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LCDC meeting October 19-22, 2010 regarding Rural and Urban Reserves

Public comments regarding Area 93, Bonny Slope West, Rural Reserve designation

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This area was brought into the UGB in 2002. Soon thereafter much of the property was optioned to developers for future building. Planning was supposed to be completed within two years of the decision being final/un-appealable. This deadline came and went. While the developers were pursuing their channels to move the process forward, most landowners stayed active in the process as well, since they had so much to gain and/or lose. A group of landowners from the area met with Mike Jordan of Metro to ask him to force Multnomah County to proceed with the planning. Mr. Jordan asked us to be patient with the process and said that while Metro could file suit to force the process, politically it would be better not to. He said Metro was working with the building community to come up with a funding source to do the planning. That tax was implemented and Metro subsequently funded the planning process for this and other areas that had also faltered.

My contract was set to expire in 2008. With nothing happening on the planning front and the developers losing interest in the area because of the lack of progress, I decided to talk to Multnomah County about developing the property under the current zoning that provided for a "Planned Development". I met with a prominent local architect that had done similar unique planning projects in the area and we came up with what we thought would be a very nice development that had various size lots, housing options and open space. I spoke with a planner named Derek Tokos at Multnomah County about the project. After a few conversations with Mr. Tokos he essentially said not to waste my time trying to push this plan forward and to wait for the Comprehensive Plan process to complete. I told him that I was tired of waiting and that nothing ever seems to happen. He told me that if I moved forward that Multnomah County would just drag out the process long enough for the Comprehensive Plan to be completed and that would end my ability to do the Planned Development. So again I decided to be patient with the process.

Finally in 2009 Multnomah County and The City of Portland did the public meetings to complete the planning process. To my surprise this process went very well. I feel that all of the interested parties were heard and that the plan that came out of the meetings and was recommended to the Multnomah County Commissioners for approval, was something that accurately reflected the desires of the neighborhood. The lead planner for the county, Adam Barber, seems to agree and has been quoted as such in various interviews. Even though the real estate market had tanked during this process it finally felt like we were getting somewhere. Realistically development would still be a few

years away given the timeline for approval and I think most of the landowners were OK with that, thinking the market may be rebounding by then.

Mr. Barber's committee was recommending the plan to be approved by Multnomah County and out of the blue the City of Portland sends a letter stating that they have no interest in providing services to this area since it is not contiguous to the City boundary. Once again the process came to a screeching halt. The timing of this coincided with the Rural/Urban Reserve process that was currently underway. Mr. Barber told me that they intended to wait until this process was complete and that if the eastern portion of Bonny Slope was designated Urban Reserves that that would most likely pave the way for the planning to continue.

Once again I waited through the process. It seemed like a no-brainer to include the Bonny Slope area in the Urban Reserves since it is surrounded by high-density development and is not high value farm or wildlife land. On all of the early maps of the Rural/Urban Reserves it was designated Urban. Then a few weeks prior to the final vote it changed to "under discussion". At that point it started to look like the fix was in. Sure enough after the public comments at the County Commissioners meeting when it was time to vote someone moved to designate it Rural Reserve, a quick second and bingo, we just got the shaft again.

At this point instead of Bonny Slope turning into an infill area that shows the Metro planning process can work, albeit slowly, we are now looking at a situation of ongoing lawsuits and increasing hostility and dissolution towards our local bureaucrats. Is there any government agency that can exercise common sense or have we litigated that out of the system?