

North Fork 53: Tillamook County has agritourism codes

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downsizing retreats from a potential 25 people to 12 people and restricting the hours of operation. North Fork 53 would have to help maintain the nearby Bridge Lane heading to a gated community and ensure no on-street parking.

"It's partially learning about agritourism, but also finding that balance between what is a commercial use in a residential area," said Gail Henrikson, the county's community development director.

A farm and forest advisory committee — including Edwards — has been working with the county Planning Commission for the past couple of years on rural land use issues such as agritourism, codified in state law since 2011. A recommended code change will likely come before the county Board of Commissioners this summer, Henrikson said.

The couple appealed to the hearings officer to allow events, periodic camping during retreats and their food truck. The hearings officer extended the review period of their application until later this month.

"I feel like what we asked for was pretty small," Ginger Edwards said.

Allowing agritourism in smaller residential agricultural lots is especially important, Brigham Edwards said, because younger farmers often can't afford to buy large farms. The couple made their down payment on North Fork 53 by fixing the property up for the previous owners, he said.

Several vendors, neighbors and others involved in North Fork 53 testified on the couple's behalf at the county hearing.

Teresa Retzlaff, owner of 46 North Farm near Astoria

and a member of the farm and forest advisory committee, said she sees the Edwards' application as a test run for similar operations around Clatsop County. She worries that rejection by the county could set a precedent that neighbors unhappy with an idea can decide what people can do on their own property.

"That bothers me as a small-business owner, as a farmer in this county who's trying to keep a viable rural economic development happening in our area," Retzlaff said.

The struggle of getting approval for agritourism in Clatsop County is particularly ironic for Ginger and Brigham Edwards. Mere hundreds of feet south in Tillamook County, agritourism codes have been in place for several years. Small businesses have popped up throughout the valleys around Tillamook and Nehalem bays, offering consumers a chance to see how food is made.

Food trail

In April, Visit Tillamook Coast launched the North Coast Food Trail, a collection of producers, restaurants and culinary centers stretching from Cannon Beach to Lincoln City.

Nan Devlin, director of the group, said the food trail grew out of farms, ranches, markets, seafood processors, brewers, wineries, distillers, chefs and others in the food industry all wanting a concerted way to highlight their products.

"Agritourism isn't just about coming to look at the cows and plants," she said. "A lot of it is about education. People are very, very interested in how people grow their things, how they adapt to the seasons."



Brigham Edwards tends to part of the garden at the center.

The trail runs north to Cannon Beach, including local restaurants, breweries, bakeries, a cooking school, Cannon Beach Distillery and a local farmer's market. North Fork 53 and nearby grass-fed beef and lamb ranch Meadow Harvest are the northernmost farms on the trail. But with the name North Coast, Devlin said, the hope is to expand into Clatsop County.

"I would encourage the county to revisit their agritourism policies, because farming, it's not a hugely lucrative business," she said.

Farmers work seven days a week and seek out value-added products to help make ends meet, Devlin said. "We want to keep those small farmers in business."



The owners of North Fork 53 planted their first tea shrub, *Camellia sinensis*, several years ago.

Moore: 'This has got to stop'

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Sullivan said Tuesday she is "dismayed" by Moore's comments and described them as unfounded.

"My job as an elected official is to ask questions, which I have done," Sullivan wrote in an email. "My questions are a way to enlarge the public's understanding of how their tax dollars are spent. I feel comfortable with my relationship with county staff and respect the jobs that they do. I am proud of the work I've done as a commissioner and will continue working on behalf of the residents of Clatsop County."

Thompson said it is critical for the county manager to attend board meetings.

"I appreciate Mr. Moore committing to do his job by attending (board) meetings," she wrote in an email. "That is critical if we, as elected leaders, are to do our jobs of providing governance and accountability for the work of the county. I look forward to finding better ways to ensure all of us can do our job effectively in a professional manner."

Financial deal

Moore, an experienced administrator who started working for the county in April 2016, was hired to bring stability after a succession of nine county managers in 16 years. He received a largely positive performance review from the majority of commissioners last year, but private and public clashes between commissioners and county management have been common.

Threatening legal action against the county over commissioners' statements and actions, Moore has asked for a financial deal that would allow him to leave his position, sources said. Officials have not publicly offered specifics about the request.

"If he did make a deal, I wasn't interested in it," Lee said.

Moore, who is budgeted to earn \$157,590 this year, is not entitled to severance pay

in his employment contract if he resigns. But if commissioners fire Moore without cause, he would receive the same rate of pay and full medical benefits for six months.

Both Sullivan and Thompson have repeatedly claimed that commissioners do not have an adequate role in the day-to-day operations of the county. Moore and the other commissioners, in turn, have accused Sullivan and Thompson of attempting to direct the work of county staff, which they say violates the county charter and board policy.

Emails between Moore and commissioners in the past six months — obtained by The Daily Astorian through a public-records request — reveal more than a dozen exchanges that highlight the division.

In a December email, for instance, Sullivan expressed disappointment that she was not invited to hiring interviews for a new community development director. Moore responded by saying it was rare for commissioners in the county's home-rule style of government to be involved in the hiring process of any employee but the county manager.

In other emails, Moore claims that Thompson and Sullivan — to varying degrees — have offered false or misleading information to the public and have made requests of county staff that are beyond their purview. The two commissioners, for the most part, did not respond to any emails in which Moore offered criticism.

