

A solar panel plant at Langdon Farms runs through rumor mill

A rumor about placing a solar panel factory at Langdon Farms has created more heat than light.

Patrick Johnson

Wilsonville Spokesman, February 11, 2009

Greg Leo, a lobbyist for the city of Wilsonville, told the Wilsonville City Council during a work session last week he'd heard a rumor the Maletis family was trying to place a 500,000 square foot solar panel factory on the Langdon Farms golf course.

"There is, in fact, a proposal circulating by Maletis to build a solar panel plant at Langdon Farms," he said during the work session.

Jack Isselmann, an attorney with Tonkin Torp LLC who represents the Maletis family, denied the report.

"There is no basis to the rumor," Isselmann said Thursday. "Our clients, and those of us acting on their behalf, have had no conversations or other communications of any kind with a solar panel company."

Leo also reported to the council that Clackamas County chairwoman Lynn Peterson had contacted Gov. Ted Kulongoski's office and that they confirmed the rumor and said they were looking for other sites for the plant.

His report to the council was incorrect, according to Peterson.

"That's not at all what the governor's office told me," Peterson said. "Basically they said they had checked with (Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) and they had heard the proposal – it was a soft proposal – and no one at the state was promoting it. They were not picking up and running with it. That was their exact words. Greg (Leo) never talked to me."

Peterson said she heard the rumor from Clackamas County Commissioner Charlotte Lehan, and wanted to check it out.

After investigating the report, a spokesman from the governor's office said he hadn't heard anything about a solar panel plant company looking at the Maletis property.

When asked about the denials by both Isselmann and Peterson, Leo said there have been many rumors about the property, and his job was to inform the council about the issue.

"The simple fact is there is enough smoke out there to know there is a fire," Leo said. "The county got confirmation. It might not be Jack Isselmann that is working on the proposal but it's out there. There are a lot of developers looking south of

Isselmann confirmed they are working in the Metro process to have their property included in the urban reserve, so they could develop it in the next 50 years. The designation of urban and rural reserves will be made through agreements between Metro and Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties sometime by the end of the year, according to John Williams, Metro regional planning manager.