



Save Helvetia
SaveHelvetia.org

13260 NW Bishop Road
Helvetia, OR 97124

August 7, 2013

Washington County Board of Commissioners
155 North First Avenue
Hillsboro, OR 97124

RE: Ordinance 771, Natural Features Buffer in North Bethany

cc: Washington County Planning Commission
Washington County Planning Commission staff: Suzanne Savin, Aisha Willits

Dear Chair Duyck and Commissioners,

Over the past 30 years, Helvetia community members have fought many projects that would be detrimental to water quality, soil and farms in this unique area. We have successfully opposed four landfills, two prisons and a lamb carcass dump. Most recently, "Save Helvetia" mobilized significant grassroots support across the entire region to help preserve the Foundation farmland north of US-26 as rural reserve. We have also partnered with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to educate county residents and decision-makers about the importance of preserving this historical and cultural area.

Save Helvetia supporters have testified for years, in many jurisdictions, about the importance of adequate buffers between agricultural operations and urban development, based on the experience of many farmers in the area north of US-26. Inadequate buffers result in expensive and time-consuming problems for farms that diminish their ability to profitably farm their land, including crop contamination from weeds on vacant lots or poorly tended residences to frequent complaints from suburban property owners upset by the effects of farm practices to urban traffic interfering with slow-moving farm equipment.

We oppose the K&R Holdings proposal to remove development restrictions on all steep slopes within North Bethany and support the conclusions in Washington County's DLUT staff's analysis in their 2013 Issue Paper #1. The K&R proposal would eliminate all useful value of the Natural Features Buffer established in Ordinance 739, *which you adopted less than two years ago*. Ordinance 739 was the outcome of five years of stakeholder meetings, community comments, and multiple rounds of Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners hearings during which hours of public testimony were heard and considered. This recent re-opening of the agreement reached in Ordinance 739 shortchanges the extensive citizen involvement that occurred during the five years leading up to its approval. K&R Holdings has not offered any new evidence to support their request, or any new community benefit that

would result from the change - they simply disagree with the decision you reached after that very thorough planning process.

The benefits, however of the “Natural Features Buffer” as approved in Ordinance 739, are many. The current agricultural buffer (the “Natural Features Buffer”) established on the northern edge of North Bethany protects the adjacent farms. While the primary purpose of this buffer is to protect adjacent agriculture (required to comply with Metro Ordinance No. 02-987A), this buffer also happens to provide other value to the community. It helps protect an important wildlife corridor along Abbey Creek (this stretch of the creek is so valuable that it is a target acquisition area for Metro’s 2006 Natural Areas Bond Measure). It also eliminates or reduces landslide risk for property owners in this area, eliminates sewer and stormwater management problems identified by Clean Water Services and provides open space along a community trail. Community members were actively involved in planning the trails in North Bethany through the Stakeholder working groups and open houses. Replacing a significant open space next to the trail with residential development is a type of change that should NOT be made without a new community outreach process.

There is no apparent community benefit that would result from the change proposed by K&R Holdings, only added developer profits. The requirement for this agricultural buffer was established in the 2002 Metro Ordinance, before most developers started purchasing property along the northern edge of North Bethany. K&R Holdings knew a buffer was required at the time they purchased the property.

In conclusion, we support your DLUT’s staff recommendation documents in Long Range Planning Issue Paper #1, to maintain the current development restrictions on North Bethany lands with slopes >25 percent that are located *within* the Natural Features Buffer on the North Bethany Subarea Plan’s Urban/Rural Edge Map in order to maintain the North Bethany Subarea Plan’s compliance with Metro Ordinance No. 02-987A. We hope you will respect the extensive, time-consuming and expensive process that led to Ordinance 739 and keep the “Natural Features Buffer” intact.

Thank you,

Cherry Amabisca, Chair
Save Helvetia Steering Committee