

To: Planning Commission/Director

RE: Airstrip Application No. 217-20-000116-PLNG

FR: Mike Ervin

Date: March 3, 2020



Crook County

MAR 03 2020

Community Development

We are writing this letter to highlight why the application for this proposed airstrip, that is already, and has been under construction for almost a year, should be denied. We feel it's important to point out that the goals of the citizens of Crook County shall be considered. You cannot encourage the active citizen participation while appearing to only care for the private interest of one person. In honoring these goals of the citizens, the governing body has an obligation to conserve and protect our interests. A site visit, along with pictures that I will provide, will confirm construction began long ago.

### **Goal 2 Land Use Planning**

**This goal provides security and stability for all. The factual base for decision and actions assures that plans and projects will receive thorough scrutiny before being allowed or denied. Final decisions then are based on the greatest good for the greatest number of people.**

The perception is that one person can force local government to allow her to do as she wishes with her property. This could lead eventually to a reduction of agricultural income and an increase of non-farm activity. To allow a private use airstrip in cattle grazing area will alter the future.

### **Roads/Traffic**

The Paulina Highway (380), per comprehensive plan is a scenic hwy and is protected by Oregon Statute. It is narrow (a mere 22 feet wide in many places) with no pullouts in the area of the proposed airstrip. This is the only main road accessible as a travel route for farming equipment and livestock transportation. The use of this highway for these purposes is both traditional and historic. The highway is also used on a daily basis by many County residents who work or reside in outlying areas of the County.

The proposed airstrip is, on the west end, very nearly parallel with the highway and on the east end directly in line with the highway. The highway is very narrow in spots and edges of the asphalt are breaking off. With planes taking off and landing directly over the highway it would be very distracting and dangerous for drivers. This would be particularly true in the afternoon when driving into the sun, and having a plane coming at you on takeoff, at the same time.

According to ODOT Prineville, there are no plans in the immediate future to re-pave highway 380.

There is no cropland or farming of any kind in the immediate area of the proposed airstrip, however a good portion of the year there are cattle grazing very close. In fact there are cattle grazing all around the area several months out of the year. Most of the ranchers that are involved with the grazing plan on attending the public meeting to address their own individual concerns.

Exhaust emissions of planes coming and going can have an effect on neighbors in the area as well as grazing cattle. I say planes because there have been multiple planes flying over our neighborhood for over a year now. You might ask how I know these planes are connected to the Applicant. When said planes come overhead they fly very low, sometimes not so slow, as they come over cropland and houses just east of Prineville. Then they buzz the Applicants house, sometimes two or three times, before either moving off to the north or east but many times back to the west right over my house and my close neighbor. Also, the Applicants told me on November 29, 2018, that the people in the planes buzzing their house that day were their friends.

What kind of activity is really going to happen on this airstrip? Do the Applicants even have an airplane? Is the airstrip being built for their friends or for personal use of the Applicants? One has to wonder what their real intentions are.

The Comprehensive Plan on agriculture calls for the preservation of such land in large blocks is necessary in maintaining the economy of the county and for the assurance of adequate, healthful, and nutritious food (beef) and forest products for the people of this county, state and nation. Farmers and ranchers are simply trying to survive off their land while sharing their healthful products with the community. Not only will this airstrip force significant change in accepted farm practices, it will simply run some of them off their property and possibly out of business.

Additionally the plan on Agriculture states, "It shall further be the policy of the county that nonagricultural development in the rural area shall be based, whenever possible, upon demonstrated public need; and in all cases, such development shall avoid conflicts with the agricultural community. The applicant HAS NOT demonstrated a public need. This is a private want, not a public need!

**Land owners and highway traffic should not be expected to change established practices to accommodate the intrusions of private air traffic into rural areas.**

### **Crook County Comprehensive Plan – The Role of;**

#### **Natural/Scenic/Buffer Areas**

It is the goal of Crook County to ensure continuity of the open spaces and to protect natural resources for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Our grazing lands create a rural lifestyle and create an Open Space that the County should strive to protect.

These open spaces provide for and protect our wildlife. The proposed site is considered **"crucial winter range for deer and elk"** and should be left undisturbed. Even though herds may use only portions of these areas during the year, it is imperative that year round range and water conditions be maintained. Rangelands are to be preserved for rangeland uses compatible with multiple resource management. After considering the goals of the citizens and Crook County the airstrip should be denied.

#### **Noise/Dust**

Sound buffering and visual screening of activities on this airstrip is impossible. This site is clearly visible from the highway and from neighboring properties. Permitting this airstrip will exacerbate the existing

problem of air traffic in the area. Noise of airplanes just passing over on their way to somewhere is one thing. The noise of airplanes taking off and circling the neighborhood is quite another matter.

