

BCTT Subcommittee - A.3. Legal Issues and B.1. Land Use Review

Version 2 -- 11/7/2022

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**Charge A: Common Understandings Tasks**

1. A Summary of the County's current rights and obligations to Republic Services, and vice versa, surrounding:
  1. *The hauling franchise;*
  2. *The landfill CUP; and*
  3. *What legally can and cannot be conditions of any land use approvals (e.g. past compliance, compliance with future laws, codes, and policies, DEQ compliance, reopening, limitations on what can be brought into the County from where, required facilities and practices, reporting/compliance/financial monitoring requirements, etc.)*
  4. Interpretation and Deference
2. A Summary of the rights and obligations of other entities surrounding landfills, hauling, and sustainability initiatives, etc.:
  1. *Federal;*
  2. *Tribal;*
  3. *State (e.g. Is DEQ prohibited from permitting another landfill west of the Cascades and what does the "regional landfill" designation mean?);*
  4. *Local Government; and*
  5. *Summary of the step-by-step process in ORS chapter 459 and associated timing for the cross-jurisdictional approvals of landfill applications, (e.g. DEQ) including:*
    1. *What topics are within whose authority, and*
    2. *Whether, for example, the County can or should consider the topics it does not have permitting authority over when assessing the criteria outlined in Code section 53.215?*

**Charge B: Land Use Review Tasks**

1. *Create a common understanding document outlining which Development Code criteria are applicable to the review of a conditional use application for landfill expansion by reviewing:*
  1. *53.215 (Criteria)*
  2. *77.305 (Conditional Uses)*

3. 77.310 (Review)
4. 77.405 (DEQ)
2. Review Chapters 50 and 51 for context, and then prepare a conceptual list of any other Development Code criteria the WORKGROUP recommends be applicable.
3. Developing recommended [guidelines for interpreting any ambiguous provisions](#) recognizing current statutes, regulations, case law, and County precedent, etc. In doing so, refer to Comprehensive Plan for policy guidance regarding interpretation of any ambiguous Development Code provisions (see, BCC 50.015,) and Review the Planning Commission comments made during its last review of Republic Services' CUP application for context. Examples for consideration include:
  1. The phrase, "Other information as required by the Planning Official" 77.310(e)
  2. The terms found in Section 53.215, e.g.
  3. "seriously interfere"
  4. "character of the area"
  5. "purpose of the zone"
  6. "undue burden"
  7. "any additional criteria which may be required for the specific use by this code."
  8. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Develop protocols for the timely and broad distribution of CUP-related information to the public, other governmental entities, and internal committees, groups, and divisions.

## IV. Workgroup Recommendations

### SECTION A: Develop Common Understandings

#### 2) Republic Services and Benton County's Current Rights and Obligations

*A Summary of the County's current rights and obligations to Republic Services, and vice versa surrounding the hauling franchise; The landfill CUP; and What legally can and cannot be conditions of any land use approvals (e.g. past compliance, compliance with future laws, codes, and policies, DEQ compliance, reopening, limitations on what can be brought into the County from where, required facilities and practices, reporting/compliance/financial monitoring requirements, etc.)*

"... We need a very clear statement from Republic's representatives regarding which liabilities belong to VLI, vs. which liabilities Republic is legally responsible for, in the long term if Republic divests from VLI."

#### **Rights and obligations relative to past land use approvals**

[This section yet to be developed.]

#### **Rights and obligations relative to franchise agreements**

Only the current franchise agreement has bearing. The previous franchise agreement is superseded at the time a new agreement takes effect. The provisions of the current (2020) franchise agreement are reflected in the table below.

Landfill Rights and Obligations			
	Republic Right/Republic Obligation (A Republic "right" is a County "obligation" and vice versa unless another entity is noted)	Authority	Comment
1	"Operate and maintain the Landfill as a sanitary landfill for disposal of Solid Waste"	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(a)	
2	"Comply with Benton County's solid waste ordinance and all provisions for service as set forth in Exhibit B" (current provisions detailed in this document)	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(a)	Exhibit B contains Benton County Code Ch. 23.
3	"Charge tipping fees."	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(b)	County hasn't participated in rate setting since 2000 franchise agreement eliminated county oversight. Section 7(f) designates Republic information related to tipping fees to be confidential. BCC 23.505 specified rate structures are not reviewed by BOC.
4	"Operate and promote the use of a Pacific Region Composting Facility (PRCF)."	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(c)	
5	"Shall accept for disposal at the Landfill, Solid Waste created or generated within Benton County."	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(d)	This guarantees Benton County residents will have access to landfill as long as it is operational. Per §11(f), if Republic is unable to take Benton County-generated waste at the landfill, it will make other permitted landfills available to Benton County Solid Waste. In that case, the tipping fee shall be the same as if solid waste was disposed of at Coffin Butte. Same rate provision applies for 6 months.

Landfill Rights and Obligations			
	<b>Republic Right/Republic Obligation (A Republic “right” is a County “obligation” and vice versa unless another entity is noted)</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
6	"All persons holding a franchise to collect and transport municipal Solid Waste in Benton County will be permitted access to the Landfill" as long as they pay the tipping fee.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(d)	This ensures municipalities within Benton County which franchise collection services can access Coffin Butte. BCC 23.410(7) codifies this requirement as well.
7	Residential self-haulers will be accepted.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(f)	\$35 per residential vehicle flat fee established, to be revised by the CPI after 3 years.
8	Secure loads required and maintain litter control measures.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §2(h)	
9	Annual franchise fee to be paid to County.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §4(a)	Section 11(d) describes situation when uncontrollable circumstances excuse Republic from paying fees. If Republic disposes of solid waste elsewhere, but not because of uncontrollable circumstances, it must still pay franchise fee.
10	Annual host fee, based on an amount per ton of Solid Waste accepted at the landfill, will be paid to County.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §4(b)	The host fee is a credit against the franchise fee, with the franchise fee serving as the minimum amount Republic will pay County each year.
11	Until landfill expansion is approved, annual tonnage deposited at landfill is capped at 1,100,000 tons.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §5(b)	Within the tonnage cap, Republic must allow Benton County generated waste up to 75,000 annual tons. Solid waste deposited as a result of fire, flood, or other natural disasters is exempt from the tonnage cap.

Landfill Rights and Obligations			
	<b>Republic Right/Republic Obligation (A Republic "right" is a County "obligation" and vice versa unless another entity is noted)</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
12	Environmental Trust Fund to be maintained at no less than \$5,000,000.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §6(a)	
13	Republic to maintain pollution liability insurance policy with minimum coverage of \$10,000,000.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §6(b)	Section 6(d) requires the parties to meet every 4 years or after each 2,000,000 ton increment of solid waste is deposited to review the pollution liability insurance coverage.
14	Following year 1 of the agreement, Republic to furnish an annual report to County.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §7(a)	Annual report on environmental condition of the landfill, "covering air, water, Solid Waste Permits, pollution controls, and related issues as determined by the parties."
15	Beginning in year 2 of the agreement, Republic to furnish remaining capacity data to County.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §7(b)	Republic to provide BOC "necessary data to confirm the remaining capacity of the Landfill as determined by both parties." Data to include methods and calculations used.
16	Other reports to be provided to County, when submitted to other agencies.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §7(c)	Public information and reports to state or federal agencies relative to operation of landfill to be provided to County.
17	All current and future state and federal laws must be complied with.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §11(a)	Codified at BCC 23.410(8) and (11).
18	Republic may only "sell, convey, transfer or assign the Landfill or any of its rights, interests, or obligations under [the franchise agreement]" with County's prior written approval.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement</a> §11(b)	

