



**Wasco County Planning Department**  
 "Service, Sustainability & Solutions"

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## CONNECTIONS

### Bridging the gap between community & planning

**In This Issue**

**ENERGY - HOW DID WE GET HERE**

**ENERGY - WHERE WE ARE TODAY**

**IMPORTANT DATES**

**TOUGH QUESTIONS?**

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**Quick Links**

**Newsletter Archive**

**Wasco County Planning Home**

**Wasco County Home**

**Issue: #4**

**March 2012**

**Dear Brenda,**

Over the past couple of months, the planning department has been witnessing some significant "winds of change." (Some pun intended!) Specifically, the department has been working hard to coordinate materials and meetings to adopt a rewrite to Chapter 19 of our Land Use and Development Ordinance, otherwise known as the "Energy Facilities" or "Wind Energy Ordinance."

It's clear in our public hearings, and actually exciting to witness, just how diverse the opinions and feelings are regarding the regulations that would allegedly govern wind turbines. Opinions differ over the gamut of proposed regulations - from aesthetics and noise to economic opportunities, financial challenges, logistical concerns, and even what's the easiest, smartest, fastest approach. The reality: No set of regulations will likely please everyone, so we all need to prepare for that fact. Such is planning, such is life.

In developing and adopting these regulations, there are many things the community and decision-makers need to weigh and balance. The hardest part of this process is probably trying to figure out how to balance competing interest and values, while still providing the chance for successful renewable energy projects to establish themselves in the county. Doing this right and doing it well presents a golden opportunity for Wasco County and the region, and will help our community become more economically sustainable.

There are no easy solutions or answers. However, our department is committed to finding the best solution based on all the facts, points and suggestions we can collect. Our team is all about identifying problems and finding solutions, whether related to wind energy, customer service, development review processes or our land use ordinances.

So if you care about how Chapter 19 and the energy facilities regulations will play out, try and find time to attend our [Open](#)

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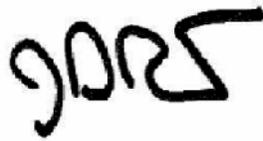
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We work to maintain up-to-date information, however, no responsibility is accepted for any errors or omission or results of any actions based upon this information. If you have any questions regarding any of these items, contact the organizational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

[House](#) from 8:00-8:50am on Tuesday, March 20th in Room 301 (Circuit Courtroom) at the County Courthouse. The Open House precedes the next public hearing on Chapter 19 before the Board of County Commissioners. Who knows? You might offer a great suggestion that could "blow us away"!

Thanks,



John Roberts, AICP  
Planning Director

### ENERGY - HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The Planning Department started the process of updating the County's energy-siting regulations more than three years ago. The public process started in February 2010, when volunteers from the community and various agencies related to alternative energy started meeting on a monthly and then bi-monthly basis. These volunteers formed two groups - the Commercial and Noncommercial Advisory Committees - and were brought together to draft amendments to the energy-related sections of the Wasco County Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use & Development Ordinance (LUDO), primarily Chapter 19.



On May 3, 2011, the draft amendments were submitted to the Wasco County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission held two public hearings reviewing updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Chapter 19 of the LUDO. These hearings were held on May 3 and June 7, 2011. During the June 7 hearing, the Planning Commission recommended that the

Board of Commissioners adopt their proposed updates to the Comprehensive Plan and LUDO.

During this time, the Oregon Health Authority was developing a statewide Health Impact Assessment related to wind energy. Commissioner Scott Hege participated in this state process by sitting on the steering committee that helped guide the assessment. Consequently, it was determined that the responsible next step would be waiting for the results of the Health Impact Assessment before taking up further consideration of the county's energy updates.

On December 7, 2011 and January 4, 2012, the Board of Commissioners held public hearings on the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, and at the conclusion of the January 4 continuation hearing voted in support of the amendments. Then on February 15, the Board of Commissioner held the first public hearing to discuss the proposed updates to Chapter 19 of the LUDO. Todd Cornett, the former Wasco County Planning Director now with the Oregon Department of Energy, presented an overview of the proposed changes, and then more than a dozen Wasco County residents stood up to share their comments.

## ENERGY - WHERE WE ARE TODAY

At the conclusion of the February 15 hearing, the Board of Commissioners continued the public hearing to March 20 in order to give more county residents an opportunity to share their thoughts and comment on the proposed amendments. All in all, since the first Planning Commission hearing on May 3, 2011, the County has received more than 75 official comments. The majority of comments surrounding the February 15 hearing centered on the proposed setback requirements for wind energy facilities. To this end, the Planning Department has prepared maps and handouts clarifying the proposed setbacks and illustrating what they will look like if implemented in Wasco County.

To summarize, there are [three "primary" setbacks proposed](#) for commercial wind energy facilities:

- In **RESIDENTIAL ZONES** ("Non-Resource," i.e. R-R, A-R, F-F, etc.) setbacks are **1 mile (5,280 ft) from property lines**. Commercial turbines are not permitted in residential zones, though their support facilities are.
- In **FARM and FOREST ZONES** ("Resource," i.e. A-1, F-1, F-2) setbacks are **2/3 miles (3,520 ft) from dwellings**. An adjustment provision may reduce this distance for consenting property owners.
- From **INCORPORATED CITIES** (Antelope, Shaniko, Maupin, Dufur, Mosier and The Dalles) setbacks are **3/4 miles (3,960 ft) from city limits/urban growth boundaries**.

For [more information about these setbacks](#) and other

regulations affecting the siting of energy facilities, please review the [Proposed Chapter 19 "Standards for Energy Facilities,"](#) support maps and materials created by the Planning Department, and come to the Open House on March 20.

## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

Here are a few important upcoming dates. Please visit the [Planning Department website](#) for further details.

March 20 - [Open House on proposed Chapter 19 Amendments](#)  
8:00-8:50am, Circuit Courtroom #301, Wasco County Courthouse, 511 Washington Street, The Dalles, OR 97058

March 20 - Wasco County Board of County Commissioners hearing on proposed Chapter 19 Amendments  
9:00am, Circuit Courtroom #301, Wasco County Courthouse, 511 Washington Street, The Dalles, OR 97058

## 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](mailto: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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