

CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, OREGON

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR/CITY COUNCIL

SPRINGFIELD



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November 24, 2008

Faye Stewart, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners
125 East 8th Avenue
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Chair Stewart:

On behalf of the City of Springfield, I want to request that the Board of Commissioners take up the matter of the Intergovernmental Agreement under which the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) operates. The City of Springfield has been a partner in this effort since its inception in 1967. LRAPA operates as the only regional area air quality control authority in Oregon, serving approximately 10 percent of the state's total population.

The City of Springfield certainly has seen the benefits of local control and a regional partnership approach to air quality. Over time and particularly recently, additional factors have come into play. There are shrinking resources available to maintain and repair critical transportation systems. The costs of those improvements have increased much more than the standard rate of inflation. There are more interests than ever competing for the ever scarcer resources. Long gone are the days when we could prepare a balanced budget, fund all of our highest priorities and still look to growing reserves to address future needs. You and your colleagues on the Board know better than most the challenges of such an exercise.

It is in the context of these competing issues that we ask the Board to examine the relative need for funding a service that is in part duplicative of that provided by the State. While we certainly see the value in some of the unique services provided by LRAPA we believe that the times we face call for priority setting based on core goals and know that sometimes hard decisions are the result. All this said, if LRAPA remains in place we would see Springfield continuing as a partner agency. Please let me know if we can provide any information or answer any questions you may have. Thank you for taking up this difficult matter.

Sincerely,

Sidney W. Leiken
Mayor



PROUD HISTORY
BRIGHT FUTURE



LRAPA
Lane Regional Air Protection Agency

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Springfield, OR 97477

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November 21, 2008

Mayor Sid Leiken and Council
City of Springfield
225 Fifth Street
Springfield, OR 97477

RE: LRAPA Intergovernmental Agreement

Dear Mayor and Council:

I understand you will be discussing next Monday the future of the Intergovernmental Agreement that establishes the operation of the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA). LRAPA greatly values our 40-year partnership with the City of Springfield. Please let me review a few important reasons for continuing your local partnership with LRAPA into the future.

Return on investment: Local dues provide less than 15% of LRAPA's budget, but are very effective in leveraging other funds for special projects to local businesses, schools and communities for cleaner fuels, vehicles and home heating systems that far exceed the amount of the dues.

Protecting air quality: Continued compliance with air quality standards contributes to both the health of our citizens and economic well-being of local communities. Air quality continues to improve, but recent scientific health studies are proving that tighter health standards are necessary to protect public health as illustrated in the attached graphs. Non-compliance with these standards will limit the expansion of current businesses or the location of new businesses in our communities. The added presence of a local agency within our community is a built-in compliance incentive for community industries and individual citizens.

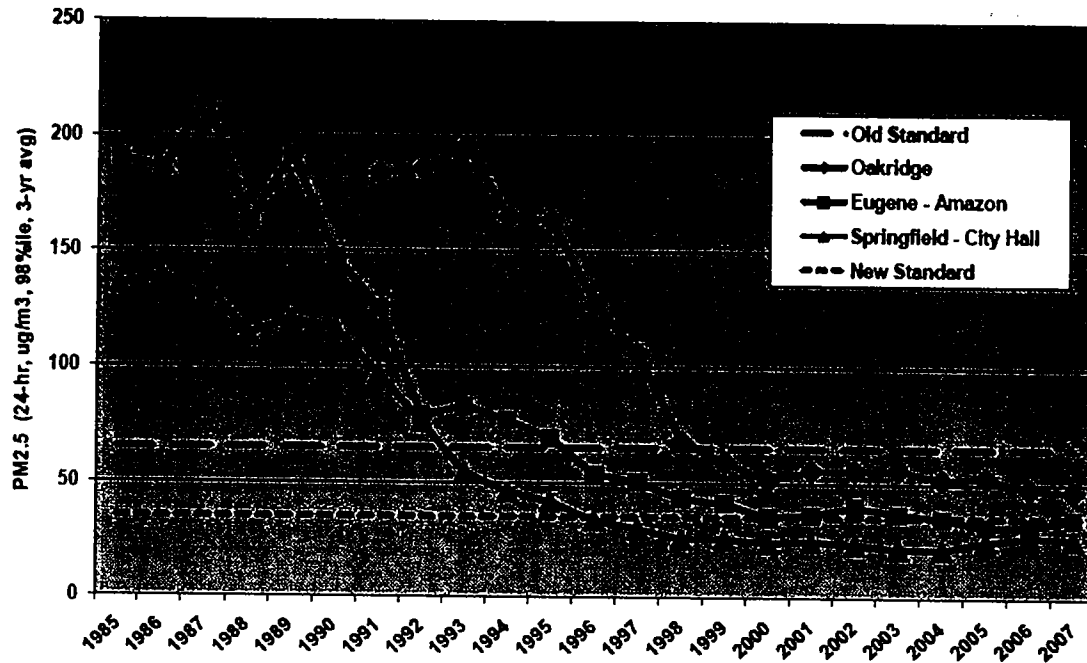
Working together effectively: The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognize the benefit of our LRAPA partnership with Springfield and the other local IGA partners. None of us can accomplish on its own what together we can achieve. Together the three agencies have successfully tackled tough issues such as benzene levels in Pacific Northwest gasoline and diesel exposure to school-age children and local communities. Other air toxics efforts, in order to be successful, reasonable and cost-effective, will need to be carefully coordinated. LRAPA has received national recognition as an air quality leader, including two national awards in the last few years.