<b>Landfill Rights and Obligations</b>			
	<b>Republic Right/Republic Obligation (A Republic "right" is a County "obligation" and vice versa unless another entity is noted)</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
19	90-day notice required prior to discontinuance of service.	BCC 23.410(9)	
20	<b>DEQ</b> permit required to operate landfill	<a href="#">ORS 459.205</a>	Term of permit not to exceed 10 years. ORS 459.245(d).
21	Cleanup of hazardous substance contaminating ground water	<a href="#">ORS 459.248</a>	
22	Closure of landfill site.	<a href="#">ORS 459.268</a> , <a href="#">OAR 340-0940100</a>	
23	Groundwater monitoring	<a href="#">OAR 340-094-0080</a>	
24	Emissions Standards	<a href="#">OAR 340-236-0500</a>	
25	Franchise Agreement may only be reopened with "the mutual approval of both the Board and [Republic]."	<a href="#">BCC 23.310(2)</a>	
26	Republic and County will "work together" to monitor the flow of C&D materials and work toward establishing a transfer facility.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement §2(g)</a>	
27	"Negotiate in good faith to establish a program to promote selfhaulers and cease activities by illegal dumpers."	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement §2(e)</a>	Parties to establish a Dump-Stoppers program by July 1, 2021 with a joint report to BOC three years thereafter.
28	If landfill expansion occurs prior to 2024, host fee will be adjusted to reflect additional landfill space.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement §4(c)(i)</a>	
29	If landfill expansion occurs 2025 or later, host fee and franchise fee will be adjusted.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement §4(c)(ii)</a>	

Landfill Rights and Obligations			
	Republic Right/Republic Obligation (A Republic “right” is a County “obligation” and vice versa unless another entity is noted)	Authority	Comment
30	Inspections of landfill by County authorized.	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement §7(d)</a>	County has the right to inspect landfill for "determining [Republic's] compliance" with the franchise agreement.
31	County may prevent interruption of service.	<a href="#">BCC 23.415</a>	If failure or interruption of service would create an "immediate and serious health hazard or serious public nuisance," the BOC, with 24-hours' written notice to Republic, authorize county personnel or other persons to temporarily provide the service.

From Republic Services 9/30/22

(a) **The landfill franchise:** Valley Landfills, Inc., operates Coffin Butte Landfill under a Landfill Franchise and Host Agreement (“Landfill Franchise Agreement”) negotiated with Benton County in accordance with Benton County Code Chapter 23 (“BCC Chapter 23”). The most recent Landfill Franchise Agreement became effective on January 1, 2021 and extends until December 31, 2040. A franchise agreement is a contract, meaning that it cannot be amended except in writing executed by both parties. Among many other provisions, the Landfill Franchise Agreement specifies that Benton County will receive franchise and host fee payments from Valley Landfills, Inc.

Collection Rights and Obligations				
	<b>Republic Right/Republic Obligation</b> (A Republic "right" is a County "obligation" and vice versa unless another entity is noted)	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	Republic to provide solid waste collection and recycling services in the service areas specified in its application	Republic	<a href="#">Solid Waste Collection Franchise Agreement ¶1</a>	Service area is all of the unincorporated area of Benton County. See Map attached to application.
2	Republic to pay fee of 5% of gross cash receipts from collection service provided in service area	Republic	<a href="#">Board Order D2022044 ¶3</a>	
3	Republic to comply with applicable provisions of BCC Ch. 23 (Current provisions detailed in this document)	Republic	<a href="#">Board Order D2022044 ¶4</a>	
4	Annual submission of service/days of week map	Republic	<a href="#">Board Order D2022044 ¶8</a>	
5	Coordinate recycling efforts with solid waste collection efforts to enhance recycling/recovery and meet state goals.	Republic	<a href="#">Board Order D2022044 ¶9</a>	State goals found at ORS 459A.010.
6	Make reasonable effort to resolve customer complaints on service, record written complaints and their disposition.	Republic	<a href="#">Solid Waste Collection Franchise App. §5.E.</a>	
7	Provide solid waste collection at least weekly.	Republic	<a href="#">BCC 23.410(1)</a>	23.410 provide some exceptions to this baseline requirement.
8	Provide and maintain adequate equipment to handle and dispose of or resource recover solid waste.	Republic	<a href="#">BCC 23.410(2)</a>	

Collection Rights and Obligations				
	<b>Republic Right/Republic Obligation</b> (A Republic "right" is a County "obligation" and vice versa unless another entity is noted)	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
9	Set rate structure.	Republic, County	<a href="#">BCC 23.505, 23.510</a>	Republic proposes rates, county reviews and approves. Rate adjustments to accommodate Refuse Rate Index adjustments may not need BOC approval if contemplated in prior BOC order.
10	If County wants to consider a new solid waste service, Republic will provide written proposal within reasonable period of time, including proposed methods and costs for the service.	Republic, County	<a href="#">Solid Waste Collection Franchise Agreement ¶17</a>	Also found in Order, paragraph 7.
11	Agreement to be amended by July 1, 2024 "to include same or similar terms as the forthcoming City of Corvallis collection franchise agreement, including, but not limited to, the same termination date, as well as concepts from the consensus-seeking process."	Republic, County	<a href="#">Solid Waste Collection Franchise Agreement ¶12</a>	This provision is also found in the BOC Order granting the franchise at section 2.
12	County may prevent interruption of service.	County	<a href="#">BCC 23.415</a>	If failure or interruption of service would create an "immediate and serious health hazard or serious public nuisance," the BOC, with 24-hours' written notice to Republic, authorize county personnel or other persons to temporarily provide the service.

Collection Rights and Obligations				
	<b>Republic Right/Republic Obligation</b> (A Republic “right” is a County “obligation” and vice versa unless another entity is noted)	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
13	County to protect franchise rights and interests granted Republic to achieve compliance with BCC Ch. 23.	County	<a href="#">Solid Waste Collection Franchise Agreement</a> ¶15	

From Republic Services 9/30/22

- (a) **The hauling franchise:** Corvallis Disposal Co. dba Allied Waste Services of Corvallis (also dba Republic Services of Corvallis) (“Republic Services”) provides solid-waste collection under separate franchise agreements with both Benton County and the City of Corvallis. In June of 2022, Benton County renewed Republic Services’ Solid Waste Collection Franchise (“Benton County Collection Franchise”) for ten years. On or before July 1, 2024, Benton County may seek to negotiate the amendment of certain terms of the Benton County Collection Franchise when Republic and the City of Corvallis negotiate the renewal of the City of Corvallis Collection Franchise.

## What legally can and cannot be conditions of any land use approvals

From Republic Services 9/30/22

### (b) What legally can and cannot be conditions of any land use approvals:

- The existing landfill and expansion area are located on property specially designated for a landfill site on the comprehensive plan and zoning maps. The expansion requires CUP approval by the County under criteria **that focus on negative off-site impacts**. The applicant is required to demonstrate that the expansion (a) does not “seriously interfere” with uses on adjacent property, with the character of the area or with the purpose of the zone, and (b) does not impose an “undue burden” on public improvements or services available to the area. The County has authority to impose conditions of approval to ensure compliance with these criteria but does not have authority to impose conditions unrelated to the criteria. Attachment “A” to this memo provides further detail on the interpretation of the CUP criteria.
- The County only has jurisdiction under the CUP over the proposed expansion as requested in the application. Existing and past operations are not within the County’s jurisdiction. Prior decisions are final and cannot be revisited or collaterally attacked as part of the CUP application for the expansion. *See, e.g., Beck v. Tillamook Cnty.*, 313 Or 148, 153, 831 P2d 678 (1992). Any future application would have to be judged under the standards and criteria in effect at the time of the application.
- Although both Corvallis Disposal Co. dba Allied Waste Services of Corvallis and Valley Landfills, Inc. are subsidiaries of the same parent company, the collection franchise for Benton County (“Benton County Collection Franchise”) (as well as that of the City of Corvallis) is comprised of a separate operation which is distinct from the landfill operations.
- Both the Benton County Collection Franchise and the Landfill Franchise Agreement are controlled by BCC Chapter 23. BCC Chapter 23 is not a land use regulation. It authorizes negotiation of franchise agreements for collection and disposal of solid waste. Because BCC Chapter 23 is a business regulation separate from the land use process, the County has no legal authority to require changes to the Benton County Collection Franchise or the Landfill Franchise Agreement in conjunction with the review of a CUP for the landfill expansion. Any changes to the Franchise Agreements must be negotiated between the parties.
- ORS 459.095(1) preempts local government’s authority to adopt regulations or impose conditions that conflict with DEQ regulations.

