



**Linn
County**

NEWS



Contact: Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, 541-967-3825 or email: apaul@co.linn.or.us

Commissioners OK 1-mile setbacks for CAFOs

ALBANY — Tuesday morning, Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker took a major step toward defining where Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) can be built in Linn County, approving a code text change that will require a minimum one-mile setback from property lines on a property where new large CAFO's may be sited.

The code text amendment follows new state regulations and a three-quarter mile setback recommendation by the Linn County Planning Commission.

The regulations will only apply to new large CAFO permit applications and are not retroactive. Specifically, the issue is the proposed development of large-scale chicken farms that produce millions of birds per year in confined buildings.

Families in the Scio area have adamantly opposed two such large-scale chicken farms in recent years. Several spoke during Tuesday's public hearing. Although they supported the proposed three-quarter mile setback, several added they actually preferred a one-mile setback.

Among their issues is the protection of drinking water, local rivers, odors, ammonia emissions and proposed facilities being close to a local elementary school and church.

One person called the proposed setback a "good guardrail" against the large farming operations owned by hedge

funds that make profit a priority over lifestyle.

Some of those who testified fought back tears as they talked about their farms, whether they are relatively new to the area, or are living on land owned by their families for five generations.

They suggested such large-scale operations need to be developed in more open country, not where families are more closely bunched like the mid-valley.

The Planning & Building Department also received numerous letters during a public comment period. All of them supported expanding the county's setback rules.

Board Chairman Nyquist said he asked the county GIS (Geographic Information System) Department to outline how many properties in the county could be used for a CAFO with a three-quarter mile setback in place. There are about 360 such properties.

He also asked how many properties would work within a one-mile setback. There are about 89, so the new rules would not ban CAFOs, they are an outright use within land use regulations.

Commissioner Tucker made a motion to approve a three-quarter mile setback, but after discussion, that motion failed. The commissioners then discussed the benefits of a one-mile setback and all

voted in favor of a motion made by Commissioner Sprenger.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved a Plan Text Amendment for five acres of property near Harrisburg for development for a ready-mix concrete batch plant.
- Approved sending a letter of support to the Marion County Board of Commissioners for an expansion project by Santiam Hospitals and Clinics in Stayton. Many residents who live on the north side of Linn County, such as the Mill City area, utilize Santiam Hospital in Stayton.
- Assigned proxy votes for the upcoming meeting of the Association of Oregon Counties to Commissioner Tucker.
- Were informed by Planning & Building Director Steve Wills that there were 216 total non-structural permits issued in November. There were three single-family permits, three manufactured homes and 19 additions or alterations.
- Announced the planned Dec. 26 Board of Commissioners meeting will be rescheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 27 due to the Christmas holiday weekend.

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