

Thanks For A Job Well Done!



A Message From The Coalition For Agriculture's Future



The Canyon County Planning and Zoning Commission has done its job and it has done it exceedingly good. And that deserves a special note of thanks from all of us.

The Commission voted unanimously – twice – to deny a conditional rezoning request that, if approved, could have led to yet another harmful spot development smack dab in the middle of agricultural land. The decision demonstrates a forward-looking, thoughtful approach to growth and development that is hopefully a sign of things to come.

The proposal, by J.A.P.S. of Idaho, LLC, would have authorized 107 residential lots on a 364-acre parcel of land near Goodson Road. The project was originally approved in 2007 via a conditional use permit, a discredited zoning process now known to be at the heart of the many unfinished, failed or abandoned residential projects scattered throughout the county.

The proposal also asked for an unlimited time to actually do the project. In other words, a blank check that would have created a perpetual island of residential zoning in the midst of productive agricultural land.

The Commission also clearly recognized that the parcel of land was miles from the nearest organized community, a clear contradiction of the universally accepted growth management principal that says development must grow out from towns and cities to prevent spot development.

The J.A.P.S. of Idaho owner/manager characterizes the land as being “not prime farm land worthy of preservation,” yet admits there is farming “to keep the weeds down” on 117 acres. He notes it is located within a mile of at least 13 other subdivisions with 167 lots yet does not acknowledge the on-going agricultural operations on the land which completely surrounds the parcel.

We've heard the “not prime farm land” argument used for the past two decades to justify plopping a residential subdivision down in the middle of agricultural land. What we've learned is that once the spot development is in place, its presence is then used as the justification to turn the surrounding agricultural land into even more residential or commercial projects immediately adjacent. And more Ag land vanishes forever.

We must never forget this one important fact: Once rezoned, the land will never again be used to support Canyon County's agricultural economy, even if the project fails. A pickle can never again be a cucumber.

The members of the Planning and Zoning Commission clearly understood these facts and did not waiver in their decision to responsibly perform a valuable public duty. That is a refreshing change from so many examples in the past where development at all costs was the rule of the day.

We have not always agreed with the decisions made by the P & Z Commissioners – and we have said so. This latest decision is not only heartening, but also perhaps an indicator that a “business as usual” approach to land use issues, which has badly hurt Canyon County's agricultural economy, will no longer apply. And for that fact alone the Commissioners have earned the grateful thanks of our Coalition and the citizens of Canyon County.

The Coalition for Agriculture's Future is formed from 30 of the area's largest agri-businesses, financial institutions, ag-related associations and other companies and individuals with agricultural interests in the Treasure Valley. You can learn more about the Coalition and the issues with which it deals by visiting our web site:

www.agriculturesfuture.org