

Damascus/Boring Observer, April 1, 2002

## Are there new cities on the Horizon?

In recent weeks you have probably heard some rumblings from Damascus. More specifically, you may have heard or read of the formation of the Committee to Incorporate Damascus. Perhaps this is welcome news; then again, it may raise fears that yet another group of strangers wants to meddle in local affairs. The difference is this Committee is the only study group that comprises only volunteers who live and/or work in the community. This Committee, with your participation, will be the voice of the local citizens and guide our area through an uncertain future.

### Damascus faces alternatives

Though most Damascus residents are happy with life in our community just the way it is, it is true that change is coming, like it or not. There is a strong possibility that Metro will expand the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) into our area at the end of 2002. It is undetermined how far that boundary would extend. Foster Road? 242nd Avenue? Hwy 26? These are all possibilities.

If the UGB is expanded into the Damascus-Boring area, maintaining the status quo will simply not be an option because of state laws regarding land-use planning and minimum housing densities. Clackamas County has stated it does not want to manage further urban development in unincorporated rural areas and has established a policy stipulating all such growth should occur within an incorporated city. Under this scenario, Damascus has two options.

The first option involves annexation by Happy Valley and/or Gresham. Both cities have expressed an interest in absorbing large portions of Damascus, due to a need to enhance their current tax bases with commercial and industrial zones. Many Damascus residents feel that neither Happy Valley nor Gresham would fairly represent local interests. This does not mean, however, that local residents have no choice but to throw their hands in the air and let someone else decide their future.

A second option has been placed on the table: the incorporation of Damascus into an independent city. This is also an option for Boring and is being explored by the Boring CPO. Both Damascus and Boring have well over a century of history as distinct communities. Incorporation would be one way to preserve a sense of identity and keep the communities whole.

## Origins of the Committee

The Committee to Incorporate Damascus began with an informal gathering of about 130 local residents in late January of this year. In light of the interest neighboring communities have expressed in Damascus, those who attended this meeting felt some local action was necessary. The Committee was officially formed on February 4, 2002 and a seven-member board of directors was elected. Dee Wescott, local businessman and fourth generation Damascus resident was elected Chair.

Funds for the incorporation study process will be needed. Committee members are paying initial costs out of pocket and the process to secure formal funding through grants and donations has begun. The Committee is also applying for non-profit tax status so donations will be tax-deductible. Anyone who can contribute is encouraged to do so.

## What the Committee means to you

Whatever changes come to the Damascus-Boring area, it is important that local residents understand their options and involve themselves in the process. Two-way communication is critical to making choices that represent the wishes of the majority. As with any public activity, however, especially one that can so dramatically affect the lives of those involved, rumors may travel faster than news. Some may be true, others blatantly false; some will likely have a kernel of truth, yet still be incorrect. Here are a few simple facts regarding the Committee.

The Committee to Incorporate Damascus:

- \* is simply a study group to consider the best alternative for local residents; it does not mean city limits have already been decided, or even proposed;
- \* includes Boring in its study area so that the needs of both

- communities can be considered when defining the boundary;  
Damascus residents do not want to encroach upon Boring;
- \* comprises volunteer local residents and businesspersons, including members of the Boring CPO; it is not sponsored by any outside group or government body;
  - \* wants to be sure local residents have a say in determining the local lifestyle, including any changes that will affect it;
  - \* holds open meetings every Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. and encourages all residents, property owners, and businesspersons in the Damascus-Boring area to participate.

## What you can expect

The Committee to Incorporate Damascus seeks to represent all the area's residents. The overriding goal is to assure that local residents have a voice in determining the future of the community. Informal polls throughout the process will help the Committee understand the community's wishes, but active participation by local residents is the best way to assure satisfactory results. Expect opportunities to attend a series of community forums beginning this summer. A basic framework for incorporation is expected by fall. An actual incorporation vote, should the study determine that to be a viable option, would not occur until 2004.

In the meantime, consider attending one or more of the weekly meetings, or serving on one of the six subcommittees that have been formed. They are as follows:

### Group A

Public Information (communications, forums, publications, website)

Public Works (water, sewer, streets, lighting, solid waste)

Public Safety (law enforcement, fire, municipal court, animal control)

### Group B

Process/Legal/Finance (governance, fiduciary)

Planning (land use, building)

Services (parks, library, transportation, senior services)

Group A meets on the first and third Mondays of the month, while Group B meets on the second and fourth Mondays. Special presentations to the committee are expected throughout this process and may preempt this schedule. Check with the Committee for an agenda.

Watch this newspaper and the Boring Fire District's Fire Break for continuing news and updates on the Committee's progress. If you have any questions regarding the Committee to Incorporate Damascus, or if you would like to contribute time or resources to the project, please use the following contact information.

### Contact information

The Committee to Incorporate Damascus

Voice Mail: 503.658.8545

Fax: 503.658.3395

Email: [studydamascus@hotmail.com](mailto:studydamascus@hotmail.com).

[www.damascusstudy.org](http://www.damascusstudy.org)

[www.boringstudy.org](http://www.boringstudy.org)

Meetings:

Damascus Assembly of God Church

19070 SE Sunnyside Road, Damascus

Every Monday evening from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

*The Committee to Incorporate Damascus is a representative group of citizens from the community whose mission is to define Community needs in light of urban expansion, preserve the quality of life and rights of the people, provide representation to outside agencies and governments, and recommend a governance solution to the Community. Above all, it is the Committee's goal is to accomplish these tasks through citizen involvement.*