



CLARK COUNTY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – AGRICULTURAL LANDS STUDY
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2025
OPEN HOUSE – PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Battle Ground Community Center
912 E Main Street
Battle Ground, Washington

5:30 p.m.

TESTIMONY

ROTH: So, my name is John Michael Roth, R-o-t-h. My address is, my farm address is 17400 N.E. 88th Street, my private residence is 17906 N.E. 87th Circle, Vancouver, Washington, 98682.

Our family has been in the dairy business 104 years in the United States. The first 20 some years was over by the Portland Airport, in 1941 we moved to the 17400 address, and we milked cows there until 1995 and then in 1995 we moved our farm to Idaho.

The reason we moved the farm was we felt like we couldn't grow anymore in Clark County like we wanted to grow because we felt that economies of scale would be better suited to the size of family we had and because, and just to keep up with growth because usually business growth is a good thing.

So, at the time land in Idaho was \$2,000 an acre and in Clark County it was anywhere from 30 to \$50,000 an acre and so it was, we were not in a competitive environment anymore and so we made the decision to move. We still have land in Clark County that is outside of the urban growth boundary although we are right next to the urban growth boundary; in fact, some of our farm was put inside the urban growth boundary.

Today I have a hobby farmer farm the ground, I don't even charge him because if I did, he couldn't probably couldn't make any money. He has a full-time job and does it because he loves to farm. I don't think it's -- I don't think there's a food scarcity problem in Clark County and I don't think it should be associated with the urban growth boundary because all the grocery stores are full and people with enough money can buy groceries, it's more of a social problem and a food distribution problem than it is a food scarcity problem.

And so, I'm at the Battle Ground meeting and there's a lot of, there's a booth here talking about food scarcity and in my opinion the two really shouldn't be talked about in the same vein. There is something to the fact that local food or food that is fresher, maybe there's some of that, people can grow gardens, but to be commercially viable it's very difficult with the land prices in Clark County, with

the infrastructure in Clark County, with the support system of universities and local colleges, they're more aligned with Eastern Washington and the abundance of farm ground there.

Also, in Clark County there's plenty of water but if you don't have water rights, you really can't farm on any type of scale without water rights. Numbers mean something and when I was a kid growing up there had to have been close to 500 dairies at one time in Clark County, but through the years to this day there's only two dairies left in Clark County, one a small organic dairy up in View and probably has no debt and has been there for many many years, the other is a large dairy located in Clark County that is fortunate to ship to a co-op, Tillamook, that pays better than almost every other processor.

So, people got out of the dairy business, the attrition rate is extremely high and that's because people could go other places and produce milk for less money thus causing an economic strain on the dairies that were left and the highest and best use for their land is no longer for dairies.

It's up to each individual person what they do with their land and if they think they can farm and make money that's wonderful, we need food, but if a person decides that highest and best use is for something else other than farming, we really shouldn't be restricted to get some development rights for it.

A lot of people talk about affordable housing and there's definitely a need for housing of all sorts and I think the only way to do that is to open up land for more types of housing so that the price of housing will come down, it's a supply and demand issue, and if the supply is limited, there's no way that affordable housing will come to fruition.