

Friends of French Prairie

Friends of French Prairie
is an Oregon non-profit corporation

PO Box 403 | Donald, Oregon 97020 | www.friendsoffrenchprairie.org



March 13, 2019

House Committee on Judiciary;

We write in support of House Bill 2353 to require response by State agencies to public records requests within 15 days. This bill is exceedingly important to address the chronic pattern of the slow to no response to records requests by multiple State agencies that has been documented by The Oregonian and other media in the State. The scope of this legislative action, to authorize the Attorney General, district attorney or court to award penalty to public records requester plus reasonable fees if a public body fails to respond or unduly delays is long overdue.

Friends of French Prairie has had its own multi-year experience with the Department of Aviation, characterized by no response or at best slow response to any requests. After two years of no response to general inquiries about the status of the Master Plan for the Aurora Airport, our attorney submitted a letter addressed jointly to Martha Meeker, Chair of the Aviation Board and Betty Stansbury, newly appointed Director of the Dept. Of Aviation (delivered by registered mail) on January 28 that asked the following questions:

- Has a draft master plan for the Aurora State Airport been submitted to the State Aviation Board for approval & adoption?
- Has the Board in fact adopted or approved a master plan for the Aurora Airport? If so, when?
- If no master plan has been submitted to the Board, what is its current status?
- What is the status of the Department's state agency coordination efforts with respect to the master plan? Have these been carried out? If not, how and when will they be carried out and completed?
- What citizen involvement efforts have been undertaken with respect to the master plan? What further citizen involvement efforts are planned or being planned?

As of this date we still have no response to the letter.

On February 26 I met in person with Betty Stansbury, and we discussed many problems with the Aurora Airport over the last decade and specifically discussed the questions asked in the letter sent on January 28.

Because Ms. Stansbury was just coming into her new role, on Feb. 28 I sent her a copy of the letter by email. As of this date I have had no reply. The lack of response to a correspondence that asked basic questions about an agency's process and practice has forced us to file a formal Public Records request.

Documents and decisions such as these effect the lives of Oregonians and State agencies who are in place to protect and serve the citizens need to be responsive in a timely manner to requests for documents that are "public record" and must be held accountable for failure to provide them when requested.

Sincerely



Benjamin D Williams

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