

**LU-24-027 IN-PERSON TESTIMONY
SUBMITTAL COVER SHEET**

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Written testimony from John Keogh, October 27, 2025.

I submit this letter in response to testimony on the record of the Benton County Board of Commissioners' hearing on October 22 & 23, 2025.

Thank you again, Commissioners, for carefully considering the overwhelming public testimony in opposition to the Coffin Butte landfill expansion. We heard your request for a bulleted list of testimony that aligns with County ordinances and criteria. I offer this sample of testimony related to criteria. All the testimonies mentioned below have been filed with Benton County under *LU-24-027 Public Testimony* and are in the record.

CONDITIONAL USES

53.205 Purpose. Conditional uses are land uses which may have an adverse effect on surrounding permitted uses in a zone. [Ord 90-0069]

53.210 Permit Required. A person shall obtain a conditional use permit from the County in order to establish a conditional use.

The decision to issue a conditional use permit is discretionary. [Ord 90-0069]

53.215 Criteria. The decision to approve a conditional use permit shall be based on findings that:

- (1) The proposed use does not seriously interfere with uses on adjacent property, with the character of the area, or with the purpose of the zone;
- (2) The proposed use does not impose an undue burden on any public improvements, facilities, utilities, or services available to the area; and
- (3) The proposed use complies with any additional criteria which may be required for the specific use by this code. [Ord 90-0069]

Examples of testimony related to criteria.

53.215 (1) Expansion will seriously interfere with uses by these landowners on adjacent properties.

- Bob Kipper testified that the proposed expansion puts his family's 4th-generation tree farm at risk from permanently impacting groundwater levels on Tampico Ridge. A blast during excavation could open a connection to water-bearing rock, which would drain wells and springs, cause severe drought-stress to their trees, and drastically shrink timber production. Monitoring is of no use in this case. The damage is irreversible.
- Nancy Whitcombe testified on behalf of the elderly Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, who fear they will be forced out of their home like their neighbors have been. The Phillips property is now surrounded on three sides by the landfill, as Republic Services has bought out their neighbors.
- Rose Holdorf testified that the landfill expansion threatens her family's home and 2nd-generation business by dangerously raising fire risks and by making life difficult with increasing odors and noise from the adjacent landfill. The landfill is many times larger and more intrusive than when the family purchased their property in the 1980s and Rose's father built their home. At that time, the landfill was scheduled to close in 2000.
- The Bradley family testified that their home, ranch, and business are all negatively impacted by noxious odors and jarring noise from the adjacent landfill. Their business, "Bit By Bit," offers animal therapy experiences to people with autism, ADHD, Downs syndrome, cerebral palsy, etc., people who are themselves susceptible to undue burdens of traffic noise and chemical odors. The Bradley's business is especially threatened by

windblown garbage that can be lethal to their pastured animals. Expanding the landfill will make it impossible for the Bradleys to continue to live and work in Benton County.

- Angela Krueger testified that her cattle business suffers serious inference from air-borne litter blown in from the existing landfill. The proposed expansion will push landfill operations much closer to her grazing cattle, putting the health of her cattle and her business in serious jeopardy.
- Ian Finn testified from his family's home on Blaze Drive, the closest property to the proposed expansion. The Finns are already experiencing serious interference from industrial noise, chemical odor, and scattered litter from the existing landfill. The proposed expansion will bring the active landfill within 800 feet of their home, significantly increasing their undue burdens.
- Hundreds of residents of surrounding neighborhoods also testified to serious interference caused by polluted air, increasing traffic, and growing concerns about elevated fire risk, decreased quality of ground and surface water, and clusters of cancer diagnoses above the national rate. These concerns will expand with an expanded landfill.

53.215 (1) Expansion will seriously interfere with the character of the area.

