

From Grace Point Church

Submitted by email 3/11/2014

Planning Commission,

We are concerned about the restriction the current Normal Avenue plan will place on future uses of the lot behind Grace Point Church.

First, the plan designates the W-9 wetland, as adopted by local and state agencies, based on an estimate of this region rather than an actual delineation by species and groundwater survey of the property. The actual wetland area may be larger or, as we see it after 7 years of mowing and maintaining, is significantly smaller than current estimates.

In the case of the wetland being larger than current estimates, the area available for development will be smaller and our use will be limited. However, in the event that the required delineation results in a smaller area of wetland, there seems no remedy in the current plan for a reduction of the Open Space designation to allow us to use the space available for development. In speaking with the Ashland Community Development Department it was confirmed the W-9 open space size would not change even if a wetland delineation survey showed it to be smaller.

It seems that there is some attempted amelioration of this by density transfer from open space to the rest of our property, this allowing a maximum of 64 dwelling units on the entire property. This is a tradeoff but is only usable to us if we make unacceptable changes to the property by placing residential dwellings on our front field and in our parking lot. It does not allow us to make up for that loss to the South of the church in our field. From a 5 to 10 year timeline we have a property that really cannot be used. From a longer term planning viewpoint this may be a reasonable planning concept except I must remind this commission that this Nazarene Church was started in Ashland in 1905 (109 years ago) so we do plan with a long term viewpoint.

A combination of 2 possible solutions exists. The first is allowing the decrease or increase in the conservation area based on an accurate delineation. Secondly, increasing the density allocation from NN-02 (10 units per acre) to NN-03 (15 units per acre) on the only usable space to the South of the church. This would leave the current NN-02 designation for the rest of the church's property. We request you adopt both.

Shifting the focus now to the matter of 2 transportation corridors traversing this area. I am told by staff that an alley or multi use path is required by code adjacent to open spaces. This means that in addition to a 50 foot swath through this property for the road another 25 feet will be taken by the proposed alley. This is in addition to the required 50 foot buffer zone around wetlands. That raises the public taking for transportation corridors to about 75 feet and 125 feet if you consider the buffer zone. This seems exorbitant from our viewpoint.

Our request as a solution is to move the current road as far to the south as allowable, within 50 feet of the W-9 open space. This would eliminate the coded need for another transportation corridor.

Where in this code and planning action is there a use for this property? There is a public straightjacket to most reasonable uses of this property. We might just have to lease to a farmer who wants fence for livestock to raise cows, sheep, goats and pigs and not ever annex.

Finally, there have been comments made in the public forum pertaining to ditching we have done on the property. Some well meaning folks seem to think that this is their property to police. Prior to any ditch cleaning we contacted the Oregon Department of State Lands and were told that there were existing ditches on this parcel and that maintaining these ditches was allowable. We did as they recommended, cleaning these drainages to their previous depth and removing brush from these ditches. We were able to find the previous depth because there were existing culvert pipes in at least 3 locations to set our cleanout depth.