

Tillamook Headlight Herald



DAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2016

TILLAMOOK, OREGON • WWW.TILLAMOOKHEADLIGHTHERALD.COM

VOL. 127, NO. 45 • \$1.00

Neskowin subdivision makes rare request to withdraw from sewer district

By Ann Powers
editor@northcoastcitizen.com

Neskowin Regional Sanitary Authority (NRSA) customers have until a Nov. 23 public hearing to collect about 40 signatures if they want an election on whether the Hills of Neskowin (HON) subdivision should be allowed out of the sewer district's boundaries and

fees.

In a two-to-one vote Nov. 2, Tillamook County Commissioners approved a petition from the subdivision's Homeowners Association (HOA) to begin the process of withdrawing from NRSA. The majority vote determined it is not realistic for the special district to provide services directly benefiting HON in a timely manner.

"In my opinion this is not feasible and is not going to happen in a significant amount of time," said Commission Chair Mark Labhart.

Documents show HON was first platted in 1997, with each property approved for its own on-site septic system. The subdivision has nearly built out to full capacity with approximately 60 parcels – each with separate,

fully functional, septic systems.

Homeowners said there has been no need for NRSA to install a sewer line for those properties in the nearly 20 years since HON was established.

"This seems to be a little bit of an overkill for us," explained HON resident Lloyd Van Roekel. "We already have a

■ See SEWER, Page A8



Headlight-Herald photo by Ann Powers

Hills of Neskowin Homeowners Association representatives James Blasius and John Metschan make their case to the Tillamook County Commission, Nov. 2, on why the subdivision should be allowed to withdraw from the Neskowin Regional Sanitary Authority.

■ Sewer

Continued from Page A1

tic system and to put in a septic line would tear up the neighborhood.”

Moreover, in 2005, district voters approved a bond for water system improvements required by the state. Because the subdivision lies within NRSA’s boundaries, HON residents were required to pay the permanent tax rate.

HOA representatives said the subdivision’s total payments have amounted to approximately \$100,000 since the tariff was first levied.

“We don’t have a burning desire to leave the district,” said James Blasius, HOA president. “But, we do have a burning desire not to be taxed. What’s fair is fair. We are basically a retirement community with a lot of folks on fixed incomes.”

NRSA’s Annis Leslie said the bond was retired in 2015 and the tax revenue is currently going into a reserve for the district’s 10-year plan.

“It went to pay down debt,” Leslie told commissioners. “Now the property taxes are going into a capital reserve fund to pay for future projects.”

Out of eight projects outlined by priority in NRSA’s future plans, the one affecting HON is number five on the list – a Highway 101 trunk sewer extension. Engineering experts estimated it would cost roughly \$1.8 million and Leslie said the trunk line is “developer driven” by preliminary plans for a trailer park north of HON.

The line’s installation would also require excavation of the subdivision with no direct advantage to that area, according to subdivision dwellers. Moreover, NRSA could not give commissioners a timeline for the project’s implementation.

“It won’t occur in the next five years and we don’t know if it will occur in the next 10,” Leslie said.

Nevertheless, NRSA Board Chair Shelley Stoll said sewer services benefiting the greater good should be taken into account.

“The Neskowin core area where the post office, café, store, park, hotels, condos and bus stop are located is used by all,” Stoll wrote in a letter to the county board, dated Oct. 25. “The service NRSA provides eliminates the possibility of sewage from many businesses and hundreds of homes spilling into creeks, the wetlands and flossing into the ocean.”

Taking all of the information provided, Commissioners Labhart and Tim Josi voted for HON’s petition and Commissioner Bill Bartlein voted against.

“I would be amenable to looking at it again in a year or so,” Bartlein said. “At this point, there are too many unknowns about whether it’s feasible or not feasible. So, I’m going to have to take the road that it could be feasible at some point.”

In order for there to be an election on HON’s withdraw, the county must receive written requests by no less than 15 percent of the electors, or 100 electors (whichever is the lesser number), registered in the sewer district by the Nov. 23 public hearing, according to Tillamook County Council William Sargent.

“If there’s not enough signatures for an election than the commissioners can approve the withdraw and that’s the end of it,” Sargent said. “I’ve been doing this now for about 20-plus years and believe it or not, this is the first time that I recall that a party has petitioned the board of commissioners to withdraw from a special district.”