During the summer months the surrounding area is very dry, non-irrigated land. Dust from planes taking off and landing will be obvious from long distances. What precautions are being made for a potential fire due to an accident? What precautions are being made for a potential fuel spill? There is an existing airport in the Prineville area that can be used at any time without concern for any of the issues discussed in this letter (less than 10 miles away).

**Earlier I mentioned two things:**

- Over the past year or so there have been small planes buzzing the Applicant's home and flying low around the neighborhood. The attached, what I call an Airplane Log, will show the planes I have witnessed doing this. I am retired and am home quite often, but not always, so I'm sure there were other times that planes were buzzing around the area. As was the case Saturday, February 22, 2020 around noon according to my neighbor. (Note: Chapter 18.08.010 Definitions for purposes of permits for uses in the County's Exclusive Farm Use zones in the Crook County Comprehensive Plan, "Airport, personal use" means an airstrip restricted, except for aircraft emergencies, for use by the owner, and, on an infrequent and occasional basis, by invited guests and by commercial aviation activities in connection with agricultural operations. No aircraft may be based on a personal use airport other than those owned or controlled by the owner of the airport. Exceptions to the activities allowed under this definition may be granted through a waiver by the Oregon Department of Aviation in specific instances).
- The airstrip has been under construction for many months if not over a year. The attached picture was taken on June 8, 2019 which shows a dump truck, a back hoe and a small excavator sitting on the airstrip. During this time huge berms of dirt and sagebrush have been pushed up inside the fence line so you cannot see, from the highway, the activity/construction going on with the airstrip.

Yes, there is another private use airstrip in the area. There are significant differences between that airstrip and what this Applicant is proposing. The existing airstrip is:

- Well back off highway 380
- Naturally buffered from the highway by juniper trees and unseen as you drive by.
- Very rarely used and only used by the landowner.
- Not used by multiple friends with noisy planes.
- Takeoff and landing is not directly over the highway.

If the format of this letter and the content seem familiar to you, it should. You needn't look any further than a letter sent to you, the Crook County Planning Commission, by the current Applicant dated November 20, 2018 concerning Application Number 217-18-000341-PLNG. I am not saying I agree with everything that was written in the November 20, 2018 letter, but if the author believed it consequential enough to address you, and employ a three piece suit to come from Eugene to argue her case, she has effectively argued a good case against approving a personal use airstrip. That, along with the additional information that I have provided, should be reason enough for denial.

We reserve the right to present a statement at the public hearing in addition to entering this letter, photo and airplane log. Decisions of the County must be based on substantial evidence. Thank you for your consideration in this critical decision.

Regards,

Mike and Teresa Ervin  
8015 SE Paulina Hwy  
Prineville Oregon, 97754

#### Airplane Log

11-29-18 two planes 2pm

1-10-19 two. 9:30am ish

1-18-19 one plane. 9am

1-24-19 one plane 2:51pm

#### A tail dragger

1-30-19 one plane 11:40am. White Tail dragger. Buzzed their house four times. 50/60 elk on flat this morning

3-26-19 1:50 pm one white plane.

4-17-19 11:30 am white tail dragger.

4-18-19 4:30 pm White tail dragger.

5-7-19 10am. Same plane.

5-24-19 8:15am Same plane.

5-31-19 10:20 am same plane.

6-8-19 10:05 am same plane

6-27-19 7:15am

6-30-19 10:50 am

7-6-19 3:15pm different plane flying faster. Wing under. Buzzed their house 3 times and went back west.

Fri 7-12-19 6:45am buzzed once to east then went northwest then back east under rim over Ochoco Valley towards Ochoco dam.

Tues 7-16-19 tail dragger. 11:30am

Fri 7-19-19 tail dragger 7am

Friday 7-26-19 7:45 am same plane

Saturday 8-17-19 9:52am

Same plane right over my house

Sunday 8-25-19 11:20Am

Wednesday 9-11-19 8am

Thur 10-3-19 8:35 am

Thursday 10-24-19 10:59am red and white plane took off from logging road

Thur 10-24-19 2:31pm. White tail dragger. Buzzed their house 4 times and went west.

Sat 11-2-19. 9:40am same tail dragger.

Sunday 12-15-19 At least 4 planes 3pm buzzing their house and came right over us.

Sunday 12-22-20. 11:47 am different plane. White and blue. Faster and louder. One pass from west to east then flew off to the north.

Tue 12-24-19. 12:18pm

Blue and white. Right over my house. After buzzing their house from east to west.

Sent from my iPhone