**From County Counsel Vance Croney**

**Question: Can Benton County prohibit solid waste generated outside the county from being deposited at Coffin Butte landfill?**

**Answer: No.**

The Commerce Clause, Art. I, §8, Cl. 3 of the U.S. Constitution, explicitly gives Congress the power “to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.” Implicit in this grant of authority is the prohibition on states (and local governments) against passage of legislation which discriminates or burdens interstate commerce. This is referred to as the “dormant Commerce Clause.”

The dormant commerce clause was the basis of a decision by the United States Supreme Court in which it ruled unconstitutional a Michigan law barring out-of-state solid waste from being deposited in landfills located in Michigan counties.

In *Fort Gratiot Sanitary Landfill, Inc. v. Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources*, 504 U.S. 353, 112 S.Ct. 2019 (1992), Michigan enacted legislation which prohibited private landfill operators from accepting solid waste originating outside the county where the facility was located, unless otherwise authorized by the county’s waste management plan. *Id.* at 353. In its challenge to that law, the landfill operator argued “that requiring a private landfill operator to limit its business to the acceptance of local waste constituted impermissible discrimination against interstate commerce.” *Id.* at 357.

As part of its analysis, the Supreme Court reexamined its holding in *Dean Milk Co. v. Madison*, 340 U.S. 349, 71 S.Ct. 295 (1951) in which the petitioner challenged a Wisconsin city ordinance “that made it unlawful to sell any milk as unpasteurized unless it had been processed at a plant ‘within a radius of five miles from the central square of Madison.’” *Dean*, at 350. That local ban, as it applied to adjacent Illinois dairy producers, was found to be unconstitutional under the Commerce Clause. *Id.* But, significantly, the Court also emphasized the intrastate unconstitutionality of the ban:

The fact that the ordinance also discriminated against all Wisconsin producers whose facilities were more than five miles from the center of the city did not mitigate its burden on interstate commerce. As we noted, it was ‘immaterial that Wisconsin milk from outside the Madison area is subjected to the same proscription as that moving in interstate commerce.’ *Dean* at 345, n. 4.

*Fort Gratiot*, 504 U.S. at 362-63.

Relying on *Dean* and *Philadelphia v. New Jersey*, 437 U.S. 617, 98 S.Ct. 2531 (1978), the Court found Michigan’s ban “unambiguously discriminate[s] against interstate commerce and [is] appropriately characterized as protectionist measures that cannot withstand scrutiny under the Commerce Clause.” *Fort Gratiot*, 504 U.S. at 367-68.

Pursuant to the holding in *Fort Gratiot*, and the precedent cited by the U.S. Supreme Court, Benton County may not prohibit a private landfill operator from accepting solid waste from outside Benton County.

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## IV. Workgroup Recommendations

### SECTION A: Develop Common Understandings

#### 1) A chronological history of key Coffin Butte Landfill topics

##### E) Reporting requirements

#	Authority	Reporting Requirement
1	<a href="#">Landfill Franchise Agreement:</a>	Operational Reports
2		Capacity Reports
3		Other Reports: copies relative to the operation of the landfill (Benton County & Valley Landfills, Inc., 2020)
4	<a href="#">OAR Chapter 340, Divison 94: "(13) Records"</a> (Oregon Secretary of State, 2022)	(A) Daily listing by load of the volume or weight of solid waste received;
5		(B) Monthly and quarterly accumulations of amounts of daily waste received."
6	<a href="#">DEQ Solid Waste Permit Reporting Requirements</a> (GeoLogic Associates, 2021)	Operating Record
7		Daily amount of each waste type received and approved alternative daily cover
8		If applicable, every quarter, record the amount of each material recovered for recycling or other beneficial purpose.
9		Solid Waste Disposal Report/Fee Calculation form.
10		Wasteshed Reporting (as part of the Opportunity to Recycle Reporting)
11		Retain copies of all records and reports for 10 years after their creation.
12		Update all records to reflect current conditions at the facility
13		Annual Environmental Monitoring Report (AEMR)
14		Statement of compliance
15		Annual leachate treatment report
16	Split sampling submittal	
17	<a href="#">DEQ NPDES Permit</a> (Geo-Logic Associates, 2021)	Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC)
18		Monthly monitoring results
19	<a href="#">Federal Fish and Wildlife Depredation Permit</a> (Geo-Logic Associates, 2021)	Annual Report

#	Authority	Reporting Requirement
# 20	<a href="#">Oregon Title V Operating Permit for Site Air Emissions</a> (Geo-Logic Associates, 2021)	Excess emissions reporting
21	<a href="#">Oregon Title V Operating Permit for Site Air Emissions</a> (Geo-Logic Associates, 2021)	Permit deviations reporting
22		Semi-annual and annual reports
23		Monthly reports

From Republic Services 9/30/22

- a) **Reporting requirements:** The environmental services industry is one of the most heavily regulated in the United States, and Coffin Butte Landfill works cooperatively with all its regulatory partners, whether they be at the federal, state, county, or local level. The following is a summary of Coffin Butte’s partnerships and inspections.
- i. **Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) solid waste permit:** Includes semiannual inspections, semi-annual groundwater monitoring (usually in April and October); **results are submitted in an annual report every month to DEQ.**
  - ii. **DEQ Title V air permit:** Bi-annual inspections; Coffin Butte also utilizes third-party technology to monitor landfill gas twice monthly. Results are reviewed in real time and submitted to DEQ twice a year. In addition, Coffin Butte submits monthly and semi-annual reports to DEQ on well readings, flare readings and other routine operations.
  - iii. **DEQ stormwater permit:** Coffin Butte staff performs weekly and monthly visual inspections of the stormwater and stormwater related infrastructure. Stormwater monitoring (taking samples and sending them to a third-party laboratory for analysis) is conducted four times a year during rainy season and reported to DEQ quarterly. DEQ also conducts its own inspections every five years or so.
  - iv. **City of Corvallis wastewater disposal permit:** Subject to an annual inspection as well as weekly monitoring and monthly reporting to the City.
  - v. **City of Salem wastewater disposal permit:** Subject to semi-annual inspection as well as semi-annual monitoring to the City and reporting to the City.

## IV. Workgroup Recommendations

### SECTION A: Develop Common Understandings

1. ***A Summary of the County's current rights and obligations to Republic Services, and vice versa, surrounding:***

#### ***4. Interpretation and Deference***

*Memo prepared by Vance Croney, Benton County Counsel (10/27/2022). Reviewed and concurred with by Jeff Condit and Holly Doyle, attorneys for Republic Services (11/2/2022).*

To: Legal Issues Subcommittee

From: Vance M. Croney, Benton County Counsel and Jeffrey G. Condit, Attorney at Law

Date: Oct. 28, 2022

Question: How are ambiguous terms interpreted and what deference is given to that interpretation?

Answer: The rules of statutory construction describe how ambiguous terms are to be interpreted and then, when an interpretation is made, as long as it is plausible, LUBA's standard of review is highly deferential to that interpretation.

