

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

Teach your children well

Sisters students can benefit from grappling with difficult and controversial topics such as the persistent role of race and racism in American history, culture, and society. The community as a whole could benefit from such discourse.

Actually, the conversation should be taken beyond race. What do we mean when we use the word diversity? It’s usually used in the context of race, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation or identity, but what about other types of diversity— cultural, socio-economic, religious/spiritual, etc.?

What does “equity” mean? What does it mean to be truly inclusive?

The Sisters School District has a pretty good template in its policy on “Teaching Controversial Issues.” The policy is published on the SSD website. Some of its key components are:

- The discussion should contribute significantly to developing the skills of critical thinking and problem solving.
- Teaching strategies should be objective

so that all sides of the issue are explored.

- Suitable materials, including facts and concepts of all aspects of the issue, should be available.

If Sisters students — or the broader community as a whole — are to have such discourse, it’s critical that no point of view be treated as above question. If we are to create a truly “safe” environment for discourse on hard topics, there has to be room to challenge orthodoxies without fear of being tagged with an infamous label.

That’s a tricky assignment, especially in our current overheated climate. But the Sisters School District has another simple principle laid out in its core beliefs that can serve as a compass bearing:

“Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.”


Jim Cornelius, Editor in Chief

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer’s name, address, and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

Grappling with growth

To the Editor:

Your correspondent Sue Stafford’s May 26 recount of the Planning Commission meeting left me confused as to the commission’s role in protecting Sisters from rampant growth in single-family housing.

Do not the citizens of adjacent properties have legitimate concerns, like increased

traffic, parking problems, snow mitigation? Ms. Stafford also reported that Habitat’s requested modifications would reduce the size of some lots with homes already occupied by real (Sisters) families? Does that even sound constitutional? And didn’t commissioner Jeff Seymour state that potential parking issues raised by the neighbors should be dealt with

See **LETTERS** on page 16

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday

Sunny

94/60



Thursday

Sunny

88/53



Friday

Mostly Sunny

71/40



Saturday

Mostly Sunny

60/37



Sunday

Partly Cloudy

60/37



Monday

Partly Cloudy

59/39



Tuesday

Partly Cloudy

64/39



The Nugget Newspaper, LLC

Website: www.nuggetnews.com
442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, Oregon 97759
Tel: 541-549-9941 | Email: editor@nuggetnews.com



Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Nugget Newspaper,
P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759.
Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon.

Editor in Chief: Jim Cornelius
Production Manager: Leith Easterling
Creative Director: Jess Draper
Community Marketing Partner: Vicki Curlett
Classifieds & Circulation: Lisa May
Proofreader: Kit Tosello
Owner: J. Louis Mullen

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area.
Third-class postage: one year, \$55; six months (or less), \$30. First-class postage: one year, \$95; six months, \$65.

Published Weekly. ©2021 The Nugget Newspaper, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. All advertising which appears in The Nugget is the property of The Nugget and may not be used without explicit permission. The Nugget Newspaper, LLC. assumes no liability or responsibility for information contained in advertisements, articles, stories, lists, calendar etc. within this publication. All submissions to The Nugget Newspaper will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyrighting purposes and subject to The Nugget Newspaper’s unrestricted right to edit and comment editorially, that all rights are currently available, and that the material in no way infringes upon the rights of any person. The publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of artwork, photos, or manuscripts.

Growth in Sisters

By Scott Woodford
City of Sisters
Community Development Director

Sisters is growing way too fast!
I like Sisters just the way it is.
I don’t want it to turn into _____ (the place I just left).
It’s getting too expensive — where are my kids going to live when they grow up?
I don’t want Sisters to sprawl. I like the small-town feel and don’t want to lose that.
Why do we even have to grow in the first place?

This is some of the sentiment we’ve heard from the community over the last nine months as we’ve embarked on the update to the Sisters Comprehensive Plan — the city’s blueprint for growth for the next 20 years.

For some, growth is good. Their business may rely on it or they work in a field associated with construction. Growth can attract businesses offering higher-wage jobs. Others see it as a way to increase housing supply to combat rising housing prices. Some think that if we don’t grow, we risk gentrification or, worse, stagnation.

In Oregon, we cannot simply “close the gate behind us” and shut out the world — we have no choice but to plan for growth. Growing is not mandated by the State, but what is mandated is allowing the opportunity for growth. The State was ahead of its time when it passed Senate Bill 100 in the 1970s to prevent runaway sprawl and to protect our rural and natural areas by requiring urban growth boundaries (UGB) around towns and cities. It requires each community to adopt a Comprehensive Plan and comply with 19 statewide planning goals, but also maintain a 20-year supply of land to accommodate expected population growth. It’s also good planning to be proactive — rather than reactive — to ensure we have enough land for housing, commercial and industrial, schools, as well as the infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, and parks) to support it.

This year is Sisters’ 75th anniversary of the town’s incorporation in 1946. The population then was around 500 and it grew very slowly for about 50 years until residents voted to install sewer infrastructure in 1998, followed closely by annexation of 341 acres in 1999, which catalyzed growth and bumped up the population to its current 3,270. Based

on projections from Portland State University, we will have 5,399 people in 2041. At an average household size of 2.4 people, our Housing Need Analysis says we will need 1,100 new housing units to house them (for perspective, we currently have 1,689 housing units).

What? That’s like almost adding another Sisters! Where are we going to put all those units?

I agree, it does sound daunting, but remember: this is a 20-year plan, all those units aren’t going to be added overnight, and, while we can’t stop growth, we can shape it to our liking so that it respects the small-town, Western character of Sisters and protects our natural resources and scenic views to the greatest degree possible.

So, if we have to grow, do we grow up or out — or both?

You’ll be hearing a lot about that in the next couple of years. After adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, our first task is to consider implementing “efficiency measures.” Those are infill strategies to use the existing city boundary more efficiently through encouraging development of vacant or underutilized land, increasing allowed heights and permitted densities, permitting smaller single-family lot sizes, and possible rezoning of non-residential land to residential, among others. We could also reduce barriers to housing types, such as “missing middle housing” to encourage density, yet preserve community character.

Efficiency measures may satisfy the need for all of the 1,100 units within the existing city boundary; however, it may be determined it’s not possible to accommodate all of them without compromising other values we hold dear, such as our urban forest and the character of Sisters. After contemplating all of that, a community can consider expanding its UGB. If that occurs, it will be part of a community process and subject to strict guidelines from the State to ensure it will not impact surrounding forest or farm lands.

How that shakes out will be determined over the course of the next few years and will, again, have to be coordinated with the State so that we comply with the statewide planning rules — which encourages infill before expansion. The community of Sisters will have their say too, so that it balances our needs.

Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.