

WEEKLY REVIEW

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
March 30, 2021



This document is a weekly review of the Board of County Commissioners meeting, Tuesday, March 30, 2021. Information related to agenda changes, Consent Agenda, and Public Comment are on the [County website](#).

Public Hearing

Ordinance Amendment to BCC 11.15 & BCC 11.17, OA 2021-001 (moved to April 6, 2021) – Greg Wendt, Director of Community Development

The Planning Division and Planning Commission are forwarding an ordinance amendment to the Board with a recommendation for approval that would increase the setback requirements from property lines, dwellings, and road rights-of-way for wind turbines located in the Rural Lands 20 Acre and GMA Agricultural zoning districts. A public hearing was held on March 9, 2021 by the Planning Commission and, after taking testimony and discussion amongst the Commission, they voted unanimously to forward a recommendation for approval of the proposed amendments, subject to five (5) Findings of Fact. The Planning Division and Planning Commission recommend that the Board delay the public hearing until April 6, 2021 for continuance on that date. **The Board agreed to continue the open record hearing until the April 6, 2021 meeting at 9 AM in the Commissioners' Conference Room, Justice Center, Kennewick.**

Open Space Land Classification Application, OS 2021-001 – Greg Wendt, Director of Community Development & Peter McEnderfer, Associate Planner

The Planning Division & Planning Commission are forwarding an Open Space Land Classification application to the Board with a recommendation for approval. The proposed application will allow the subject parcels to be valued at their current use rather than their highest and best use for assessment of property taxes. Specifically, the subject parcels provide native habitat for a wildlife rehabilitation center. Hundreds of native species are released on the site, with the location providing an environment that supports native food sources and open space for the birds and animals to mature or recover. The wildlife rehabilitation center has a US Federal Fish & Wildlife Permit and a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit from the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. The property owner must comply with the current use audit program, administered by the Benton County Assessor. If the "present" use is discontinued, it will necessitate removal from Open Space Land Classification. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 9, 2021 and, after taking testimony and discussion amongst the Commission, they voted unanimously to forward a recommendation for approval of the proposed amendments, subject to seven (7) Findings of Fact. **The Board moved and seconded to adopt the Planning Commission's Findings and Conclusions as its own and approve the application for Classification for Open Space Land as noted in Casefile OS 2021-001 and authorize the Chairman to sign the Notice of Approval for Classification as Open Space document. Motion carried.**

Scheduled Business

Benton Conservation District – Mark Nielson, District Manager & Heather Wendt, Assistant Manager

Representatives from the Benton Conservation District briefed the Board on Benton Conservation District activities and priorities, particularly those that intersect directly with Benton County. The County and the Conservation District have worked closely on groundwater and noxious weed issues in recent years, and an upcoming area for cooperation is the water stargrass issue. A memorandum of agreement (MOA) on this issue will be presented to the Board in the coming weeks. **No Board direction or vote necessary.**

Scout Clean Energy's Application to the Washington State Energy Site Facility Evaluation Council (EFSEC) for Horse Heaven Wind Farm – Greg Wendt, Director of Community Development & Michelle Cooke, Assistant Planning Manager

Staff was directed by the Board at last week's meeting (March 23, 2021) to prepare a letter for the Board's review and approval to address the Horse Heaven Wind Farm project. The public has continued to flood the Commissioners' Office and Planning Division with hundreds of calls, emails, and comments with an overwhelming majority (approx. 93%) of people stating their opposition to the project. Concerns range from loss of habitat, agriculture, and wildlife to the negative impact the 244 wind turbines will have on ecological aesthetics, visual resources, and rural character of Benton County and the Tri-Cities area. The letter will be available in its entirety, including attachments, on the County's website at www.co.benton.wa.us later this afternoon. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the statement of opposition letter to EFSEC regarding the Horse Heaven Wind Farm project for tonight's meeting as presented. Motion carried.**

#

Contact: Shyanne Palmus, Communications Coordinator
Shyanne.Palmus@co.benton.wa.us | 509-222-3760