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An ambiguous term is one that is typically undefined by statute or code. *See State v. Arnold*, 302 Or. App. 765, 772 (2020). If the term is then capable of two or more plausibly reasonable explanations, it is ambiguous. *Hoffman Const. Co. of Alaska v. Fred S. James & Co. of Oregon*, 313 Or 464, 470-71 (1992). When confronted with an ambiguous term, the decision-making body engages in a form of statutory construction.

*PGE v. Bureau of Labor and Indus.*, 317 Or 606, 611 (1993) and *State v. Gaines*, 346 Or 160 (2009) establish a framework for interpreting statutes based upon text, context, and legislative history. This same framework also applies to the interpretation of local code provisions. *Church v. Grant County*, 187 Or App 518, 527 n.4 (2003) (citing *Lincoln Loan Co. v. City of Portland*, 317 Or 192, 199 (1993)).

The text is the best evidence of intent: If a term is not defined in the code or is not otherwise a term of art, the courts in Oregon apply a "plain, ordinary meaning" rule, where they turn to the dictionary.

Context includes provisions in the same code section and within the regulatory scheme.

Legislative intent is determined by reviewing evidence of the intent of the legislative body (in this case, the Benton County Board of Commissioners) at the time of enactment.

Within the above framework, the governing body then reaches an interpretation of the ambiguous term, which then gives rise to the next question: How much deference is given to the governing body's interpretation?

The Oregon legislature and the state Supreme Court have both answered this question. ORS 197.829 reads:

(1) The Land Use Board of Appeals shall affirm a local government’s interpretation of its comprehensive plan and land use regulations, unless the board determines that the local government’s interpretation:

- (a) Is inconsistent with the express language of the comprehensive plan or land use regulation;
- (b) Is inconsistent with the purpose for the comprehensive plan or land use regulation;
- (c) Is inconsistent with the underlying policy that provides the basis for the comprehensive plan or land use regulation; or
- (d) Is contrary to a state statute, land use goal or rule that the comprehensive plan provision or land use regulation implements.

ORS 197.829 is framed within LUBA’s jurisdiction because appeal of land use decisions are made to LUBA.

The Oregon Supreme Court applied and explained the breadth of this statute when it reviewed the City of Medford’s interpretation of its development code: “[W]hen a governing body is responsible for enacting an ordinance, it may be assumed to have a better understanding than LUBA or the courts of its intended meaning. \* \* \* [T]hat assumption is equally relevant to \* \* \* the governing body’s intention.” *Siporen v. City of Medford*, 349 Or. 247, 258 (2010).

The Court found when a local government interprets its own development code, it is “entitled to the deference described in ORS 197.829(1).” *Id.* And the extent of that deference is substantial:

[W]hen a local government plausibly interprets its own land use regulations by considering and then choosing between or harmonizing conflicting provisions, that interpretation must be affirmed, as held in *Clark v. Jackson County*, 313 Or. 508 (1992) and provided in ORS 197.829(1)(a), unless the interpretation is inconsistent with *all* of the “express language” that is relevant to the interpretation, or inconsistent with the purposes or policies underpinning the regulations. (emphasis in original)

*Id.* at 259.

When LUBA assesses whether an interpretation is “plausible,” the standard of review is “highly deferential” to the governing body and the “existence of a stronger or more logical interpretation does not render a weaker or less logical interpretation ‘implausible.’” *Mark Latham Excavation, Inc. v. Deschutes County*, 250 Or. App. 543, 555 (2012), quoted in *Crowley v. City of Hood River*, 308 Or. App. 44, 52 (2020).

Thus, as long as the Benton County Board of Commissioners’ interpretation of its development code is plausible, LUBA must defer to that interpretation. It should be noted, deference only applies to interpretations by the governing body (the Board of Commissioners) and not to interpretations of other county decision-makers, such as staff, the Planning Commission, or the Solid Waste Advisory committee.

In addition, the exercise of interpreting a code or statutory provision only applies if the term is ambiguous; deference can’t be use to amend a code in the guise of an interpretation. *Central Eastside Indus. Council v. City of Portland*, 74 Or LUBA 221 (2016).

## IV. Workgroup Recommendations

### SECTION A: Develop Common Understandings

#### 3) Other Entity Rights and Obligations

A Summary of the rights and obligations of other entities surrounding landfills, hauling, and sustainability initiatives, etc. The following table list questions for various federal, state, tribal, and local entities regarding rights and obligations. The table includes preliminary research relating to entity roles and authority. Each entity will be contacted and asked to respond to these questions, to help provide more information.

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
1		What are DEQ's rights and obligations regarding groundwater associated with landfills?	459.248 Cleanup of hazardous substance contaminating ground water. In addition to any other authority granted by law, if the Department of Environmental Quality finds that ground water is contaminated with a hazardous substance originating at a land disposal site, the department may require cleanup of the hazardous substance pursuant to authority under ORS 465.200 to 465.545. As used in this section, "hazardous substance" has the meaning given that term in ORS 465.200. [1993 c.526 §3] (State of Oregon, 2021)	Republic Services, Oregon DEQ	<a href="#">ORS 459.248</a>	

2			<p>(6) Additional Requirements to Protect or to Monitor Potential Threats to Groundwater. When a person applies to construct a new or expanded landfill cell at a municipal solid waste landfill, the Department shall evaluate the need to provide protection to groundwater in addition to the requirements of 40 CFR, Part 258, Subpart D. The Department shall also evaluate whether the specific conditions at the site require an enhanced ability to monitor potential threats to groundwater in addition to the requirements in 40 CFR, Part 258, Subpart E. The evaluation shall be based on site-specific data, including but not limited to location, geography, hydrogeology and size of the site. To assist in the Department's evaluation, the applicant shall provide necessary relevant data. The Department may require a secondary leachate collection system, and/or leak detection system, or other design or technology providing equivalent protection to the environment if the Department determines that:</p> <p>(a) There is significant potential for adverse impact to groundwater from the proposed cell; or</p> <p>(b) Additional measures are necessary to provide adequate monitoring of potential threats to the groundwater.</p>	<p>Republic Services, Oregon DEQ</p>	<p><a href="#">OAR 340-094-0060</a></p>	
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Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
3			<p>Groundwater Monitoring and Corrective Action</p> <p>If a municipal solid waste landfill is subject to 40 CFR, Part 258 as provided in 40 CFR, §258.1, the owner or operator shall comply with groundwater monitoring and corrective action requirements in 40 CFR, Part 258, Subpart E. Consistent with those requirements, all municipal solid waste landfill owners and operators shall also comply with this rule: (See rule for more detail)</p>	<p>Republic Services, Oregon DEQ</p>	<p><a href="https://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/REGISTRATION/Pages/340-094-0080.aspx">340-094-0080</a></p>	

<b>Other Entity Rights and Obligations</b>						
	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Right or Obligation</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
4			<p>(4) Sensitive Hydrogeological Environments. In addition to the requirements of 40 CFR, Part 258, Subpart B, no person shall establish or expand a landfill in a gravel pit excavated into or above a water table aquifer or other sensitive or sole source aquifer, or in a wellhead protection area, where the Department has determined that:</p> <p>(a) Groundwater must be protected from pollution because it has existing or potential beneficial uses (OAR 340040-0020); and</p> <p>(b) Existing natural protection is</p>	<p>Republic Services, Oregon DEQ</p>	<p><a href="https://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/REGISTRATION/REGISTRATION/Pages/340-094-0030.aspx">340-094-0030</a></p>	
5			<p>insufficient or inadequate to minimize the risk of polluting groundwater.</p>			

