



Contact: Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, 541-967-3825 or email: apaul@co.linn.or.us

Commissioners OK zone change for proposed LBCC ag complex

ALBANY — Tuesday morning, Linn County Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker approved a Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment that will allow 53.5 acres of land owned by Linn-Benton Community College to be rezoned from Exclusive Farm Use to Public Service.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the application in March.

It paves the way for the college to begin working toward development of a new agricultural program campus on Looney Lane south of the Main Campus that will include classes about rearing horses, pigs, cattle and sheep.

And perhaps most importantly, offering what people said is addressing a serious need of veterinary technicians.

The current program is housed on a much smaller parcel of land and buildings are antiquated.

The new campus will include classroom space, parking areas, a storage building and a manure containment barn plus barns for each animal species.

Although no one spoke against the proposal, neighboring farmer Don Jenks said that while he supports the project he is concerned about water run-off from the property and that some of the ground can get extremely wet in winter months.

Representatives of the project said stormwater will be contained in two on-site ponds and no added water is expected to be created from site run-off.

Manure will be stored in a covered building and composted. It will either be spread as fertilizer during the proper time of year, or hauled off-site.

Alan Sorem of the Salem law firm Saalfeld Griggs, said the primary goal is to create a vocational education facility and not as a site for “a host of other uses.”

He acknowledged there are wetlands issues, but the college is prepared to purchase mitigation credits and to work responsibly in dealing with those issues.