Moore announced in an October email that he was eliminating commissioners' interactions with staff altogether, citing numerous complaints from department heads about Sullivan and Thompson.

Another conversation in September centered on an independent behavioral investigation initiated by the county last summer. The investigation found that Thompson, while discussing her dissatisfaction with Moore, acted inappropriately by allegedly placing her

hands on a county employee. Thompson said in a statement that the investigation was an example of why many staffers, due to fears of retaliation, do not share concerns to county management.

Moore then launched an investigation into the allegation, claiming no evidence had been found to support Thompson's claims. He announced his intention to resign over the matter in a Sept. 15 email to commissioners, but he was dissuaded by Lee and Commissioners Sarah Nebeker and Lisa Clement.

'Stop harassing'

Three days after that email, Moore sent another one addressed specifically to Thompson.

"I am extremely fortunate to also have the funds to hire counsel to help me," Moore said in response to a similar statement made by Thompson's attorney. "While I have always encouraged and benefited from honest, thoughtful feedback — positive or negative — throughout my career of almost four decades, I currently find myself in the position of having to respectfully request that you cease making false and defamatory statements regarding my performance as county manager."

Roughly a month later, Lee called for Thompson's resignation over her response to the behavioral investigation and her travel expenses relative to other commissioners.

Then, in an April email, another employee alerted Moore about a "confusing and also concerning phone call" in which Thompson allegedly said she was concerned the employee would "end up in court" and that county management had been sending "threatening emails."

Moore sent an email to Thompson about the incident: "I'm going to make this as simple as possible. Stop harassing members of my staff. Stop undermining the effectiveness of county government operations. Stop making false statements about county manage-

ment. If you bother to listen, I am sure county counsel will advise you that your actions are creating legal liabilities for the county."

Sullivan and Thompson also have often questioned Moore's statements and proposals at meetings.

A recent example came in February when Sullivan proposed adding a letter to minutes from a previous meeting. During the discussion, Nebeker asked Moore for his opinion, but Sullivan objected.

"I would like the commissioners to make the decision," Sullivan said before Nebeker repeated the request. "Well, point of order, he's not standing on this board."

Moore, with a surprised look on his face, paused for a few seconds before saying that he wouldn't be opposed to adding the letter even though it would be an unusual practice. About 15 minutes later, he declined to give a county manager report, typically the last item on the meeting agenda.

"Well, apparently I've said enough, so I don't have a report tonight," Moore said.

Later that week, Sullivan sent an email to commissioners and Moore apologizing for the exchange, which Moore did not accept.

"While some of your comments and behaviors during Wednesday's (board) meeting were disappointing, they were not unexpected. Almost from the time you joined the commission in January 2017 you have treated me with contempt and have demonstrated a high level of indifference to anything I have to say both publicly and privately," Moore wrote in response.

The county manager said he has had to apologize to county department heads repeatedly for how Sullivan has treated county staff both during and after meetings. "From here on I will address every false statement or instance of rude behavior by Commissioners Thompson and Sullivan in an open and public manner. This has got to stop."

Dredging: 'This dredge we have is probably antiquated 30 years ago'

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recommended the Port reconsider the cost of dredging in-house given the new information, and release a bid as quickly as possible to hire a private company for the dredging season between November and February.

Commissioner Bill Hunsinger, a commercial fisherman and former longshoreman, decried how much of the Port's maintenance staff is dedicated in that four-month window to maintaining and manning the dredge instead of docks.

"This dredge we have is probably antiquated 30 years ago," said Commissioner James Campbell, a marine tower and contractor.

Commissioner Dirk Rohne said the Port should see what sort of deals it can get on a longer-term contract, while factoring in staff time

spent on the Felkins. Commissioner Robert Stevens, a retired Coast Guard captain, said some of the Port's customers have complained of slips silting in immediately after dredging.

"These are paying customers who rent the slips, and at low tide they can't get their boats out," he said.

The Port Commission also agreed in a 4-1 vote to sign a letter of support for Christa Svensson, fleet manager for Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Co. and an Oregon candidate for federal appointment to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Hunsinger was the lone "no" vote. The other two candidates for the council are Mariel Combs, legal counsel for ocean advocacy group Oceana, and Bob Rees, executive director of the Northwest Association of Steelheaders, Svensson said.

Cormorants: Two species nest seasonally on island

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seasons, contractors killed adult double-crested cormorants and destroyed their nests and eggs.

"The colony collapsed in 2016 after weeks of relentless shooting of cormorants by government agents and within days of the initiation of nest destruction on the island," Bob Sallinger, the society's conservation director, said in March.

"Despite that fact, the agencies resumed shooting activities in 2017 and less than 500 birds returned to nest," he added. "Instead, tens of thousands of cormorants moved further up the estuary where the Corps models indicated they would eat more salmon than if they had been left alone on East Sand Island."

The Corps blamed the birds' dispersal on predators, particularly bald eagles, which are often seen in the estuary, and were witnessed flushing cormorants at East Sand Island at times, according to the agency's monitoring reports.

Both years, cormorants appeared to move upriver and nested in large numbers on the Astoria Bridge.

Two species of cormorant nest seasonally on East Sand Island. Over the years, the number of double-crested cormorants swelled. The birds threaten juvenile salmon and steelhead runs, the Corps and others said. In 2015, the Corps finalized a management plan with the goal of reducing the colony from over 14,000 breeding pairs to no more than 5,380 to 5,939.