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
6		What are DEQ's rights and obligations regarding leachate associated with landfills?	(3) Leachate. In addition to the requirements of 40 CFR, Part 258, Subpart D, any person designing or constructing a landfill shall ensure that leachate production is minimized. Where required by the Department, leachate shall be collected and treated or otherwise controlled in a manner approved by the Department. Leachate storage and treatment impoundments shall be located, designed, constructed and monitored, at a minimum, to the same standards of environmental protection as municipal solid waste landfills.	Republic Services, Oregon DEQ	<a href="#">OAR 340-094-0060</a>	
7		What are DEQ's rights and obligations regarding noise associated with landfills?	OAR 340-030-0035 established DEQ regulation of industrial or commercial noise levels. OAR 340-030-0110 states legislative funding for DEQ's oversight of noise control was defunded in 1991.		OAR <a href="#">340-035-0030</a> , OAR <a href="#">340-035-0110</a>	
8		What are DEQ's rights and obligations regarding odors associated with	(4) Gas Control. No person shall establish, expand or modify a landfill such that:  (a) The concentration of methane (CH <sub>4</sub> )	Republic Services, Oregon DEQ	<a href="#">OAR 340-094-0060</a>	

<b>Other Entity Rights and Obligations</b>						
	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Right or Obligation</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Comment</b>
9		landfills?	<p>gas at the landfill exceeds 25 percent of its lower explosive limit in facility structures (excluding gas control or gas recovery system components) or its lower explosive limit at the property boundary;</p> <p>(b) Malodorous decomposition gases become a public nuisance.</p>			

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Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
10		What fugitive methane emissions standards and monitoring is required by the landfill?	<p>ii. Air Quality Permit</p> <p>(1) All sources subject to this division must have an Oregon Title V Operating Permit that assures compliance by the source with all applicable requirements in effect as of the date of permit issuance. (Oregon Secretary of State, n.d.-a)</p> <p>340-239-0100 Landfills with Greater Than or Equal to 200,000 Tons of Waste-in-Place</p> <p>(4) The owner or operator of a landfill having greater than or equal to 200,000 tons of waste-in-place must submit an annual Waste-in-Place Report to DEQ pursuant to OAR 340-239-0700(3)(e) and an annual Methane Generation Rate Report, pursuant to OAR 340-2390700(3)(f), until the owner or operator submits a Closure Notification pursuant</p>	Republic Services, Oregon DEQ	<p><a href="#">340-218-0010</a></p> <p><a href="#">340-239</a></p>	

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
11			<p>to OAR 340-239-0700(3)(a). The initial Waste-in-Place Report and Methane Generation Rate Report submitted by a landfill pursuant to sections (1), (2) or (3) shall satisfy this requirement for the initial year it applies to a landfill.</p> <p>340-239-0800 Test Methods and Procedures</p> <p>When required as provided in OAR 340239-0100 through 340-239-0700, the owner or operator of a landfill must comply with the test methods and procedures for monitoring and measurements in this rule. (Oregon Secretary of State, n.d.-b)</p>			

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
12		Can or should the County consider DEQ permitting topics when assessing the local land use application criteria?	The county does consider, and incorporates, DEQ's permitting into its conditions of approval. Typically, conditions of approval will include the requirement that the applicant obtain, and maintain, the relevant and required approvals and/or permits from other regulatory agencies, e.g., DEQ, DSL, ODOT. The condition recognizes the outside agency's jurisdiction over the issue and links the lawful status of Benton County's permit to the applicant's compliance with the agencies rules and regulations. If the applicant later violates, or is unable to meet the agency's, regulations, that failure would constitute a violation of a condition of Benton County's approval.			
13	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)	a. What restrictions does the landfill have regarding wildlife?	. (3) Endangered Species. In addition to the requirements of 40 CFR, Part 258, Subpart B, no person shall establish, expand or modify a landfill in a manner that will cause or contribute to the actual or attempted: (a) Harassing,	Republic Services, Oregon	<a href="#">OAR 340-094-0030</a>	

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
14			harming, pursuing, hunting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing or collecting of any endangered or threatened species of plants, fish, or wildlife; (b) Direct or indirect alteration of critical habitat which appreciably diminishes the likelihood of the survival and recovery of endangered or threatened species using that habitat. (Oregon Secretary of State, 2022)			
15	Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL)	What are the rights and obligations both retained and delegated by DSL, which are associated with landfills, hauling, and materials management?				

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
16	Water Resource Commission	What are the rights and obligations both retained and delegated by Water Resource Commission, which are associated with landfills, hauling, and materials management?				
17	Oregon Department of	What are the rights and obligations				
18	Transportation (ODOT)	both retained and delegated by ODOT, which are associated with landfills, hauling, and materials management?				
19	Metro	What are the rights and obligations associated with landfills, hauling, and materials management?	a. Financial Reporting	Republic Services, Metro	<a href="#">Designated Facility Agreement, Metro Contract No. 936520</a> (Metro, 2019)	

Other Entity Rights and Obligations						
	Agency	Question	Right or Obligation	Responsible Party	Authority	Comment
20	City of Corvallis	What are the rights and obligations both retained and delegated by Corvallis, which are associated with landfills, hauling, and materials management?	a. Stormwater Discharge Reporting	Republic services, City of Corvallis	<a href="#">City of Corvallis Industrial Wastewater Discharge Permit No. 5</a>	
21			Solid Waste Collection Franchise, negotiations with the hauler heavily influence Benton County's agreement.	City of Corvallis, Republic Services	<a href="#">City of Corvallis Ordinance No. 2015-13</a>	
22	City of Salem	What are the rights and obligations both retained and delegated by	a. Stormwater Discharge Reporting	Republic Services, City of Salem	<a href="#">City of Salem Wastewater Discharge Permit No. WD7577</a>	
23		Salem, associated with landfills, hauling, and materials management?				

**3. Summary of Rights and Obligations of Other Entities:**

- (a) **Federal:** Republic will provide input on this topic in the “Other Entity Rights and Obligations” document circulated on September 26, 2022.
- (b) **Tribal:** Republic will provide input on this topic in the “Other Entity Rights and Obligations” document circulated on September 26, 2022.
- (c) **State:**
  - i. Is DEQ prohibited from permitting another landfill west of the Cascades? No.
  - ii. What does the “regional landfill” designation mean? The State of Oregon implemented and began permitting “regional landfills” in the 1970s, as a more environmentally reasonable approach to solid waste management and disposal. Coffin Butte was designated a regional landfill in 1974 under a cooperative effort between Benton, Linn, Marion, Yamhill and Polk Counties. The plan noted that “individual communities will be unable to effectively solve the economic, social, scientific and technical problems of solid waste disposal” and that a “regional approach to solid waste disposal will be necessary” for the area’s economy. Today, these counties all depend upon Coffin Butte for responsible waste disposal through various contracts, requirements or other enforceable arrangements, which cannot be wished away.

**From County Counsel Vance Cronney**

Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 459.005(23) defines a Regional Disposal Site as follows:

“Regional disposal site” means a disposal site that receives, or a proposed disposal site that is designed to receive more than 75,000 tons of solid waste a year from outside the immediate service area in which the disposal site is located. As used in this subsection, “immediate service area” means the county boundary of all counties except a county that is within the boundary of the metropolitan service district. For a county within the metropolitan service district, “immediate service area” means the metropolitan service district boundary.

The immediate service area of Coffin Butte is Benton County. To constitute a regional disposal site, Coffin Butte must have been designed to “receive more than 75,000 tons of solid waste a year” from outside Benton County.

The definition set forth in ORS 459.005(23) was enacted in 1987, but at that time, limited the 75,000-ton threshold to solid waste received from commercial haulers. In 1993, the definition of regional disposal site was amended to remove the reference to commercial haulers and has remained substantively unchanged since that time.

The 1994 annual report submitted by Benton County’s Environmental Health Department showed solid waste received at Coffin Butte from outside Benton County in 1993 totaled 250,655 tons. In every year thereafter, Coffin Butte has received solid waste in excess of 75,000 tons from outside Benton County.

