



News Release

The Coalition For Agriculture's Future

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Coalition Calls For Six Month Moratorium On Applications Changing Conditional Use Permits to Conditional Rezone

**For Immediate Release
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The Coalition for Agriculture's Future has asked Canyon County Commissioners to impose an immediate six-month moratorium on processing or approving applications for zoning changes that started out as Conditional User Permits (CUP) that are now about to expire.

“Specifically, we are very concerned about the number of Conditional Use Permits involving agricultural lands that are at or near their project start or completion time limits and which have or may be resubmitted as formal requests for conditional rezoning,” said Coalition Chairman George Crookham in a letter delivered to the Commissioners on Tuesday (May 12). A copy of the letter will be available on the Coalition website at www.agriculturesfuture.org.

The Coalition believes the process of changing an expiring CUP to a request for rezoning amounts to little more than efforts by developers to end-run spot zoning and speculative statutory prohibitions on projects that are no longer economically viable, Crookham noted in the letter.

“The goal obviously being to rezone into perpetuity residential development land use changes without start or completion restrains There may well be legal issues which, if challenged in court, could put the findings of the commissioners in legal jeopardy,” the CAF Chairman wrote.

One such application – the Lake Estates project – was approved by Commissioners earlier this month. Another similar project – from BPB development (formerly known as Southern Hill and Canyon Ranch Estates) – will come before the Board on Thursday.

“They may well represent the tip of a tidal wave of CUP-to-rezone applications about to flood the approval process,” the letter noted.

Coalition officials say that the Commissioners must take positive action to establish a system for these types of applications which can weed out zoning changes for unscrupulous or unattainable development projects originally approved as Conditional Use Permits. A moratorium gives the County time to put in place an enhanced application review process for these specific types of applications.

“Years have passed and economic conditions are vastly different then when the original CUP was approved. Some type of enhanced process is needed to scrutinize the true likelihood of the project ever becoming reality. This would help ensure that land speculation strategies cannot be successfully camouflaged by developers,” the Coalition letter continued.

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Many of these expiring CUPs involve hop-scotch residential development in historically productive agricultural lands which have consistently provided a greater economic beneficial use for the public. These types of leap frog developments, if allowed to go forward, inevitably cost taxpayers more in provided public services than will ever be returned in taxes, according to the Coalition.

The Coalition also called on the Board of Commissioners to provide a more comprehensive method of fully informing the public that CUP-to-zoning-change types of applications are to be considered. That's the only way full public involvement can be achieved in the rezoning process.

“We are also concerned about “out of sight-out of mind” attempts to evade public scrutiny by renaming controversial development projects, thus minimizing public and media attention and subsequent involvement,” Crookham added in the letter.

“Also, it would help ensure that the provisions of the county’s comprehensive plan are being fully incorporated into land use decisions, a critical element of public trust given the efforts that citizens put into its creation,” the letter noted.

The Coalition for Agriculture’s Future is formed from more than two dozen of the area’s largest agri-businesses, financial institutions, ag-related associations and other companies with agricultural interests in the Treasure Valley. It was formed to preserve and promote the agricultural heritage and traditions that have forged the values and character of Idaho’s people and which have crafted the foundations of responsible stewardship of its natural resources.

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Editor’s Note: The members of the Coalition are Ada County Farm Bureau; Atlas Products Inc; Caldwell Economic Development Council; Canyon County Farm Bureau; Crookham Company; Dairyland Seed Company; Del Monte Foods; Dorsing Seeds; Greenleaf Farms; Harris Moran Seed Company; Idaho Crop Improvement Association; Idaho Seed Analysts Association; Intermountain Community Bank; J.R. Simplot Company; Lou Morgoito; Nevill Enterprises, Inc.; Nunhems USA, Inc.; NW Farm Credit Services; Pacific Seed Association; Pat Takasugi; Pioneer Hi-Bred International; Sandy & Jerry Stevenson; Seminis Vegetable Seeds; Summit Seed Coatings; Syngenta; The Hartwell Corporation; Wild West Seeds; and Zions Bank.