I recognize the difficulties of the local budget situation. You have some hard decisions ahead of you. I only ask that you consider carefully the ramifications of your decisions regarding the LRAPA partnership. Our citizens need your support to continue to improve air quality and economic development for all of us.

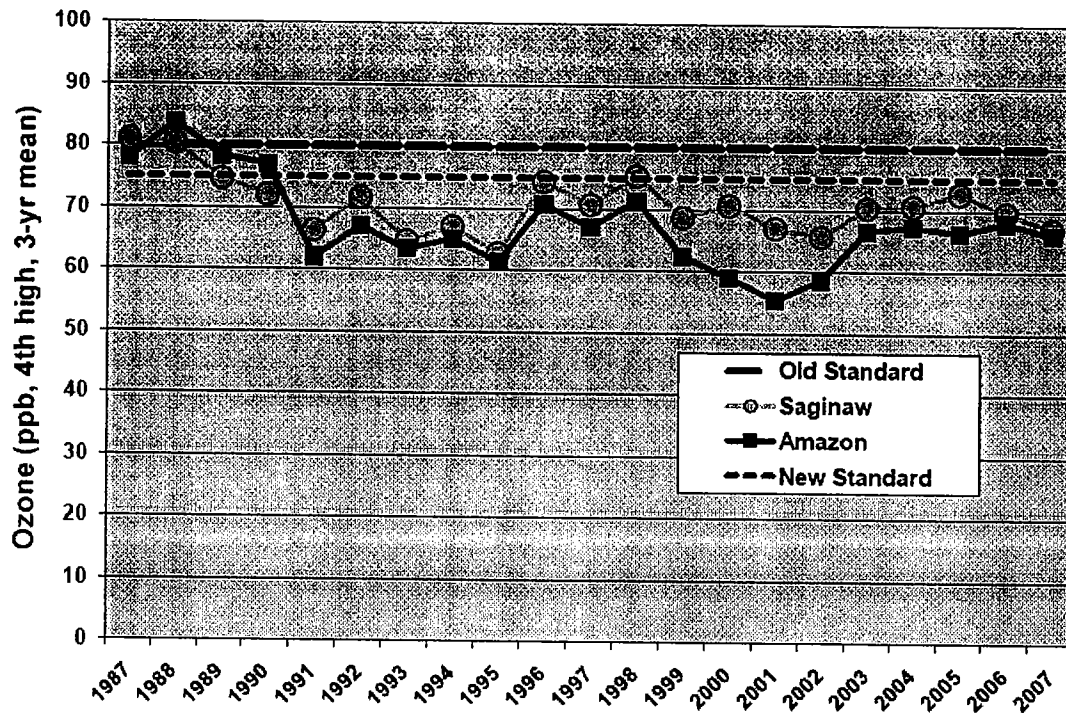
Sincerely,

Merlyn L. Hough, Director
Lane Regional Air Protection Agency

Respirable Particulate Matter (PM2.5) in Lane County



Ozone in Lane County



RG

Bad rap on LRAPA: Local air quality agency deserves support

Published: Nov 26, 2008 08:53AM

Opinion: Editorials & Letters: Story

The Lane Regional Air Protection Agency has been in the crosshairs of budgetary target-shooters for much of its 40-year existence. The agency relies upon the financial and political support of a sometimes awkward partnership of local governments. What's more, if LRAPA went away the state Department of Environmental Quality would step in to enforce air pollution rules, as it does in all other areas of Oregon.

Little wonder, then, that the Springfield City Council has asked the Lane County Board of Commissioners to consider disbanding LRAPA. Such a move would save Springfield the \$57,000 a year it contributes to the air quality agency's budget. With a shortfall looming next year, it's natural that Springfield would be looking for opportunities to economize.