So, while the statute uses the term “designed to receive” rather than “receives,” Coffin Butte has received more than 75,000 tons of out-of-county solid waste per year and the facility is clearly designed to accommodate those volumes. Its annual out-of-county solid waste volume exceeds the statutory threshold for meeting the definition of a regional disposal site.

Before the Oregon legislature defined regional disposal sites, Benton County established Coffin Butte as a regional disposal site through the land use process. The Board order dated May 15, 1974, declared “that the proposed Coffin Butte landfill be and is hereby approved as a regional sanitary landfill site as recommended by the Chemeketa Regional Solid Waste Program Report.” The staff report accompanying that order identifies Polk, Yamhill, Marion and Linn Counties as being served by the regional sanitary landfill. Benton County Comprehensive Plan Policy 6.5.8 identifies Coffin Butte as a “Regional Sanitary Landfill.”

The Chemeketa Report designated Coffin Butte as a regional landfill. Report, pg. 24. Pursuant to the Chemeketa Report, the region to be served by Coffin Butte included Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Linn and Benton Counties.

In 1988, by Board Order, Benton County included Tillamook County among the counties to be served by Coffin Butte. In 1993-94, the Board authorized the inclusion of Lincoln County in the region.

- d) **Local government** Republic will provide input on this topic in the “Other Entity Rights and Obligations” document circulated on September 26, 2022.

- e) **Summary of the step-by-step process in ORS chapter 459 and associated timing for the cross-jurisdictional approvals of landfill applications...** As previously noted, a landfill expansion requires amendment to three existing environmental permits from Oregon DEQ. But due to statutory state-agency coordination requirements, DEQ will not review or act on the environmental permit modifications until the County has granted land use approval. Valley Landfills cannot begin the DEQ permitting process until it has secured a CUP from the County.
- f) **What topics are within whose authority?** Please refer to previous responses.
- g) **Whether County can or should consider the topics it does not have permitting authority over when assessing the criteria outlined in Code section 53.215.** Please see response to Section 2(b).

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## **Charge B: Land Use Review Tasks**

1. **Create a common understanding document outlining which Development Code criteria are applicable to the review of a conditional use application for landfill expansion by reviewing:**
  1. **53.215 (Criteria)**
  2. **77.305 (Conditional Uses)**
  3. **77.310 (Review)**
  4. **77.405 (DEQ)**
2. **Review Chapters 50 and 51 for context, and then prepare a conceptual list of any other Development Code criteria the WORKGROUP recommends be applicable.**
3. **Developing recommended guidelines for interpreting any ambiguous provisions recognizing current statutes, regulations, case law, and County precedent, etc. In doing so, refer to Comprehensive Plan for policy guidance regarding interpretation of any ambiguous Development Code provisions (see, BCC 50.015,) and Review the Planning Commission comments made during its last review of Republic Services' CUP application for context. Examples for consideration include:**
  1. **The phrase, "Other information as required by the Planning Official" 77.310(e)**
  2. **The terms found in Section 53.215, e.g.**
  3. **"seriously interfere"**
  4. **"character of the area"**
  5. **"purpose of the zone"**
  6. **"undue burden"**
  7. **"any additional criteria which may be required for the specific use by this code.**
  8. **Other: \_\_\_\_\_**
4. **Develop protocols for the timely and broad distribution of CUP-related information to the public, other governmental entities, and internal committees, groups, and divisions.**

## BACKGROUND

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

### *How does a land use decision get made in Benton County?*

1. Application submitted:
  - a. form;
  - b. fee;
  - c. documentation to support a demonstration of compliance relative to the applicable criteria in the Development Code (and, in some instances, in state law).
2. 150-day clock<sup>1</sup> starts. County must reach a final decision within 150 days.
3. If Planning Official determines application is “incomplete” (i.e., missing any of the documentation required by “c.” above) and notifies applicant within 30 days of application submittal, then 150-day clock is paused.
  - a. Once application is complete or applicant directs application proceed without the missing information, 150-day clock starts again.
4. Notification is mailed to nearby property owners and other interested parties identifying a public comment period. Public notice in newspaper.
5. Staff researches and prepares a report evaluating the proposal relative to the applicable criteria.
6. Planning Official issues a decision; notice of the decision is mailed as in #4 above.
  - a. 14-day appeal period; if no appeal, decision is final.
7. If appealed, or in the instance of certain land use applications that go directly to the Planning Commission, a Planning Commission hearing is scheduled. Notice of the hearing is mailed as in #4, above.
8. Planning Commission receives staff presentation, applicant presentation, public testimony, applicant’s rebuttal.
  - a. Planning Commission may ask questions of any testifiers.
  - b. May keep record open for additional written testimony or may continue hearing for additional oral testimony.
  - c. Planning Commission deliberates, votes to approve or deny the application.
9. Notice of Planning Commission decision is sent to, at minimum, all participants. Practice has been to mail as in #4, above.
  - a. 14-day appeal period.
  - b. If no appeal, decision is final decision
10. If appealed, Board of Commissioners hearing is scheduled. Process is the same as for Planning Commission hearing (#9, above)
11. Board of Commissioners decision is final local decision, ending the 150-day clock.
12. Notice of Board of Commissioners decision mailed to, at minimum, all participants.
  - a. 21-day appeal period

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<sup>1</sup> Discussed further in separate section below.

- b. Appeal is to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals and from there to the Oregon Court of Appeals and then to the Oregon Supreme Court. Federal constitutional issues (such as regulatory takings of property without just compensation) may be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

### ***Decision-making Process for Planning Commission or Board of Commissioners***

- A) Criteria applicable to the land use proposal are identified.
  - Typically these are all within the Benton County Development Code
  - Some instances where state rules or statute are directly applicable; examples:
    - i. Exceptions to a statewide planning goal
    - ii. Expansion of an urban growth boundary
- B) Decision-makers consider available evidence in determining whether the proposed use complies with the applicable criteria. When the criteria are subjective, this analysis (either explicitly or implicitly) involves interpretation of what the criteria mean. Evidence and testimony can address the interpretation of the criteria as well as whether the proposal meets the criteria.
  - Staff research and analysis
  - Public testimony, including from other agencies
  - Members of the Planning Commission or Board of Commissioners are discouraged from doing their own research as that can lead to issues or perception of bias or ex parte contact.
- C) A motion is made; deliberations (oral discussion of the matter) are held by the decision-making body, including reasons why the proposal does or does not comply with the applicable criteria, and a vote is taken. If the motion fails, another motion is made, and so on, until a motion approving or denying the application passes.

### **From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22**

**Overview of the Land Use Framework.** Under Oregon land use law, an application for a land use permit is considered “quasi-judicial” (as opposed to legislative) because the local government is judging whether an applicant has submitted sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with the applicable criteria. As part of the quasi-judicial process, an applicant is entitled to an impartial decision-maker, the ability to present and rebut evidence, and a written decision applying the adopted criteria to the facts subject to review by the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA). A local government may not apply criteria or policy choices outside the applicable code criteria. ORS 215.416(8)(a).

An applicant is statutorily entitled to approval or denial of its application based upon the standards and criteria in effect at the time of the application (this requirement is called the “nochanging-of-the-goalposts” rule). ORS 215.427(3). If the local government desires to change the applicable criteria, it must first go through the post-acknowledgement plan amendment (PAPA) process, which is subject to notice; review by the Land Conservation and Development Commission; compliance with the comprehensive plan and Statewide Land Use Planning Goals;

and the public hearing and adoption process. Such amendments are applicable to applications after the date the new regulations become effective, but can't be retroactively applied to prior approvals or pending applications filed prior to the effective date of the amended regulations.

## **INTERPRETING CODE PROVISIONS**

### From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

Provisions that are mandated by state law must be interpreted consistent with state law and the case law that bears on that state law.

Example: whether a property qualifies for a farm-related dwelling is spelled out in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR).