There will be fire hydrants on site, buildings will be construct-

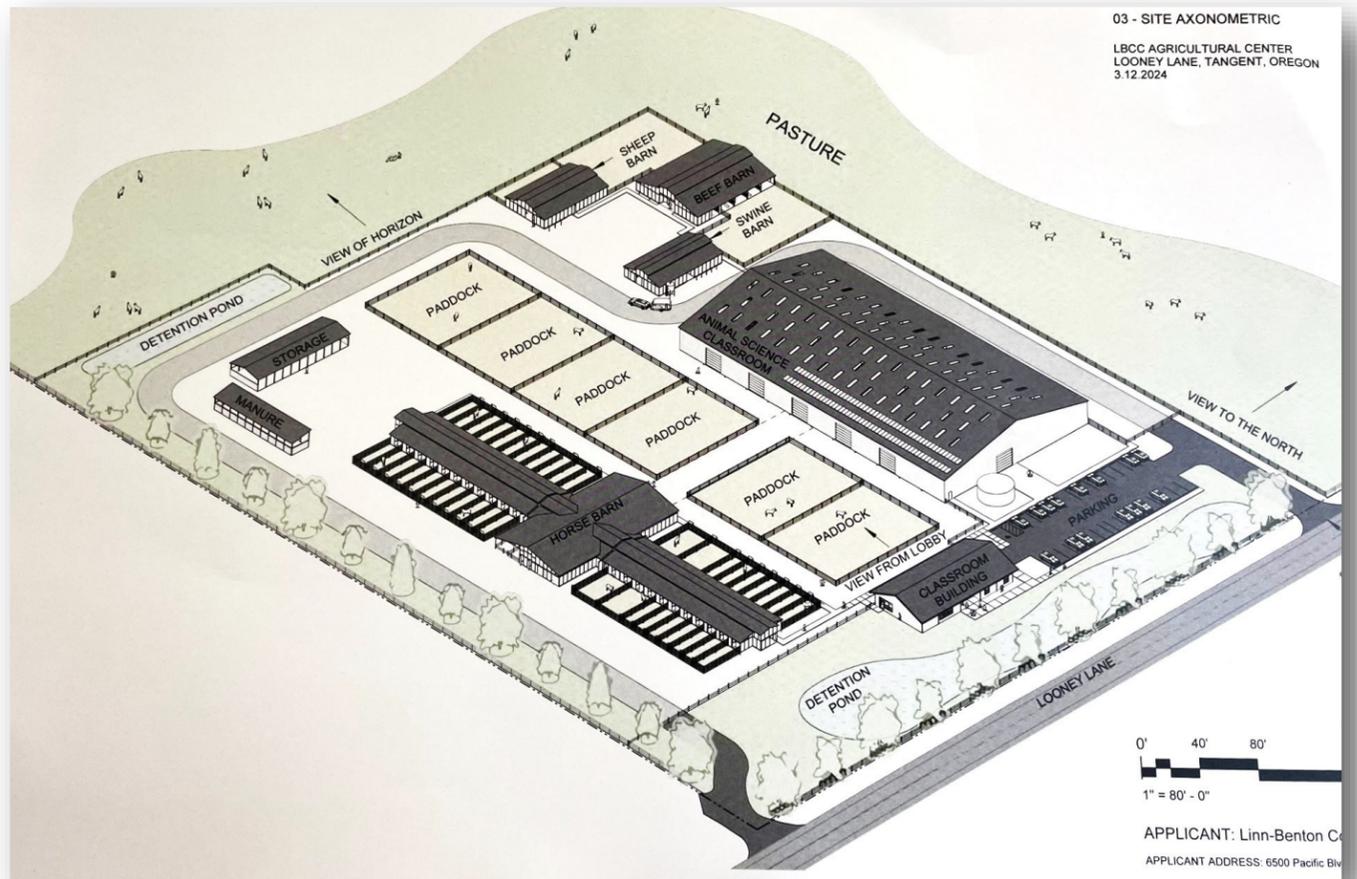


Diagram of proposed LBCC agricultural education campus on Looney Lane.

ed with metal framing and materials and there will be fire sprinklers in the classrooms.

Traffic is expected to be less than that associated with a nursery or public park.

Sheldon Flom, vice president of finance, said that currently students often travel to area farms for their hands-on training. This can create scheduling conflicts due to travel times. Also, local ag producers often sell livestock, so opportunities fluctuate with market prices.

Veterinarian Chris Wyckliffe owns the nearby Cascade Equine Center and said the proposed new campus is greatly needed. He said there is a major shortage of veterinary technicians on the entire West Coast. He also said that 70% of his staff were trained at LBCC.

Although they voted unanimously to approve the application, each of the commissioners voiced concerns.

Chairman Nyquist said he is always concerned about the potential conflict of “ag versus ag”. In this instance, an ag education center surrounded by working farms. He was also concerned about the poten-

tial to host large events in a rural area, but was assured that is not the college’s intent.

Commissioner Sprenger was concerned about potential water run-off issues. An engineer outlined the plan to retain storm water and release it at historical rates.

Commissioner Tucker was concerned about the potential that the operation might be considered a Confined Animal Feeding Operation — the college already has 42 horses — which has numerous state regulations. In other business, the commissioners:

- Were told by Accounting Officer Bill Palmer that the county staff continue to spend prudently. He said that although the fiscal year is about two-thirds over, overall spending is at 47% and the county fund balance of \$109,598,000 is almost \$10 million more than this time a year ago.

- Planning & Building Director Steve Wills said six permits for new dwellings were issued in March, three for single-family homes and three for additions. Seventeen new code enforcement cases were opened and 21 were closed. The Department received two fire hardening grant applications for the

North Canyon area.

- Approved a contract for \$228,856.50 with Legacy Contracting for the Cedar Creek Pedestrian Bridge Project in Mill City. The county will be reimbursed by Mill City.

- Approved a new classification of Veteran Service Officer Program Manager, management exempt and pay range 18.

- Reappointed Mayra Fabiola Herrera Hernandez, Kacey Wimmer and Lawrence Eby to the Health Advisory Council.

- Reappointed Scott McDowell and Debra Haile to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

Announced that Budget Hearings for the 2024-25 Fiscal Year will be held on April 29-May 3 at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center. All meetings are open to the public. A daily schedule can be found on the County Treasurer’s page of the Linn County website: <https://www.linncountyor.gov/treasurer>.

Posted: 4-9-2024

Media contact: Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, 541-967-3825 or email apaul@co.linn.or.us.