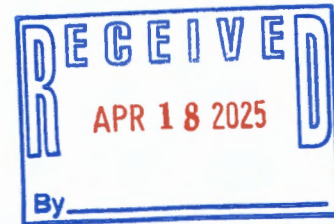


April 16, 2025

To: Benton County Planning Commission

From: Steve Michaels

Re: LU-24-027



The application to expand Coffin Butte Landfill does not meet county code decision criteria and must be denied. Operational problems at Coffin Butte Landfill are known to include methane emissions, widespread odor complaints, air borne particulates and a toxic soup of leachate. Groundwater contamination cannot be ruled out as well. The applicant has submitted voluminous information intended to demonstrate that the landfill expansion will not repeat the existing problems. The applicants state that landfill environmental and related livability issues are subject to state jurisdiction.

The application does not meet BCC 53.215(1). Coffin Butte Landfill currently has an adverse effect on surrounding permitted uses. Methane leaks, odor & air borne particulates are known to effect surrounding permitted uses through numerous complaints to the County and governing governmental agencies. These issues remain unresolved. The applicant would have you believe that the landfill expansion will not replicate these adverse impacts. No amount of prospective research can prove there will be an absence of adverse impacts. In fact, it is well known that landfills age badly. Case in point, Chiquita Canyon Landfill in Castaic, California is smoldering deep inside the pile of trash evaporating toxic chemicals including benzene and compromising the stability of the nasty leachate stew. The best landfill engineering practices cannot be counted on to protect surrounding uses or the public from a deteriorating landfill. It is reasonable to expect that an expanded landfill will continue to have an adverse effect on surrounding permitted uses.

The application does not meet BCC 53.215(2). Trash needs a home, but a landfill is a hazardous land use. The existing landfill is more than problematic. And the reality is Coffin Butte could evolve into an even greater public health and land use problem. An expanded landfill adds to the potential hazard. At the present, the existing landfill may be functioning without imposing an undue burden on public improvements and services. In the future, that will not be the case. A failing, toxic landfill will impose an undue burden on public improvements, facilities and utilities. An expanded landfill will make it worse. The County cannot accept that risk.

I recognize the need for proper collection and disposal of trash. I have been a Republic Services customer for many years and appreciate the service they provide. However, the opportunity to establish a regional solution to a regional trash problem is now, before the landfill is expanded. LU-24-027 does not meet Benton County Code criteria and must be denied.

Steve Michaels
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Corvallis, Oregon