The fact that LRAPA is the last surviving agency of its kind shows that it's possible to get along without a local air quality authority. It's also evidence that the southern Willamette Valley has air quality problems that are unique in Oregon. LRAPA provides more comprehensive air quality monitoring than could be expected from the state. The local agency can set air quality standards that exceed state and federal limits, and can work more closely with local businesses seeking ways to reduce or eliminate air pollution. LRAPA is also more responsive to citizens' calls about air quality problems ranging from field burning to ozone levels, problems that are of greater concern locally than statewide.

In these ways LRAPA makes valuable contributions to the local economy, public health and the quality of life. Local governments, including Springfield, serve their citizens well by supporting LRAPA, and should do their best to find ways to continue.

Most of LRAPA's budget comes from permit fees and federal and state funds, but a vital 12 percent comes from Lane County and the cities of Eugene, Springfield, Oakridge and Cottage Grove. The agency would collapse without this support and the political backing that comes with it. LRAPA is governed by a nine-member board appointed according to a population-weighted formula that entitles Eugene to four members.

Eugene's plurality on the board has become a source of friction in recent years. Most of the industries regulated by LRAPA are in Springfield. Eugene's board members are perceived as favoring aggressive enforcement of air quality rules, so inevitably, the bigger city has come to be suspected of pursuing environmental goals at the smaller city's expense. In the latest variation on

Springfield
Story

City considers leaving LRAPA, Springfield officials say the local pollution control agency may be too costly

By Andrea Damewood

The Register-Guard

Published: Nov 25, 2008 11:10AM

SPRINGFIELD — With looming budget concerns in mind, the Springfield City Council agreed Monday to send a letter to the Lane County Board of Commissioners asking that the board consider disbanding the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency.

As the city's general fund dips with the economy, a number of intergovernmental agreements, including the 40-year relationship between Springfield and LRAPA, may have to come to an end, Mayor Sid Leiken said.

The state's only local air pollution regulation authority, the agency is funded in part by the participating cities of Eugene, Springfield, Oakridge and Cottage Grove, as well as by Lane County. Air pollution is governed by the state Department of Environmental Quality everywhere else in Oregon.

"I just personally think it's kind of run its course," Leiken said. "It makes more sense from a consistency standpoint to have Lane County be regulated by the DEQ. Should we be spending taxpayer money on duplicating services? To me at this point in time, I think the answer is no."

If just one agency pulls out, LRAPA could continue to operate in the area, but if multiple jurisdictions were to quit, the agency might have to disband.

Each member city in the air protection agency pays 99 cents per resident each year, meaning Springfield would save just under \$57,000 if it quit, LRAPA Director Merlyn Hough said.

Funding for LRAPA is renewed annually, so "especially in difficult budget years, the question comes" whether governments will continue their support, Hough said.

"We welcome the questions, because it gives us an opportunity to explain why LRAPA is here," he said, adding that he wrote a letter to the council Friday asking councilors to reconsider their decision to ask the county commissioners to end the agency.

"Here in Lane County, we've had strong support and when the questions have come up, the decision has been made that LRAPA has been critical to the quality of life here," Hough said.

Local fees make up about 15 percent of the agency's \$2.5 million annual budget and the rest comes from state and federal funds, he said.

Because of budget woes, Lane County paid only about half of its \$118,000 obligation to the air pollution authority this year, he said.

Aside from money concerns, Leiken said he believes the agency has strayed from its original mission. He said some on the group's nine-member board have created an activist board by getting involved in the debate over whether to curb field burning.

"Getting involved in field burning ... that's not part of LRAPA's business," he said.

LRAPA board Chairman David Monk said the board is not out of line for wanting to end an archaic practice such as field burning. LRAPA has no jurisdiction over field burning, Monk said, but recommending that the state ban the practice is "not a radical idea by any means." LRAPA in the past has logged citizen complaints about field burning.

"There's a little bit of politics as well as budgetary issues behind this, and I would like to alleviate those concerns for Mayor Leiken and the City Council," he said. "The DEQ can't give the level of service to the community that LRAPA can."

Councilor John Woodrow said the Springfield-based SierraPine particleboard company called him to say it would like the city to continue its relationship with the local authority.

However, Councilor Anne Ballew said the city is likely going to face tough times in the next year and may have to trim all it can from its budget. "It's a higher level of service and maybe the time has come when we can't afford it," she said.

The city may also have to reevaluate its payments to the Lane Council of Governments and Lane Metro Partnership, Leiken said.

The letter to LRAPA will stand as a six-month notice should the council decide later to quit the agency, he said.

"It's good to send the letter out now just for notification," Leiken said. "Springfield is going to have to tighten its belt; this is one of our belt-tightening issues."