



The McCroskey Agrarian



A Circular for the McCroskey Township

December 19, 2024 (Christmas Time) 🌲

Issue #9

The Almanac Predicts a Mild Winter

“The Farmer’s Almanac” since 1792 has been predicting the weather for the Continental U.S. Mr. Robert B. Thomas used a “secret formula” involving, among other things, the effects of solar spot cycles. The Almanac claims an 80% accuracy, which I think is exceptionally good.

Stands to reason that it would predict a mild winter for us here in the Inland Northwest, Solar Cycle #25 just peaked this year. So, we might be benefiting from the extra solar energy.

What is a Farmer?

We have been discussing the latest legislation on agriculture exemption zones. I’m still not sure what our legislators think they are doing. According to existing statutes, farms are already exempted. Maybe our friends at the Farm Bureau will soon find out. Local farmers will be meeting with the Commissioners to ask them some important questions.

However, as the proposed model ordinance stands, the definition of a farm is woefully inaccurate and shows favoritism to the “big boys” who ride expensive tractors.

A farm is someplace where you grow food and fiber. Do you define it according to acreage? If the ordinance requires a minimum threshold of five acres, what about the people who grow produce from their half-acre garden, enough for themselves and to sell at the market?

If we require an income qualification, say \$10k a year, what do we do with the people who own their land and only need enough money to pay taxes? It’s called *subsistence farming* and it has been the standard in agriculture for thousands of years.

If we say subsistence farming isn’t real farming, we might just as well ascribe “motherhood” only to women who manage to give childbirth in a hospital. All others don’t count.

It all sounds pretty dumb to me, but you should appreciate the fact, as hard as it might be to believe: government does not attract the best and the brightest. You should expect boondoggles from the officials every time they meet.

The Subdivision Ordinance

And speaking of dumb, the new fangled Subdivision Ordinance is accomplishing the very opposite of its intended goal. The Commissioners tell us that it is necessary to keep out the money-hungry developers from invading the County. But instead, it makes it impossible for locals to make a profit from the subdivision process. So, it will go to the new robber barons by default, anyway.

The Ordinance requires you to develop a five-acre parcel with an “infrastructure” before you can sell it. Until now, a buyer could purchase raw land down to five acres and then build a homesite. Locals will soon find out that there is no money in that. They will sell-out for chump change to outside developers who have the capital to buy a lot of land and create giant subdivisions. Instead of a healthy balance of clusters of small-scale farmsteads intermingled with larger farms, the whole county will turn into one giant subdivision of rich people’s estates where everybody will have a few horses, or worse, faster ATVs.

Poor people who want to raise livestock or grow things will not be able to afford the property taxes. So, instead of protecting local small landholders, the Commissioners have declared regulatory warfare against them.

That's why I recently wrote my tongue-in-cheek Letter to the Editor to the St. Maries Gazette-Record (published December 11th). County officials may not appreciate the political satire, but somebody needs to wake them up.

The Tourist Trap

Local businesses, realtors and government officials think catering to tourists is the way to wealth and prosperity. The opposite is true: if your economy is dependent upon tourism, local production and value-added industries will atrophy. It will gut the tax base.

Does anyone appreciate or understand the blow to the local economy the closing of the Stimpson Lumber Mill in Plummer will have? How many tourists will it take to replace that loss?

Worse yet, if tourism accounts for more than 20% of your local economy, you will lose control of your local government and civic institutions. The tourist will call the shots. Local values will no longer count. Everything will be geared toward making the tourist happy.

And what if that cranky tourist decides to stay and buy a second home? If he moves to your community, this new part-time resident will expect that everything should be done his way.

In effect, local officials have declared open borders for Benewah County. Since they slammed the door shut to local development and growth, only outside money need apply.. Wealthy investors with different values are going to move in and take over.

Next issue: More reports on County Business, Vertical Farming, And an update on the McCroskey Territorial Agrarian Society.

If you want to read more or missed the previous issues of this newsletter, you can find them at the website: savebenewahcounty.com. James Stivers, Editor/Publisher jwstivers1@gmail.com.

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Beware of government officials meeting over the Holidays! Might ask the Commissioners what they decided for us at the meeting of the 23rd

The McCroskey Agrarian
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