



Save Helvetia
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2 March 2021

Chair Julie Fahey
Honorable Members
House Committee on Housing

Re: HB 3072 - For a hearing on March 4, 2021
Workforce Housing outside the UGB

Testimony in OPPOSITION

Chair and Honorable Members,

Save Helvetia is a private non-profit advocacy organization that has been working for the past decade to protect farmland in Washington County. Many of our Board have been active in related efforts for many years prior to our formal organization in 2010. Save Helvetia was formed during our urban and rural reserves process.

We studied the ORS (SB 1011) and the associated OARs and applied our citizen science to our Greater Helvetia area, north of Highway 26 and the City of Hillsboro. We testified some 35 times at Washington County and to Metro. We earned standing in so doing. In that we determined that Washington County and Metro had substantially strayed from the rules, we appealed to the State Court of Appeals.

Pending the court ruling, we remained willing to negotiate a settlement with Washington County but our overture was rejected. The court eventually ruled that the

county plan was illegal, founded on “pseudo factors” the county had created outside of the ORSs/OARs.

This was the basis for our appeal. The county was faced with redoing the process or joining the legislative “Grand Bargain” of HB 4078. The end result was the bipartisan and unanimous approval of HB 4078 and the governor’s signing it into law. This was to be a one-time-only legislative land use and all stakeholders were required to so stipulate. We incurred \$60,000 in legal fees and expended 10,000 hours of volunteer time. And we proved right in our appeal. We earned our credentials.

Within this context, Save Helvetia voices strong opposition to HB 3072. HB 3072 would upend the urban and rural reserves settlement in Washington County and urban and rural reserves elsewhere. The reserves process and the enabling legislation were said to promise certainty for both farmers and developers. This would take certainty away. HB 3072 would put willing sellers in the drivers seat of Oregon’s land use. Market pricing and developers would become the drivers of sprawl and farmlands would be steadily eroded.

It would do away with any assessment of need currently required for land use planning. The county as local land use planning authority and the Metro role of review are usurped. Will we get a tax rebate? I don’t think so.

HB 3072 would bypass the Goal One requirement for citizen involvement throughout. It also does away with rights of appeal. Back to the wild west!

HB 3072 makes the legislature a quasi real estate broker. We understand a local developer has signed contracts for nearly 2,000 acres of rural reserve farmland should he succeed in flipping the land to urban reserves.

The development of “workforce housing” is laudable and cities should be working on that objective within their urban growth boundaries for the provision of urban services at an economy of scale that planned land use leverages.

HB 3072 does nothing to define commercial development related to workforce housing. The City of Hillsboro has taken designated industrial land and subsequently allowed Top Golf, K-1 Speed (go cart operation), and fast food operations onto it. What was once touted as “job land” is now being taken up with data farms that employ few staff while accessing all the “job land” subsidies.

Good planning can include the use of “buffers” and “hard edges” to help delineate urban from rural, farm from industrial. HB 3072 could readily put concrete sidewalks in proximity to plows, streetlights in proximity to crops, spraying in proximity to residential, and dust/pollen in proximity to high tech clean rooms.

Our Oregon system of land use has become an Oregon Treasure for the entire state and is withstanding the test of time. As you apply the balancing test, keep in mind that the workforce housing does not require you to pit this Oregon Treasure against affordable housing. Help cities work within their urban growth boundaries to stimulate that development in innovative ways.

There are pilot projects underway in Redmond, Bend, and perhaps Pendleton to develop affordable housing on designated 50 acre expansions. Let these field trials ripen and come to fruition and then we might have some improved guidance.

Respectfully,

Cherry Amabisca
President
Save Helvetia

Robert Bailey
Corporate Secretary
Save Helvetia