- Several people testified that Coffin Butte Landfill has grown enormously since 2000, the year it was scheduled to close. A quarter-century later, an industrial-scale landfill and associated odors, noise, traffic, and trash, have become an ugly "Welcome to Benton County" signpost. An expanded landfill will expand the problem and further harm the scenic character and reputation of Benton County.
- According to the Franchise Agreement, any expansion of the landfill will remove the tonnage cap. Many residents testified that removing the tonnage cap will result in more unmanaged toxic waste, such as dead cows, dead bodies, electronics, PFAS, medical waste, and other dumping incidents reported in testimony. Expansion will compound the already unsolved problems of toxic leachate and methane plumes, among much else.
- Mental health professionals testified that stress and pollution from environmental degradation are known to negatively affect human mental and physical well-being. A bigger landfill will force bigger stress on residents of North Benton County. This problem, they said, needs to be fixed, not expanded.

53.215 (2) Expansion will impose an undue burden on any public improvements available to the area.

- According to the Franchise Agreement, this landfill will close within the next 15 years. Expanding it now will make a much bigger, more expensive public-improvement problem later, an undue burden on the future.
- Testimony from a wildlife biologist explained how this landfill expansion *directly* complicates implementing the County's "Habitat Conservation Program" for upland and wetland prairie habitat and similar public improvements in the area.
- Testimony from rural residents involved in the County's "2040 Thriving Communities Initiative" noted how this landfill expansion complicates implementing public socioeconomic improvements described in "Thriving Communities."

53.215 (2) Expansion will impose an undue burden on any public facilities, utilities, or services available to the area

- Adair Rural Fire and Rescue *volunteers* testified about dangerous and undue risks they face when called after

business hours to put out potentially explosive dump fires. These risks will expand with an expanding landfill.

- FireWise residents testified that the area's ISO rating for fire protection is currently excellent. But that rating could worsen dramatically if volunteer fire fighters no longer want to face the risks of responding to dangerous dump fires. Reduction in the volunteer fire-fighting force would lead to significantly higher insurance premiums or difficulty obtaining any coverage at all.
- Several outdoor groups testified that hiking, biking, and walking in MacDonald Forest and EE Wilson Wildlife Area will be increasingly constrained by a larger landfill with larger emissions of toxic chemicals in the air.
- Several water-quality engineers testified that the Willamette River, our greatest shared public facility, will be increasingly fouled by increasingly more untreatable leachate draining from the increasing volume of garbage hauled into Benton County.

53.215 (3) Expansion *does not* comply with additional criteria which may be required for the specific use by this code. [Ord 90-0069]

- Testimony from state elected officials and others pointed out that this expansion proposal ignores the County's workgroup, "Benton County Talks Trash, and its roadmap toward sustainable waste management. Ignoring this work undermines the value and credibility of County-initiated workgroups.
- Testimony from state elected officials and others further pointed out that the proposal ignores the work begun by the County's (now disbanded) "Regional Sustainable Materials Management Plan," shutting down another initiative for developing a better future for Benton County.
- Testimony from Catherine Biscoe, a Benton County Planning Commissioner, pointed out that this expansion proposal conflicts with the goals within the Comprehensive Plan in the Benton County Code, as well as the Oregon Statewide Land-Use Planning Goals.
- Testimony by Virginia Scott illustrated the landfill's location is an *accident of convenience* from 1942, when it was improperly sited on a hillslope, over a wetland, in a rainy climate. It is grossly out of compliance now and should not be further expanded.
- Testimony by Maya Ables and several other Benton County residents pointed out that, by ignoring environmental ordinances that County residents *themselves* must follow, Republic Services has been free to expand Coffin Butte's "grandfathered" land-use status, transforming it into a lucrative private asset within Republic's \$69-billion enterprise.
- According to testimony by Beyond Toxics and other environmental engineers, Republic's odor report is faulty, based on 20-year-old data collected *before* Republic took control and *before* its rapid expansion of the landfill.
- Nor does Republic's odor report include years of documented DEQ odor complaints from the surrounding area, according to testimony by Faye Yoshihara.
- And finally, testimonies repeatedly pointed out that this landfill expansion contradicts Benton County's much touted claim of a "long history of commitment to the principles of sustainability to secure healthy, prosperous communities now and for our future." Residents—young and old—urged you, Commissioners, to live up to that commitment and let us all be proud of Benton County and its government, now and into the future.