

Zone change sought for farmland

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Bulletin

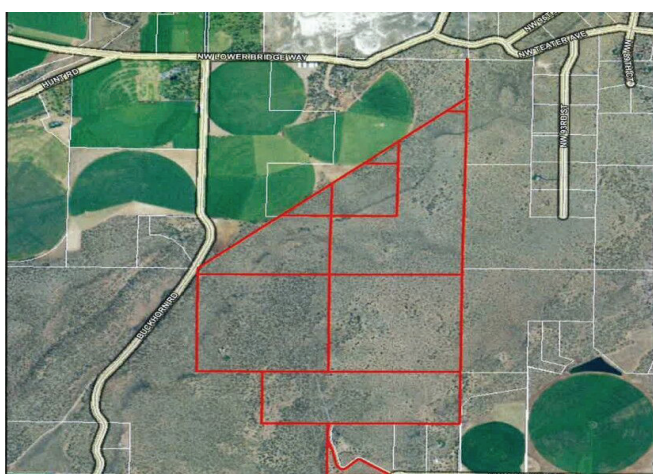
TERREBONNE

Roughly 700 acres of land in north Deschutes County has the potential to be rezoned from farmland to rural housing.

In April, a public hearings officer will evaluate an application to rezone the land, which sits north of state Highway 126 adjacent to Lower Bridge Way and Coyner Avenue. The property is surrounded by farmland, federal land and some nonfarm dwellings in rural subdivisions, according to Haleigh King, a county associate planner.

It's unclear what the plans are for the land, other than a request to change the zoning on all 710 acres to rural residential housing, which allows for no more than one dwelling per 10 acres. But the application has already drawn opposition from surrounding neighbors, farmers and Central Oregon LandWatch, a land use advocacy group.

"This is an irreplaceable



Map courtesy Deschutes County

Roughly 700 acres of land zoned for farming near Terrebonne could be rezoned for rural residential use.

resource we have," said Ed Stabb, who has farmed the land south of the property for roughly 22 years. "It's changing the historical character of Deschutes County."

The applicant, 710 Properties LLC, is registered to Robert Turner and Charles Thomas III, according to the Oregon Secretary of State's Office business registry. Both have Sisters

addresses listed.

Mark Stockamp, a representative for the applicant, declined an interview to answer why the applicant was pursuing a zone change for the land.

"We appreciate the interest in this process and are excited to share more about the project soon," Stockamp said in an emailed statement.

A request to rezone this

amount of land at once is "rare but not unprecedented" in Deschutes County, said Peter Gutowsky, the county's community development director. The next largest example happened in 2018 and 2011, when the Department of State Lands parcel referred to as Stevens Ranch was rezoned in two parts to make up 640 acres.

But some people have raised concerns about the impact a zone change could have on the environment on and around the land. While not officially adopted yet by the county, the 700-acre tract is recognized as mule deer winter migration habitat, said Andrew Walch, a district wildlife biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"Certainly those larger tracts of land provide more space and less disturbance for wildlife, and ODFW and wildlife advocates certainly are concerned every time these large zoning changes happen and divide land," Walch told The Bulletin.

Ben Gordon, the executive

director of LandWatch, said the organization is strongly opposed to the potential rezoning. He argued it will be hard for the applicant to prove this land is no good for agricultural purposes when there are ranching operations next door.

"Because the surrounding lands are being actively ranched, we stand with the farmers and ranchers in that community trying to make a livelihood," Gordon said. "We see this suburban development as a very incompatible use."

For farmers and ranchers in the area, a chief concern is water. Billy Buchanan is a rancher who has raised Wagyu and Angus cattle south of the property for the past eight years.

Buchanan prides himself on providing locally sourced beef to businesses in Central Oregon.

He is worried about what building potentially 70 homes on 10-acre lots will do to an aquifer that he relies on for his farming operations. Several neighbors have already had to drill wells deeper amid a long-

standing drought.

"It does directly affect us," Buchanan said.

Buchanan also argues the land has agricultural worth regardless of irrigation. The land could be used for hay storage, for example, or to give cattle more room to roam to keep them from getting too fat on irrigated pasture.

"If it can be farmable, I feel you should keep those residential areas in other residential areas," he said.

According to Deschutes County records, the applicant argues other than a small portion around a residence, the land is not irrigated, which makes agricultural practices difficult. A soil study shows that 71% of the soil that is deemed generally unsuitable for farming, according to county records.

The applicant says the land has not been historically farmed, at least in the last 20 years, according to county staff.

A public hearing on this potential zone change has been scheduled for April 19.

Politicians pulled left and right in Oregon primary fights

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — As Oregon's political campaigns head into the final stretch before the May 17 primary, candidates on the left and right are working for votes among their ideological base in order to win the closed primaries. With only party members able to vote in partisan primary races, the turnout is usually about half of the general election.

Republicans are seeking votes of Republican activists who won't skip the primary, while Democrats go after the progressive wing of their party who turn out in large numbers for primaries. It's also a time when lesser-known candidates can make a splash and draw the attention of the party faithful. That's been the story in recent days in political action around the state.

