

From: Cherry Amabisca
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Date: May 11, 2010

To: Washington County Chair and Board of Commissioners

Re: Opposition to Proposed Change of Peterkort property from RR to UR

I would like to register my opposition to the proposed change from Rural Reserves to Urban Reserves of the 129 acres owned by the Peterkort family and approved by the Planning Commission on April 21, 2010.

A key principle in Core 4 discussions throughout the Fall of 2009 was the consensus that the Rock Creek flood plains serve as an effective natural buffer/edge for adjoining farmland and that urbanization and development NOT extend north of the Rock Creek flood plains. For that reason, a number of groups endorsed this area as Rural Reserves: The State Agencies, MPAC, Core 4, the Agricultural and Natural Resources Coalition, the Washington County Farm Bureau, Metro and you, the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

The real reason that Urban Reserves is being requested for the Peterkort property is money. There is not enough funding for roads to get people into and out of North Bethany. Urbanizing the 77 acres of buildable land on the Peterkort property would facilitate the funding of the transportation system link. Given the botched planning that has occurred throughout the North Bethany build-out, how can taxpayers be sure it's right this time?

The 77 acres that are developable are on the far side of the North Bethany urban area - to the north and west of the Rock Creek flood plains. After taking into account that 50% of a development goes into roads and other infrastructure, we are left with 38-acres for homes. Isolating this 77 acres for urban development will create a tiny island north of the Rock Creek flood plains. This is not good planning. It is planning out of desperation. It harms the ecological value of the wildlife habitat for the Roosevelt elk herds and the steelhead that are found here.

The Peterkort family has offered to donate the easement of 3,600 feet of sewer trunk line, easement for Road A and the 52 acres of flood plains for wetland mitigation ONLY if they get their property designated as Urban Reserves. They rightfully know that land designated as Urban Reserves is worth a whole lot more money to them than if it remained in Rural Reserves. If the county designates their property as Rural Reserves, the owners will not cooperate and the county will have to pay for these easements.

The sewer line easement and the road easements to support North Bethany can be done in Rural Reserves - that's what plan amendments are for. Adding an isolated island of development north of the floodplains is bad for the environment, it's bad for the wildlife corridor, it's bad for the taxpayer. It's very good for the Peterkorts and it's convenient for the county. Your vote will tell us which side you are on.

North Bethany has been a nightmare - are we prepared to continue that nightmare with a new problem called "West Bethany"?

the threat of non-cooperation by the owners makes county staff decide that adding this property to an urban reserve is necessary and appropriate.

So, why is designating the Peterkort property as Urban Reserves critical to providing urban services to North Bethany? The sewer line easement and the road easement can be done in the context of Rural Reserves - Urban Reserve designation is not necessary.

The Peterkort property serves as an important wildlife habitat: Herds of Roosevelt elk range throughout this part of the wildlife corridor. Steelhead inhabit the part of Rock Creek that is found on this property. The ecological value of the 52-acres of Rock Creek flood plains is The stretch of Rock Creek is steelhead bearing stream. Taking 129 acres of foundation farmland, wildlife habitat and floodplains gets Washington County out of a bind created by inadequate planning for transportation funding of North Bethany.

County staff admits that this property qualifies for both rural reserves and urban reserves. However, their recommendation is weighted more heavily toward urban reserves - not because this property meets the factors for urban reserves but because