

## **Character of the Area**

[Case File: T3-2022-16220]

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Living only 750 feet away from the proposed site for building a water filtration and communication tower, which will be fully visible looking through the front and side windows of our home, my husband and I were not initially informed of the proposal until it was approximately one year into the planning stage. Otherwise, we would have been advocates in opposition from the very beginning. We appreciate and thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns.

My husband, child, and I previously lived in Happy Valley, once a peaceful locale nestled amongst tree-covered hills and horse-filled pastures. Both having grown up as country-kids, the invasion of Happy Valley, known as urban development, with its increased traffic, road noise, construction, tax increases, displacement of once cherished farm animals and wildlife, and onslaught of humans, drove us further east to where we now enjoy our quiet, rural life on SE Cottrell Rd. The idea of once again being displaced, this time by the Portland Water Bureau's lack of understanding and compassion for the culture of our community, is horrifying.

We have unnecessarily become Portland Water Bureau's sacrificial lamb as they are seemingly unwilling to explore more appropriate options that would require more thoughtful planning, expense, and red tape on their part, but would preserve the integrity of our country-living community. Furthermore, besides dismissing alternative filtration systems already used throughout the Pacific Northwest such as UV filtration, the Portland Water Bureau has willfully neglected to disclose to our community vital details such as wall and tower heights, and levels of noise and light pollution.

Currently, when we look through our windows, swing on our front porch, or gather around our firepit in the daylight hours, we see tree farms, gardens, horses, alpacas, deer, coyotes, squirrels, the occasional tractor, joggers, bicyclists, and couples enjoying a stroll down our quiet country road. Dogs and children play in the yard with little concern for safety, as traffic is minimal and everyone knows and looks out for their neighbors, most of whom have enjoyed their rural lifestyle for decades. Our home has been here since 1936, originally a chicken coup, converted to a farmhouse in the mid 1940's. Little in this area has changed since then, like the land that time forgot, which has been and should continue to be the appeal of living in this area, and a major contributor to the high property values currently enjoyed by local homeowners such as us.

As if the daylight hours are not beautiful enough, take into consideration the magic that happens when the sun retreats in the evening. A night sky full of twinkling stars, unadulterated by stadium-style lighting, the sound of wildlife rather than large trucks and trailers crumbling

the asphalt, and unparalleled privacy, create almost a country-resort quality that is unique and woven into the fabric of this land.

Life as we know it is being threatened not by inevitable necessary progress, but by pencil-pushing city-dwellers that lack consideration and the creativity to work through options that would prevent the destruction of a community, including its already poorly maintained infrastructure and at the risk of a long-established and thriving ecosystem.

If the Portland Water Bureau is allowed to build the water filtration plant and accompanying monstrosities, the next five years of our lives will be inundated by the deafening sound of trucks and nerve-grating construction all day, all night, year-round, rather than chirping birds, yipping coyotes, and the laughter of children playing with delightful abandon. Roads that are already severely neglected, for which our community has repeatedly asked for relief but have been ignored, will further decay under the weight of a couple-hundred truck loads a day. Simple math and common-sense dictate that a couple-hundred truck loads weighing 105,500 pounds, multiplied by 1,825 twenty-four-hour cycles, will cause unimaginable damage and hardship to those of us that depend on our small country road as our only way in and out of our properties. Even the potential of a false promise to repair our roads will cause further delay and disruption to our lives, extending far beyond the five years. Then what? Will streetlights be added to aid in the middle of the night transportation of materials and noxious chemicals down our narrow country road? How will changes in traffic patterns be managed? Signal lights? Add to that the blinding light from the plant itself and we can all say goodbye to our glorious night sky with its stunning constellations.

We will be burdened with the expense and encumbrance of installing fences and gates along the front of our properties to protect our animals and children from falling victim to the wheels of trucks and trailers and added traffic barreling down our road. As a veteran of construction, seasoned and well-versed in all things related to heavy equipment and truck driving, my husband understands all too well the impact such building activities will have on our roads and land.

I in contrast, an expert in the field of child development, education, and family dynamics, understand the emotional and developmental toll this change in lifestyle will have on the children and parents in our community. For a city-child, little about this proposal would be as tumultuous as it will be for our rural-raised children, who have already suffered enough in their short lives through the COVID-19 pandemic. They finally are experiencing a return to normalcy, and here comes the Portland Water Bureau proposing to thrust them into a new crisis. Those looking to excuse the negligence of this proposal may claim that such challenges build resiliency. To the Portland Water Bureau I say, go strengthen your own resiliency by going through the challenge of building your plant somewhere else!

Of course I have barely touched on the disruption to the balance of nature, which primarily I will leave to the experts who have already addressed the detrimental impact of displacing wildlife, not to mention the threat to that same wildlife, our groundwater, our natural vegetation, crops, vegetable gardens, livestock, and domestic animals, caused by toxic chemicals being

introduced practically in our own front yard and literally in the backyard of neighboring properties.

As for property values, anyone intending to sell to move even further east to escape the proposed atrocity, now must disclose the Portland Water Bureau's incomprehensible plan to potential buyers in what is only the beginning of deteriorating property values. Nearing a recession, inflated interest rates, and already a downturn in the housing market, we are faced now with additional adversity coming from the loss of value to our properties. This is a hard-working community but most of us are not financially wealthy by any means. The riches we value are tied up in land ownership and the pleasure derived from our choice to live quietly and harmoniously in the country.

Around here, we all get along by being good neighbors and minding our own business. This is one time, however, that we are being good neighbors by not minding our own business. In fact, the proposal is our business, because it is us that will suffer the fallout, not the planners that will never have to experience the hardships building this water filtration plant will cause. As neighbors, friends, families, and a community, we stand united against bureaucratic bullies and will fully exercise our rights to defend ourselves against the tyrannical abuses of the Portland Water Bureau. We respectfully ask that the Land Use Planning Division respect our way of life, our rural community, and not discount our significance and contributions as rural peoples of the unincorporated greater Portland metropolitan area.

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