



Troutdale Council denies plan to vacate 242nd corridor

County pushed for sale to fund East County courthouse

BY SHANNON WELLS

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Five hours of questions, testimony and deliberation apparently did not convince most of the Troutdale City Council that vacating a right-of-way corridor at the city's western edge was a prudent idea.

In a five to two vote around midnight Tuesday, March 25, the Council denied a resolution to initiate transportation plan changes removing the 242nd Avenue corridor as a future improvement project. That leaves an 8-acre swath of mostly hillside land between Glisan and Halsey streets available for a transportation thoroughfare if a proposed transportation study calls for it.

Multnomah County officials hoped to sell the property and direct \$1.7 million to a long-promised East County courthouse. The money, part of \$15.25 million McMenamins Edgefield and the Reynolds School Board paid jointly last year for 125 acres, remains in escrow until the timeline expires in mid October.

Troutdale holds the key to unlocking the remaining acreage, which was set aside for a possible connector parkway between Interstate 84 and Highway 26. The city would have to pull out of an agreement with three other East County cities to eliminate the corridor from consideration.

In the marathon meeting, councilors heard from and queried an array of speakers, including county commissioners Ted Wheeler and Diane McKeel, Edgefield co-owner Mike McMenamin, Wood Village and Gresham councilors and recently retired Troutdale Mayor Paul Thalhoffer.

"Elimination of this route we believe will free us to find higher uses for this property," said Mike Sublett, a Multnomah County planner. "We've looked at the uses" proposed by Edgefield and Reynolds, "and they're extremely complementary."

Mayor Jim Kight and Council President Doug Daoust seemed to agree with the assessment and voted to vacate the right of way. They questioned the viability of the corridor project and expressed doubt that it would attract sufficient funding even if it were chosen as the best route option.

"I just can't see this being funded – ever," Daoust said.

However, most councilors conceded that, without the long-promised transportation study, they couldn't predict future needs well enough to support vacating the right of way. The study is on a list of Metro regional government projects in need of additional funding. Metro officials estimate the study would cost \$1 million.

Norm Thomas, who was among the five councilors who voted down the resolution, said it's simply too soon to take the corridor off the table without additional data.

"It doesn't make sense to give up a right of way," he said, "if you don't have the information available to prove it's wise to do that."