

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

A way forward for the City

Despite recent turmoil, the City of Sisters has opportunities to improve its operations and reset sometimes troubled relationships among councilors themselves and with the community at large.

It is unfortunate that Sisters is losing the services of Pauline Hardie, a capable planner who was thrust into a challenging management position and served the community diligently for seven years. In replacing the community development director, the City should seek out another capable planner who also has the management and team-building experience to rebuild the department from scratch.

The planning commission and council owes that new team clear and explicit policy direction.

Going forward, councilors must be willing to ask tough questions, challenge assumptions and push each other and staff rigorously. When seeking legal counsel, councilors should be looking for best-practices and a range of options, and not settle merely for what can be legally justified.

They must also work with each other in good faith and practice good boardmanship. Vigorous debate and occasional split votes are good things, not things to be avoided. But once a decision is made, a councilor should respect the will of the council. The current leadership has made a commitment to ensure that no councilor feels excluded or pushed aside, and there should be no reason for frustration to lead to violations of trust among councilors.

The City's harshest critics bear a share of responsibility for the atmosphere of mistrust and anger in the local political culture.

Citizen watchdogs can be invaluable. Calling out error, bad practice and poor process is a worthy endeavor. And the City of

Sisters sometimes deserves to be called out. However, assailing the character of those with whom critics are at odds, sometimes directly, often through insinuation and innuendo is not a worthy endeavor. It is corrosive and destructive.

Taking that route is a choice. It has consequences. It has caused many people to question their own willingness to enter the arena and subject themselves to relentless upbraiding that questions not just their actions but their character — especially since they are constrained by the imperatives of public service from responding as forthrightly as they might wish.

The City can improve the way it does business; its critics can change the way they do business, too. Both things need to happen for the benefit of the community.

Mayor Chris Frye said last week that “the goal of staff and this council is to improve transparency, better public outreach, engage the community, and work at ensuring good process is being followed.” He continued, “As we improve in these areas, I expect the climate to change. To receive trust we first must earn trust, and we understand that takes time.”

Every citizen of the Sisters community should be pulling for the council to succeed in achieving those goals. Those who want to see positive outcomes can do a service of their own: Question actions, not integrity; encourage positive actions; challenge those you disagree with while respecting the possibility that there may be more than one valid and honorable point of view.

Come to the table with a problem, sure. Try to bring along a solution, too. The volunteers who serve you could use the help.

Jim Cornelius
Editor



Rachel Marsden

American Voices

Federal prosecutors have filed espionage charges against three Russians allegedly working for Russia's foreign intelligence service, SVR. The only one without diplomatic immunity was arrested in the Bronx, N.Y., on Monday, while the other two have left the U.S. The federal complaint reveals some amusing realities of modern espionage.

Spying isn't terribly exciting. One of the defendants, Evgeny Buryakov, is alleged to have worked under non-official cover (NOC) for a Russian bank in Manhattan, liaising regularly with two NYC-based Russian diplomats, Igor Sporyshev and Victor Podobnyy, posing as a trade representative and a United Nations attache.

Buryakov's focus seems to have been economic dumpster diving, not nuclear or military secrets. A conversation noted in the complaint between the latter two suspects reveals disappointment that the work isn't exactly the sort of thing you see in “movies about James Bond.” One of the defendants lamented not even getting a cover identity: “Of course, I wouldn't fly helicopters, but pretend to be someone else at a minimum.”

Catching spies isn't too thrilling, either. The 26-page federal complaint reveals a long, slow, painstakingly detailed operation and subsequent analytical “proof.” It isn't exactly “Mission Impossible.” Real counter-intelligence that gathers all the puzzle pieces necessary to file a complaint against a hostile intelligence asset is more like the work detailed in John le Carre's “Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy.”

Some spies don't have a very firm grasp of the job description. One of the defendants is quoted in the complaint as saying that the 10 Russian spies deported in 2010 “weren't doing (anything) here,” and that they didn't “get any materials,” as if their only task was the collection of intelligence. His view of their assignment apparently came straight from Hollywood, with Russian agents sneaking around stealing nuclear

codes. Former KGB officers have disclosed that subversion and influence constitute the majority of intelligence work.

Some spies aren't too good with the ladies. The complaint highlights a defendant's experience trying to recruit potential female sources: “I have lots of ideas about such girls, but these ideas are not actionable because they don't allow (you) to get close enough. And in order to be close you either need to (have sex with) them or use other levers to influence them to execute my requests.” Mission impossible, apparently.

Russian spies have an impressive grasp of Wall Street culture. To quote one of the accused Russian spies on his recruitment of a potential intelligence source in New York: “For now his enthusiasm works for me. ... I will feed him empty promises. ... You get the documents from him and tell him to go (expletive) himself. But not to upset you, I will take you to a restaurant and give you an expensive gift. You just need to sign for it. This is ideal working method.”

Russian spies aren't very adept at risk management. Buryakov, the NOC banker, was invited to meet with the representative of a wealthy investor looking to develop casinos in Russia. The representative was, in fact, a confidential FBI informant. Buryakov referred to the invitation as “some sort of ... nonsense.” One of his handlers allegedly said it might be “some sort of a setup” — but allowed the meeting to take place anyway. What is that? Some kind of espionage Russian roulette? For all that risk, Buryakov allegedly left that meeting with two government documents: an unclassified list of Russian banks that could potentially be sanctioned, and a list of Russians who had been sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury — information available to anyone who can use an online search function. Hope that open-source treasure trove was worth it, comrades.

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Chance rain 50/35	Rain 52/40	Rain 52/38	Rain likely 51/37	Rain likely 55/36	Chance rain 49/na

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