Example: the "conditional use" criteria for exclusive farm use zones are specified in ORS 215.296

Provisions that derive not from state statute or rule but are developed and adopted by the local jurisdiction may be interpreted by the local jurisdiction, and are granted deference so long as the interpretation is plausible.

Example: Benton County's conditional use criteria (which serve as additional criteria in the Exclusive Farm Use zone).

Example: the provisions of the Landfill Site zone (Chapter 77).

### From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

**Rules of Statutory Construction.** *PGE v. Bureau of Labor and Indus.*, 317 Or 606, 611, 859 P2d 1143 (1993) and *State v. Gaines*, 346 Or 160, 206 P3d 1042 (2009) establish a framework for interpreting statutes based upon text, context, and legislative history. This same framework also applies to the interpretation of local code provisions. *Church v. Grant County*, 187 Or App 518, 527 n.4, 69 P3d 759 (2003) (citing *Lincoln Loan Co. v. City of Portland*, 317 Or 192, 199, 855 P2d 151 (1993)).

The text is the best evidence of intent: If a term is not defined in the code or is not otherwise a term of art, the courts in Oregon apply a "plain, ordinary meaning" rule, where they turn to the dictionary.

Context includes provisions in the same code section and within the regulatory scheme.

Legislative intent is determined by reviewing evidence of the intent of the legislative body (in this case, the Benton County Board of Commissioners) at the time of enactment.

Within the above framework, the governing body's interpretation of the code is entitled to some deference. *Siporen v. City of Medford*, 349 Or 247, 256, 243 P3d 776 (2010), stands for

the proposition that a code interpretation of the governing body, as the legislative body that enacted the code in the first place, is entitled to deference as long as it is a plausible interpretation of an ambiguous provision. But the provision has to be ambiguous; deference can't be use to amend a code in the guise of an interpretation. *Central Eastside Indus. Council v. City of Portland*, 74 Or LUBA 221 (2016). Siporen deference only applies to interpretations by the governing body (the Board of Commissioners) and not to interpretations of other county decision-makers, such as staff, the Planning Commission, or the Solid Waste Advisory committee.

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

***Role of a Recommendation from the Workgroup as to Interpretation of Terms***

1. The recommendation would not have the force of law unless it were to be adopted into the Benton County Development Code. That said, County staff and decision-making bodies would reference or draw upon such a recommendation.
2. The recommendation would provide the Planning Official with valuable information and perspective to consider in evaluating what makes a given application “complete.”
  - a. An application that is not deemed “incomplete” within the first 30 days means that decision-makers may have insufficient information to make the best decision and/or face time-pressure to comply with the 150-day clock.
  - b. Having adequate information for evaluating the extent, nature and potential impacts of a proposed use is key to the land use process serving the public’s interests.
3. The recommendation, submitted as testimony during the public comment period of a land use application review, would be valuable to the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners as they apply subjective criteria to a given application.
  - a. The forethought and analysis that would go into such a recommendation is typically highly valued and appreciated by those decision-making bodies.
  - b. Because of the time limits on land use review processes, it is not always possible to fully consider such questions of interpretation once an application is before the decision-making body.

Without such a recommendation, the County and the community risks a situation similar to what occurred with the last CUP review, in which the 150-day time limit constrains the ability of the community to have a thoughtful examination and discussion of all elements involved in a complex topic like this one.

From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

**Applicable Criteria.** As noted above, the applicable criteria are the criteria for approval of the proposed development at the time of the application and depend in part on the nature of the application. At a minimum, a landfill expansion would have to comply with the conditional use

review criteria in Benton County Development Code (BCC) Chapter 77 (Landfill Site (LS)), as identified in the 2021 staff report. If the proposed expansion extends onto Forest Conservationzoned property, the application would also have to comply with the conditional use criteria in BCC Chapter 60 (Forest Conservation (FC)).<sup>2</sup> Other criteria may also be implicated, depending on the nature of the application (e.g., if the application affects wetlands or county roads.)

### ***Subjective/Ambiguous Terms***

#### **Conditional Use Review:**

From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

**The Terms Found in BCC 53.215.** As noted above, all of the terms in BCC 53.215 have to be interpreted under the rules of statutory construction discussed above. The legislative and decisional history included on the Work Group website indicates that the purpose for creation of the Landfill Site zone was to recognize the existence of the landfill and to support its continued operation.

There are typically two types of allowed uses in a particular zone: uses permitted outright, subject to siting and occasionally design standards; and conditional uses, which are uses that tend to be higher-impact and are reviewed to ensure that any negative impacts can be mitigated. Accordingly, a landfill expansion by the County is approvable under criteria that focus on potential off-site impacts: The applicant is required to demonstrate that the expansion (1) does not “seriously interfere” with uses on adjacent property, with the character of the area, or with the purpose of the zone, and (2) does not impose an “undue burden” on public improvements or services available to the area. The decisional history posted on the Work Group website indicates that these criteria should be considered in the context of the existing operation—e.g., whether a proposed expansion creates impacts that exceed or are more significant than the impacts of the existing landfill operation.

***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;*

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

The term “seriously interfere” is crucial to the determination of whether a proposed conditional use can be approved, and it is a quite subjective term. The term is not defined

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<sup>2</sup> A landfill is also a conditional use in the Forest Conservation zone.

in Benton County Code. These criteria are locally derived and thus this term is not defined by state law or case law. Over at least the past twenty years, “seriously interfere” has generally been interpreted as: does the proposed use make it difficult to continue uses on adjacent property; would it create significant disruption to the character of the area; would it conflict, in a substantive way, with the purpose of the zone. “Seriously interfere” has been applied as meaning more than an inconvenience or irritation to neighboring property residents, but is a lesser threshold than rendering impossible the uses on adjacent property.

Hypothetical examples: A building that obstructs a portion of the view from a neighboring residence typically is not, by itself, serious interference. A noise-generating use such as an auto-repair shop locating next to an established meditation retreat center could be considered as seriously interfering with the use on the adjacent property if the noise could not be mitigated and would make it difficult to continue the land use on the neighboring property.

Note that staff recalls no instances in which the potential or perceived effect on property values was a primary element in the determination of whether a proposed use “seriously interferes.”

In the findings adopted by the Planning Commission in the matter of the 2021 conditional use permit for expansion of Coffin Butte landfill (File No. LU-21-047; see attachment), the meaning of the term “seriously interfere” is not explicitly addressed. The Planning Commission identified a number of impacts to adjacent properties and the broader area and did not find it necessary to parse the term “seriously interfere” in order to reach a conclusion that the proposal did seriously interfere with uses on adjacent property, the character of the area and the purpose of the zone. Nonetheless, the Planning Commission’s findings are useful to this charge topic in that they identify the types of concerns that are likely to be important in considering whether any future landfill-related conditional use permit application can be approved. A future application would be formally evaluated on its own merits, not in relation to the previous application, but the Planning Commission’s findings provide information as to what applicants and decision-makers in the future would do well to consider.

#### From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

- “Seriously interfere.” Starting with the common meaning of the text, “seriously interfere” means that some interference is allowable as long as it does not significantly interfere with surrounding uses. As noted above, the degree of impacts of the expansion has to be considered in the context of the existing landfill operation.
- “Character of the area.” Same analysis as noted above—whether the proposed expansion will seriously interfere with the character of the area when compared to the existing operation.

- “Purpose of the zone.” The purpose of the Landfill Site zone is to recognize and support the operation of the landfill. If land in other zones is included as part of an expansion, the purpose of those zones must be considered, again in the context of the existing landfill operation and the fact that landfills are allowed as a conditional use in 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*

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

The term “undue burden” is not defined. In practice, it has been applied generally as follows. A burden on public infrastructure and service is clearly “undue” if it overloads the system or causes significant degradation in terms of quality, effectiveness or timeliness of infrastructure or service. Lesser burdens may also be “undue” if the effect of the added burden is to jeopardize the health, safety or welfare of other people. Burdens that have typically not been considered “undue” include those that can be mitigated through planned improvements (particularly in cases where road improvements will be funded by the applicant as a condition of approval); burdens that are incremental service additions consistent with that generated by other uses in the area; burdens that fall below an established threshold (such as road classification standards that are tied to traffic levels).