Baker City mayor speaks at a right-wing rally in Salem

Baker City Mayor Kerry McQuisten, a Republican candidate for governor, appeared at the Reawaken America rally of radical conservatives on Friday, April 1, near the Capitol in the Salem suburb of Keizer. The event was sponsored by The River Church in Salem, a church active in conservative politics, and held at Volcano Stadium, a former minor league baseball park near Interstate 5.

Originally scheduled to be held in Bend, the event was canceled due to questions involving the enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions at the Deschutes County fairgrounds.

The Salem Statesman-Journal reported Friday that stores at Keizer Station mall next to the ballpark decided to close Friday and Saturday because of the rally and expected counterprotests.



Thielman



McLeod-Skinner



Schrader

the subject of a \$3.7 million lawsuit against the district by the principal of Alsea Elementary

School, who alleges a hostile work environment, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and whistleblower retaliation.

Willamette Week reports Thielman is scheduled to speak on April 15 at a fundraiser for Dan Tooze, a Republican candidate for House District 40 in the Oregon City area. Tooze is a self-described member of the Proud Boys, a group involved in riots in downtown Portland, the Oregon Capitol and the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Tooze has not said he was at any of those incidents.

Reed Christensen, an electrical engineer from Hillsboro, faces federal charges for allegedly assaulting law enforcement officers while attempting to enter the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. Christensen has made his arrest the centerpiece of his campaign for governor, saying he was trying to oppose "tyranny" by taking part in the riot's attempt to stop the count of electoral votes that Joe Biden won the presidential election.

Jo Rae Perkins, a candidate for the U.S. Senate seat held by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, has also taken the QAnon pledge. She was the GOP nominee for the U.S. Senate in 2020, losing to incumbent U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon.

Insurgent Democrat beats incumbent in nod for Congress

Jamie McLeod-Skinner has been endorsed in the Democratic primary for the 5th Congressional District by Our Revolution, a nationwide

network of activists that grew out of the presidential campaigns of Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

McLeod-Skinner, who lives in Crooked River Ranch in Central Oregon, is running in the May 17 primary against U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby. Schrader first won election to Congress in 2008.

But the district was significantly redrawn in redistricting for 2022, shifting to the east, including a portion that crosses the Cascades to take in the northern parts of Deschutes County.

The district includes less than half of Schrader's current constituents.

McLeod-Skinner has campaigned on the theme that Schrader has been a speed bump on President Biden's Build Back Better legisla-

tion of aid for recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"A proud progressive Democrat, Jamie has focused her career on rebuilding communities and protecting our natural resources," the group said in its endorsement statement, released Monday. "Her mom, a schoolteacher, taught her to 'always leave a place better than you found it.'"

Schrader, the most moderate of Oregon's four Democratic members of the U.S. House, has said he supports the party's position in most matters, but is not in lockstep with House leadership. He was one of the few Democrats to oppose the nomination of U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., when she sought to return to the House speakership when Democrats

won a majority of seats in 2018.

The winner of the Democratic primary will face a Republican challenger from a primary slate that includes Bend entrepreneur Jimmy Crumpacker, former Happy Valley Mayor Lori Chavez-DeRemer and Wilsonville physician John DiPaola.

Our Revolution says it is "organizing a down-ballot bench of progressive candidates from city halls to the halls of Congress."

In Oregon, the group helped elect school board candidates in Portland, Corvallis, Salem-Keizer and Centennial.

In areas east of the Cascades, it worked to elect Marcus LeGrand and Janet Sarai Llerandi to the Bend-La Pine School Board.

St. Charles changes visitor policy

Bulletin staff report

BEND — As of Monday, April 4, St. Charles Health System is making a number of visitor policy changes related to COVID-19 in its hospitals.

Visitors to the hospitals will no longer be required to show proof of vaccination, but masks will still be mandatory. New signs will be posted at hospital entrances encouraging certain visitors to leave the building, including people with respiratory symptoms, those with a pending COVID-19 test, or those who have been in contact with a person suspected of having COVID-19 in the past 14 days, St. Charles Health System said Thursday in a news release.

Visitor screening will not apply to those seeking medical treatment or COVID-19 testing.

Another policy change will allow patients who have COVID-19 two visitors at a time. They may come and go



Ryan Brennecke/Bulletin file

An entrance to St. Charles Bend, seen in September 2020.

from the hospital as needed. There will be an exception related to patients in the emergency department, where only one visitor will be allowed.

In some cases, visitors may be required to wear additional personal protective equipment for their safety.

"Two years ago, we instituted visitor restrictions to keep our caregivers and patients safe," said Debbie Robinson, the chief nursing officer at St. Charles Bend. "We're in a different place now. The number of COVID-19 cases and hospi-

talizations are low in our community, and we have vaccines and many effective treatments available."

Door screeners will continue to be posted at hospital entrances through April 8 to help educate the community as the transition unfolds, the health system added.

On Thursday, St. Charles Bend reported eight patients with COVID-19, none of whom was in the ICU.

St. Charles Health System operates hospitals in Bend, Redmond, Prineville and Madras.



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