

Questions for Commissioner Rhodes about his golf course idea

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Letters to the Editor

Mr. Rhodes, I have questions about the possible acquisition of Cape Blanco Airport and swapping Curry County land in the Cape Blanco area for a state park. I hope you will answer these questions with handouts of the proposed budgets for this project for those attending the Town Hall meetings.

1. Where are the numbers that you are using to determine revenue and costs – a budget that includes both the airport acquisition property swap with income and expenses for the first five years at least?
2. Specifically, how will the county pay for maintenance and development of a noncommercial airport and development of a golf course until significant income comes in? It may take four or more years until your proposed project is operating, let alone bringing in enough income to cover expenses.
3. What is your backup plan in case the expenses become greater and income less than planned in your feasibility study?
4. What market studies have you used to determine income and increased job employment from the golf course?

I found the following articles just doing Google searches using 'golf in decline' and other terms. The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and other news media have recently reported about the closure of golf courses due to declining golf participation. Some cities have even changed municipal golf courses back to public parks.

"Golf is in the decline in America. That reality has finally smacked us in the face like a two-by-four. The number of core American golfers (those playing eight rounds or more per year) has fallen between three and 4.5 percent every year since 2006. Since 2007, the number of golf courses closing in America has significantly outnumbered the number of new courses being built."
Bleachers Report, Golf Section, March 29, 2011

"The total number of people who play has declined or remained flat each year since 2000, dropping to about 26 million from 30 million, according to the National Golf Foundation and the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association. More troubling to golf boosters, the number of people who play 25 times a year or more fell to 4.6 million in 2005 from 6.9 million in 2000, a loss of about a third. The industry now counts its core players as those who golf eight or more times a year. That number, too, has fallen, but more slowly: to 15 million in 2006 from 17.7 million in 2000, according to the National Golf Foundation." NY Times, February 21, 2008

"Recession-battered golf courses aren't just coping with lighter crowds. Some are edging perilously close to bankruptcy. The root of the problem is stark: Most people just can't afford the luxury of a \$100 to \$400 round of golf, nor do they have the time — several hours — to complete an 18-hole round. Businesses are cutting back on golf-related expenses for executives. Travelers who once plunked down gobs of cash to golf in exotic locales are passing up golf vacations," according to the National Golf Foundation (NGF).

In the July 28 Wall Street Journal there was a headline, 'County's Fiscal Meltdown scare me'. How can Curry County cut services any more? Could the resort golf clubs be the next boom after the housing boom where timing is everything?

5. What percent of the Curry County budget is estimated for expenses and what percent for income for the combined airport, golf course, and park projects by year one through five for the first five-year period?

6. From the Curry County application to the Oregon Aviation Board on 4/28/2011, I am including the first five-year maintenance and improvements planned. Additional years maintenance and improvements are included on Aviation Board Minutes for the 4/28/2011 meeting.

7. Why weren't public focus groups involved from the beginning to give their input about your plans you were presenting to the Oregon Aviation Board last April and to the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Board?

8. Since there has been so much controversy, will Curry County residents be able to participate in the democratic process by voting or at least by a show of hands at your town meetings to show their approval of or rejection of the proposed plans to: 1) acquire the Cape Blanco Airport; and 2) swap present Curry County property for Floras Creek State Park and recreation land property to build a golf course?

I am enclosing the following information for those readers who cannot attend one of the town meetings next week. These are addresses of the state agencies involved where one can express his/her opinions/questions about the proposed projects:

On acquiring ownership of Cape Blanco Airport: Mr. Mitch Swecker, Director of Oregon Department of Aviation, 3040 25th Street SE, Salem, OR 97302-1125.

On transferring Curry County land for Oregon Parks land for golf course development: Vanessa Demoe, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 725 Summer Street NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301.

I am looking forward to receiving answers to the questions I have written above.

Thank you,

Bea Nash

Gold Beach