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Goal 5 meeting cancelled

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The Milton-Freewater area man who has been fighting wind turbines in the Blue Mountains through a Goal 5 amendment with the planning commission has withdrawn his proposal - for now.

The planning commission has canceled its meeting Thursday night.

The commission had reserved a spot at the Pendleton Convention Center after crowds of more than 150 people showed up to two previous meetings addressing the proposal formerly submitted by Richard Jolly. In June and July, the commission heard hours of presentations about protecting resources in the Blue Mountains, as well as hours of testimony from those for and against wind turbines.

The commission had promised members of the public a chance to speak Thursday after public comment got the short end of the time-slot at its previous meetings. But, without Jolly's proposal, there is no need for a meeting Thursday.

"It was the only thing the planning commission was hearing that night," said Gary Rhinhart, commission chairman.

Jolly's original proposal sectioned off the Blue Mountains with a 200,000 acre swath of land bounded by Highway 11, the eastern border of Umatilla County, the Oregon-Washington border and the Umatilla Indian Reservation border. Jolly's amendment focused on the viewshed as the primary resource to protect from industrial development.

Jolly said he will submit another proposal, but in the future he wants to preserve the Blues for many of its resources, not just the view.

In his letter to the county, Jolly cites some frustrations with the process. He had wanted to make amendments to his original proposal and delay some of the meetings with the planning commission. Being unable to do that, he felt withdrawal and re-submittal was his only option. Had he stuck with the original proposal and had the commission rejected it, he wouldn't have been able to submit a new amendment for at least a year.

When asked to speculate on how the commission might have voted on Jolly's proposal had it been put to a decision Thursday, Rhinhart said he didn't know. While some members would likely not have supported it, he said others might feel the opposite.

"I think it would have been close," he said. "It could have gone either way. ... A lot of those members are concerned with property rights but there's a lot of responsibility on those folks to do things with their land that don't affect other people, don't affect wildlife, don't affect water. It could have went either way."