arrange transportation to Sacramento, where the two sisters have relatives. After staving with their relatives for a couple of weeks, they made their final trip up to Redmond where the two sisters are currently being hosted at Steeves' family home.

"Our parents are happy we are in a safe place," Kristina said. "They miss us, but they are glad we are here."

Kristina said she misses Ukraine, her family and her friends, and is not entirely sure when she and her sister will be able to return, as the war is ongoing.

Ira and Kristina said they want people in Oregon to realize the war is still happening and is in fact getting worse.

They said in the beginning many people talked about the war, but now that months have past, it is not discussed as much, which leads people to believe the situation has improved.

It has not, they said. In fact, many innocent people are still dying. People are running out of food and water, and many are unable to leave the country, they said.

In the meantime, while they wait for work visas, they are taking advantage of spring in Bend and exploring some of Oregon's bountiful outdoor beauty. Some things they love about the United States so far is the coffee, and the grand variety of different types of cuisine available. They also like how nice people are, they added. ■ jsiess@bendbulletin.com, 541-617-7820

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