From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

“Undue burden.” Again, this phrase recognizes that some additional burden on public facilities and services is allowed as part of an expansion as long as it is not “undue,” and is again considered in the context of the burdens created by the existing operation.

*(3) The proposed use complies with any additional criteria which may be required for the specific use by this code.*

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

Additional criteria are those that, by their terms, apply to the land use or property in question. In the case of a landfill conditional use permit, the provisions of BCC 77.305 and 77.310 are additional criteria.

From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

“Any additional criteria which may be required for the specific use by this code.” If the proposed expansion implicates other code provisions in effect at the time of application (see examples above), then those code provisions would apply. This is not a license to apply unadopted criteria that are not in the code at the time of application or to require information about a topic that is not relevant to compliance with an applicable criterion.

***Not cited in the charge but relevant:***

**53.220 Conditions of Approval.** *The County may impose conditions of approval to mitigate negative impacts to adjacent property, to meet the public service demand created by the development activity, or to otherwise ensure compliance with the purpose and provisions of this code. On-site and off-site conditions may be imposed. An applicant may be required to post a bond or other guarantee pursuant to BCC 99.905 to 99.925 to ensure compliance with a condition of approval. Conditions may address, but are not limited to: [list of 12 topic areas]*

Conditions of approval are limited to those that are necessary in order for the proposed use to comply with applicable criteria.

**Provisions in the Landfill Site Zone Regarding a Conditional Use Application:**

**77.305 Conditional Uses Approved by the Planning Commission.** *Any proposal to expand the area approved for a landfill within the Landfill Site Zone is allowed by conditional use permit approved by the Planning Commission. The Benton County Environmental Health Division and the Solid Waste Advisory Council shall review and make recommendations through the Planning Official to the Planning Commission regarding the Site Development Plan Map and narrative. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality shall be given an opportunity to review and comment on any proposal which may affect this site. [Ord 26I, Ord 90-0069]*

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

This section directs the Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC) to review and make recommendations; however, the code does not specify what criteria or considerations that recommendation should be based on. There are several options for how SWAC could develop its recommendation. One option is that SWAC could review the Site Development Plan Map and narrative relative to the conditional use criteria in BCC 53.215, the same as the Planning Commission would do. A second option would be to review the site plan and narrative relative to BCC 77.310; in other words, confirming that the topic areas in 77.310 are adequately described. A third option is to consider the site plan and narrative from the perspective of meeting the County's objectives related to solid waste management, as articulated in Benton County Code Chapter 23 (Solid Waste Management). This third option is staff's recommendation. Option 1 would put SWAC into the realm of the Planning Commission, which is the body with land use expertise and tasked with considering the BCC 53.215 criteria, when SWAC's expertise is on questions of solid waste management. Option 2 limits SWAC's role and fails to benefit the County by SWAC's expertise. Option 3 is consistent with SWAC's overall role as articulated in its bylaws.

The workgroup may wish to provide a recommendation on the general purpose of SWAC's review of a conditional use permit and may also wish to recommend more specific questions or considerations for SWAC in such reviews. In the case of LU-21-047, staff provided SWAC with suggested questions to consider in their review of the proposal, emphasizing that SWAC was free to use or not use the questions to structure their review. Those questions were:

1. Is the proposed expansion consistent with long-term plans for the landfill site?
2. Is the proposal consistent with principles of responsible solid waste management?
3. What (solid waste management) benefits do you see to the proposed expansion?
4. What potential (solid waste management) negative effects do you see? Are there ways to minimize or mitigate those effects, or do you think the proposal should be rejected?

**77.310 Conditional Use Review.**

- (1) *The applicant for a conditional use permit shall provide a narrative which describes:*
  - (a) *Adjacent land use and impacts upon adjacent uses;*
  - (b) *Future use of site as reclaimed, and impacts of that reclamation on adjacent uses;*
  - (c) *Provisions for screening of the site from public roads and adjacent property;*
  - (d) *Egress and ingress; and*
  - (e) *Other information as required by the Planning Official.*
- (2) *A site plan map shall accompany a conditional use permit application. The map shall contain at least a scale, north arrow, assessor map numbers, location of existing landfill, access, proposed alteration, leachate treatment or monitoring areas surface water systems, and existing and proposed screening (location and types of materials). A statement shall be placed on the map that the site plan map and narrative together are considered as the Site Development Plan. A signature block shall be included for the date the approval is given and the signature of the Planning Official indicating approval.*
- (3) *A conditional use permit application shall contain a reclamation plan describing present efforts and future reclamation plans related to the site.*
- (4) *The following environmental and operational considerations shall be reviewed prior to changes in the documents referenced above:*
  - (a) *Geology;*
  - (b) *Groundwater and surface water;*
  - (c) *Soil depth and classification, and erosion control factors;*
  - (d) *Slope; and*
  - (e) *Cover material availability, transportation, and use.*

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

These provisions are less subjective than the provisions discussed earlier but there is still room for interpretation in terms of, for example, what should be included in a narrative to adequately describe the items listed in (1)(a) through (d). Recommendations from the workgroup in this area would be helpful. The workgroup could also recommend “other information” that the Planning Official should require in order to have an adequate understanding of the proposal. Note that the Planning Official can only require information that is relevant to applicable criteria.

From Republic Services Addendum 9/30/22

**Other Information as Required by the Planning Official (BCC 77.310(e)).** This is information the Planning Official may require as part of the applicant’s narrative in order to demonstrate compliance with the applicable criteria. This is not authority to require information unrelated to a criterion for approval. As noted above, an application must be judged under the applicable criteria in effect at the time of application.

**77.405 Review of DEQ Permits.** *Copies of materials submitted to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality as a part of any permit process shall be submitted to the Planning Official. If at any time the Planning Official determines that permit application materials or conditions of DEQ permit are judged to merit public review, a Public Hearing before the Planning Commission shall be scheduled.*

From Benton County Staff Memo 10/5/22

This provision is unusual and a bit unclear. How the Planning Official would determine that “permit application materials or conditions of DEQ permit are judged to merit public review” is subjective. Furthermore, the kind of public hearing is not specified. Typically, a public hearing results from an application submitted by a property owner which is then reviewed relative to code criteria and approved or denied. But this code provision does not state that the property owner shall submit an application or that this provision constitutes a re-opening of the previous land use approval. The code may intend that a public hearing (more of a public conversation?) be held in which the terms of the DEQ permit are discussed but with no land use action to occur. Or the code may be obliquely stating that if the Planning Official determines that what the applicant proposes to DEQ or what DEQ permits is different from what the County has given land use approval to, then an application for a revised conditional use permit is required. This is already required by BCC 53.225<sup>3</sup>, but the lack of cross-reference or use of similar terminology in section 77.405 is confusing. Staff has not had opportunity to carefully consider the language of this section, but initial interpretation is that 77.405 simply requires new review of a conditional use permit if, as described in 53.225, the use originally approved has been modified.

Workgroup recommendation on how public review of DEQ permit requirements could most benefit the public would be helpful.

**150-Day Time Limit**

[Draft in progress.]

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<sup>3</sup> 53.225 Modification of a Conditional Use Permit. An original applicant or successor in interest may request that a conditional use permit be modified if a change in circumstance has occurred since approval which would justify a change in the permit. Such application shall be processed as a new request for a conditional use permit.

***Protocols for the timely and broad distribution of CUP-related information to the public, other governmental entities, and internal committees, groups, and divisions.***



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