

Opinion

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Economic development director needs to explain himself

To the Editor:

What is up with Baker County renewing its contract with Greg Smith and his economic development snake oil? How does this guy keep getting funded for hundreds of thousands of dollars to peddle something he seems hard-pressed to even define?

When asked what the County's return on investment for the \$96,000 tax dollars he was paid last year, his answer was ambiguous at best. More disturbing was that the County board and County commissioners thought it was a wise idea to not only renew his contract for another year, but to increase it by \$12,000! In business, you should be able to articulate the return on investment to the investors of a given enterprise. Why haven't we been able to get straight answers since 2011 when he was hired?

Whenever we have funding short falls (roads, education, law enforcement, etc) the answer is to just keep taxing us. Hit us for a sidewalk tax, tax us for another police officer whether we feel the need or not, up the sewer and water rates ... It just keeps going. And for what? Do you know what our County Commissioners make each year? Any idea what the City Manager makes each year? Any idea of what these jobs are worth in the private sector? Seems like government folks like to reward themselves far beyond the actual value they bring. But they have the power to tax.

Greg Smith's contract appears to be regular PR contract worth about a \$45,000 per year (at best) in any other place in the free market.

Did that contract even go out for bid to anyone else? Should it have?

I think some answers should be forthcoming, otherwise, the County needs to opt out of this before the opt out clause expires. It's our money.

Jake Brown
Halfway

Councilor not a victim

To the Editor:

In regard to City Councilor Adam Nils-

son's letter/rant/ramble, published in another newspaper on August 9, please stop! You were caught red-handed in the act of spray painting (vandalizing) property you don't own. The fact that some other vandal had applied a previous coat doesn't make it better or okay, and trespassing will always be trespassing.

If you had just admitted your obvious guilt, taken your lumps and kept your mouth shut this whole thing would have been a non-issue. You would have possibly had some public sympathy or credibility had you not, in your own words, admitted that you were in fact painting on a building you didn't own or have permission to paint on.

Now I fully admit I did not witness deputy Maldonado's behavior at the scene of the crime, but any deficits in his behavior will never be an excuse for yours.

I live in the city and don't have many interactions with sheriff's deputies or any other law enforcement. However, on the two occasions I can think of in the last 10 years, both were actually good experiences, including being stopped for speeding out by Phillips Reservoir.

Considering the last election results, the majority of Baker County residents would disagree with your calling the Sheriff's Office "poorly led, ill-equipped or under-trained."

You are not being persecuted. You are being prosecuted. There is a big difference.

A lone officer, in a remote area with poor communication comes upon two people engaged in the act of committing a crime, and it turns out one of them is armed.

Were you expecting a hug?

Or did you think the officer would recognize your status as a city councilman and say oh, sorry, Mr. Nilsson, please paint away and feel free to trespass any time you want?

You are not the victim.

I don't know if Maldonado is, as you stated, "not qualified" to work in the capacity he was hired for, but I can think of one city councilor for which those words certainly apply.

Kevin Luckini
Baker City

— EDITORIAL —

Nervous about eclipse visitor influx

Like most residents of Baker County, right now, as this issue goes to press, we're a little nervous about the predicted influx of eclipse-seeking tourists coming into our area.

We wish we could just be excited and welcoming in the shadow of this incredibly cool celestial event, but right now the unknown for first responders, business owners and law enforcement obscures that.

The weather forecast along the Oregon Coast came out this week, and with that came news of cancelled reservations west of here and plans for visitors to come this way where the skies are predicted to be clear during the eclipse.

The problem is, without places to stay, we're hearing from travelers who just plan to pitch a tent or sit in their vehicles on BLM or Forest Service-managed lands in rural areas with no real preparation for, or experience in, that sort of camping. Those public areas bump up

against privately owned lands in much of our county, and are filled with tall, ungrazed dry grass. If a car or ATV ventures off these gravel roads into that grass, which they surely will, the potential for wildfires becomes a near certainty in many rural areas. We hope people will use common sense.

Gas station managers are already talking about the possibility they won't be able to keep up with demand.

ODOT warns about traffic, road rage, patience and accidents during a time when our first responders are going to be spread thin.

If the freeway stays open both directions all weekend long, we'll consider it a miracle. And if it remains closed or clogged for too long, with tens of thousands of people instantly quadrupling the population of our little town, food supplies are going to run slim in short order.

We think about the potential impact on our emergency room.

We think outside of accidents—what about an increase in crime?

If ever there was an example for the necessity of preparedness, this would be it! But maybe, just maybe, we won't have a thing to worry about.

We'll see how this plays out—hopefully, profitably and safely.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

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— SPECIAL COLUMN —

So I was thinking ...

The curse of four-letter words

By Jimmy Ingram
Special to The Baker County Press

Cussing, cursing, swearing, profanity, letting the expletives fly ... Call it what you want but we've all done it.

Its roots undoubtedly go back many years. You can't convince me that the pyramids were built without a cuss word or two being spoken:

"Man, are we *ever* going to be done moving these *bleeping* things?" had to be uttered at least a couple times.

I come from a long line of intelligent, yet occasionally foul-mouthed men.

As a result cussing seeped its way into my brain as a way of expressing myself at times.

In fact, if cursing at broken-down heavy machinery was an Olympic event, Michael Phelps would have nothing on me.

If creating new, more descriptive versions of traditional cuss words in a sequence was art, Vincent Van Gogh has nothing on my father.

No mortal man should be expected to work around farm machinery without a curse word or two. Drunken sailors have nothing on blue collar workers when it comes to bad language.

So does periodic cussing make you seem less intelligent? Maybe. On the other hand some situations in life just call for a four-letter word.

The two-second delay between when you stub your toe and when the pain hits calls for a far more expressive phrase than "oh goodness."

When your dog digs a crater in your yard the size of a small automobile, calling him by his *real* name seems far too passive.

Bad words exist for a reason.



Submitted Photo

Jimmy Ingram is a local farmer and father of two who enjoys people watching within our wonderful community and beyond.

Use them on occasion to express yourself and behold their stress relieving effects.

Now don't get me wrong—impressionable little ears shouldn't hear such words ... at least from adults.

But remember that there's always the one kid at school who will be able to trick your kid into saying something that will get them in trouble with you or with a teacher.

Casual conversation should also be more or less devoid of cussing.

Dinner party guests who manage to slip four-letter words into stories are typically seen as uncouth, although among certain groups they may actually welcome you as kin. Your mileage may vary.

Best to let someone else drop the first F-bomb to take the pressure off.

Much to the surprise of many of us, there *are* people out there who have never cussed.

While this is certainly an admirable trait, their frustrated expressions like "gosh darn it" and "for Pete's sake" sound like a song sung out of key—recognizable, but it just doesn't sound the same to your ears.

I suspect there is a study somewhere linking people who say they have never cussed with belief in unicorns.

So while I certainly don't advocate the use of foul language, I'm not above using it myself. If you're one of those who find it offensive, then I apologize.

If so, I urge you to wear earplugs around heavy machinery ... not necessarily because of the loud machinery, but the cussing you'll undoubtedly hear from its operator if/it breaks down.

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