

Polk County Forestland Classification Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2010

9:00 – 10:55am

Oregon Department of Forestry, Dallas Office

Meeting called to order by Terry Lamers (Chair) at 9:00 a.m. on March 9, 2010, Oregon Department of Forestry, Dallas Unit, 825 Oak Villa Rd., Dallas, OR

Members in attendance: Don Duhrkopf, Terry Lamers, Tom Parsons, Jeff Classen and Brad Withrow-Robinson.

Quorum present.

Agenda

1. Review Draft Minutes from last meeting, and approve.
2. Review outcomes of two Public Information Meetings in February. Is there need for additional public information meetings?
3. Discuss need for revisions to the Classification.
4. Determine committee's next steps.
5. Other

1. Minutes of February 8, 2010 meeting reviewed. Minutes accepted with small clarifying revisions.

2. Recapped the two meetings. Buell meeting attended by two citizens, with a generally positive discussion. Falls City meeting attended by 9 citizens. The tone at Falls City meeting more antagonistic. Several people were vocal in their opposition, feeling that they were already covered by the City Fire Department, and that this was an additional and unnecessary added tax. Also, an unfair, unequal tax on small landowners. One person spoke in favor, a number made no comment. Other issues that came up included mustering time for the volunteer crew versus the ODF and dwindling number of volunteers in both communities. Nature and extent of Mutual Aid. Also the poor economic conditions.

Terry Ney, Chief of Sheridan, Bob Young, Chief of Falls City FD attended, generally supportive.

Jeff gave a recap of what is happening in Benton County. After the letters were sent the Philomath ODF office received nearly 200 phone calls. 140 appeared at the public hearing at the fairgrounds (date). 30 people testified, all but one in opposition. A lot of emotion. Venting of emotion. Main complaint was that they were unaware of the process before the letter informing them of the change. Other was that the assessment was unfair, aimed to

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protect forests in other areas rather than local homeowners. Don asked about comments on the process. Few comments there, except folks felt that the definition of Forestland was way too broad. That neighbors on one side of the road versus the other fell in different categories. Otherwise no.

Tom wondered how we could improve the informational process (in hindsight, or yet in the process). An opportunity would have been to put a small explanation of the process in the tax bill. Could still be done for future annual meetings. Options for the current process include: another visit to the Falls City, City Council, including Fire Chiefs; a more lengthy article ahead of another informational meeting.

Terry suggested a 3rd meeting in Dallas, with an informative press release. Facts of process, 12 open process meetings, two informational meetings, some public concern/confusion. Needs to be in more than just the IO, (Statesman - Polk Today). Get fire chiefs to help. Rod Nichols.

3. Many of the comments at the public meetings dealt with matters beyond the mission of the Committee, the committee remains confident in the process followed, and the general outcomes. Falls City comments while not favorable, did not address. And finally, given that we will have another informational meeting, would be premature.

4. Next Steps

- Committee directed Jeff to see about beginning the process of having the ODF begin determining the change of status for parcels, leaving the Falls City area to last, if possible. If we do not begin soon, may lose access to State resources to do this until after fire season. Want to proceed.
- Jeff to work with Rod Nichols to draft a press release
- Schedule time and location of next information meeting. Need press release out at least two weeks ahead of the Information meeting. Target date: hearing in May? Landowners need to get letters 30 days before the hearing. Jeff will work with Commissioners and ODF to determine the time needed to process, and when commissioners would like the hearing (hearings officer, etc). Info meeting and final visit to Falls City, City Council meeting will be scheduled after that by email.
- Don Encouraged that we have a timeline for this process within a week.

Meeting recessed at 10:55.