Wasco County Planning Department
"Service, Sustainability & Solutions"

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The Wasco County Planning Department

Issue: #3 **January 2012**

Dear Brenda,

In early January, I had the opportunity to give the monthly presentation at The Dalles Chamber Power Breakfast. It was a tough topic and presentation to prepare for, considering the subject: What should we expect in terms of future land use, growth and development trends in Wasco County? Until you really look at key numbers, facts and demographics, the answer to the question is anyone's guess.

The data, however, shows some important trends, in particular: the county's population is steadily growing (particularly those age 65+); the land use development pattern isn't likely to change (i.e., distinct rural and urban land use pattern); and farm sizes and types in the county will continue to vary considerably. Moreover, there will be continued pressure to rezone agriculture and forest lands to allow for increased residential use. Conflicts between farm and urban uses will invariably surface, as the need to fairly balance both interests will continue.

To navigate the future, we'll all need to continue with our good leadership, conscientious decision-making, and ongoing openness to positive changes. Being a planner in this county is exciting. And your being involved with planning for the future is critical. Together, we must be invested with the issues that arise, as well as how we need to embrace the inevitable changes and transition.

As stated by Patrick Henry, "I know of no way of judging the future but by the past." Wasco County's had a pretty solid, stable past, but the road has been rough at times, too. That said, we're 'looking forward' at the planning department, in part, by learning from the past. It's best to keep positive, productive and proactive as we plan for the future of Wasco County. I hope you'll feel welcome in joining me as we pursue these endeavors.

Thanks,

has provided this electronic newsletter free of charge. The items contained herein are published as submitted and are provided for general information purposes only. Readers should not rely solely on this information, but should make their own inquiries before making any decisions.

We work to maintain up-to-date information, however, no responsibility is accepted for any errors or omission or results of any actions based upon this information. If you have any questions regarding any of these items, contact the organizational representative of that source/information.

John Roberts, AICP
Planning Director

PLANNER SPOTLIGHT

Near the summit of Mt. St. Helens

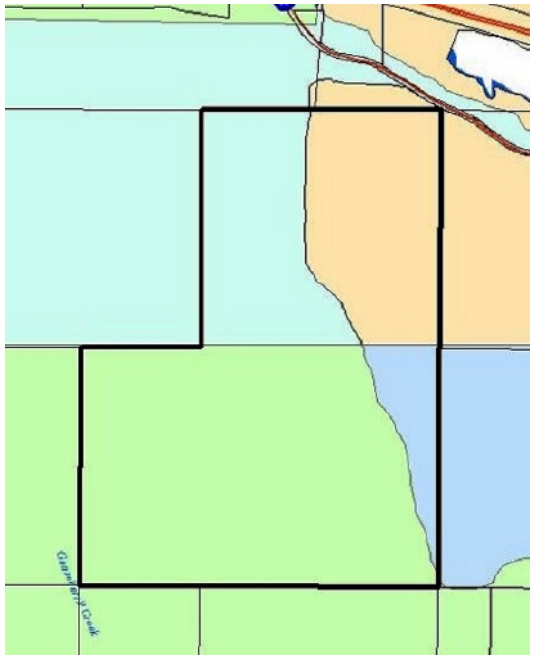
There are a couple of new faces at the Wasco County Planning Department. As many of you know, John Roberts was hired as the new Wasco County Planning Director last spring. But in August, the County also hired a new Associate Planner, Joey Shearer. Joey is a fifth-generation Oregonian who joined the Planning Department after finishing a Masters Degree in Urban & Regional Planning at Portland State University. Prior to graduate school, Joey spent four years working with a developer and homebuilder in Central Oregon where he saw firsthand the importance of smart land use planning.

In addition to assisting customers at the front counter, Joey is reviewing land use applications, helping to update the comprehensive plan, publishing the Planning Department's newsletter, and working to improve the Planning Department's processes. He is motivated to help people negotiate an often complicated land use ordinance and development review process.

ILLEGAL PARCELS

Whenever the Planning Department receives a land use application, one of the first steps we have to take is determining the legality of the parcel. Per Section 1.090 of the land use and development ordinance, a parcel is determined to be legal if it was created through one of three ways:

1. a duly recorded partition process OR
2. a duly recorded subdivision OR
3. a deed or sales contract prior to September 4, 1974



September 4, 1974 is the date on which partition laws are recognized to have come into effect throughout Wasco County. Any parcels created by deed or sales contract before this date are considered grandfathered in to the current land use system. Unfortunately, we frequently come across properties that were created illegally - - typically in the late 1970s or early 1980s -- when the county's land use laws were still relatively new.

Take, for example, a farmer in 1977 who owns 400 acres and decides to deed several 30 acre portions of the property to family members without going through the required partition process. Today, the people who own those 30 acre parcels cannot develop their property because their property was not legally created. They cannot build, renovate or replace any structures on the property.

So what can you do if you own property that may have been created illegally?

The state legislature attempted to offer relief to people caught in this unfortunate situation via House Bill 2723, which went into effect on January 1, 2008. House Bill 2723 essentially allows you to trace an illegal property back in time to the date it was created and examine the zoning at that time to determine if it *could have* been created legally through the county's process.

Unfortunately, the HB 2723 process does not work for all illegal properties, and even when it works it can be cumbersome. Most importantly, do your due diligence before purchasing or transferring property. Check with the title company to make sure there's a deed for the property recorded before September 4, 1974 AND the legal description matches exactly the legal description on the current deed. If no such deed exists, check with the Planning Department and confirm a recorded partition or subdivision created the parcel legally.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

Here are a few important upcoming (and recently past) dates. Please visit the Planning Department website for further details.

January 4 - Wasco County Board of County Commissioners hearing on proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments

January 18 - Wasco County Board of County Commissioners hearing on proposed Energy Ordinance Update
- **POSTPONED DUE TO WEATHER**: new date TBD
- Overview of Proposed Changes and FAQ

January 20 - Association of Oregon County Planning Directors meeting in The Dalles, OR

GOT A TOUGH QUESTION? ASK US!

If you have a question about anything in this newsletter, or if you have a general question about zoning, developing your property, floodplains or any other planning-related question, please let us help. You can send your questions to wcplanning@co.wasco.or.us. We will research your question and help you find the answer.

Please pass along this newsletter to anyone who may be interested in planning, land use and development in unincorporated portions of Wasco County. Archived editions of the newsletter will be posted to the Planning Department website. To subscribe to the newsletter, please click the "Join Our Mailing List!" button in the sidebar running down the left side of the newsletter.

Sincerely,

The Wasco County Planning Department

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