

City Pushes for Juniper Ridge Students in Bend-LaPine Schools

by K_Guice

The Juniper Ridge project has brought up many issues since its inception and now the matter of who will run the schools has become a question.

The City of Bend would like to see the children who live in Juniper Ridge attend schools in the Bend-LaPine School District. However, Juniper Ridge is in both their district and the Redmond School District.

Approximately two-thirds of the 1,500-acre development is in Redmond's district and Bend would like to see the school district release that property to Bend-LaPine's district.

"It seems useful to have kids in a neighborhood all going to the same school as much as possible," said Bill Friedman, Bend mayor.

He says there is nothing better or special about the Bend-LaPine School District. While both have fine schools, Mayor Friedman says it makes more sense to have the schools as close as possible so families don't have to travel so much.

"There is an elementary and middle school on Cooley Road right at the entrance of Juniper Ridge," he said.

Earlier this month, Andy Anderson, the Bend City manager met with the Redmond School Board to discuss the project and to begin a dialog about the district releasing the property.

Tim Carpenter, the Redmond School Board chair, commented that this might be a good opportunity for school officials to review and clean up boundary lines between the two districts.

"The response, I think, was caution," Mayor Friedman said. A position he says he understands.

"I would ask, what are the benefits?" and want to look at the things that might not be good if we were to make some adjustment," he added.

Some of the initial items discussed during the meeting include, concerns about the loss of potential revenue from the land sale and property taxes.

In addition, the potential benefits of students in both districts using a regional high school were proposed.

Dr. Doug Nelson, the superintendent of the Bend-LaPine School District says it is important to keep in mind that these are all just initial ideas being talked about.

“This is very much still in its infancy,” he said. “We want to be part of the process and we want to be good neighbors and good partners with our community so we can offer the best educational opportunities.”

There are still many questions that need to be both asked and answered before anything official happens. “I think clearly we have to wait until the city moves forward,” he said.

“Last week, the City Council voted to approve the Memorandum of Understanding,” he said. “We have had an initial conversation with the city in general about Juniper Ridge, but we have not had any detailed conversations, so we are in a wait and hold mode.”

He says to properly evaluate and come up with a plan, the school district needs to see where the city is heading with its master planning.

However, Mayor Friedman says that the school is a big concern to those who will become part of the development.

“As we attract important industry in to the Juniper Ridge area, those people would like to know how their kids are going to be educated and we want to make that predictable from the beginning,” he said.

Dr. Nelson says while the city has expressed the desire publicly to see this happen, that is only one piece.

“The other is how the state law works,” he said. “In essence property can go from one school district

to the other if there is a request from the property owner.â€•

He said the owner has to make that request to each school board and if they both agree then the property will then be transferred.

However, if the one party doesnâ€™t agree, the process becomes much more complicated. There are set state guidelines that would require a signature campaign and end with a vote by each of the communities.

â€œI have talked with the (Redmond School District) superintendent briefly,â€• Dr. Nelson said. â€œWe will have our staff look at the issues, which will be a long process.â€•

Before that happens, he says the city still has a lot of work to do yet.

Dr. Nelson added, â€œWe are waiting to see how things develop and we stand ready to work with the city to see how things evolve and address the issues as things emerge.â€•