

OPINION

The opinions expressed in the letters below are “your voice,” and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Columbia Gorge News*, its staff, publisher or advertisers.

YOUR VOICE

Good neighbors

A few weeks ago my husband and I were on our usual early morning walk on Belmont with our dachshund when I stumbled and went down hard on my hands and knees. I was okay, but shaken. Right away a car that had just gone past us stopped, backed up, and the driver asked if I was okay or needed help. After assuring her I was okay, she drove on. And right away another vehicle stopped and the driver asked if I was hurt, even offering to give me a ride home. We'd never meant either driver before, which made it even sweeter. It was just such a kind moment and showed me that caring and kindness are alive and well in Hood River. I can't thank these ladies enough for taking time to show their concern for me on their busy morning. I'm very grateful.

Georgia Donnelly
Hood River

Best fire engine

Mosier Fire District is about to sell off an engine purchased brand new in 2017 after an exhaustive, public, team process which determined that its specifications are and will continue to be the highest priority for all-hazard response in the district. The engine, referred to in public meetings as “the squad,” was intended to be first out on every call in a response model which partly relied on distributed equipment — certain apparatus and emergency medical equipment staying with trained and qualified responders rather than centrally stored in stations, leading to more than five years of fast, effective responses on fire and medical calls. Instead, it has hardly been used. When it has, it's usually been misapplied as a brush engine, to disastrous effect. A recent public review of response times and staffing pre- and post-2017 revealed shocking recent declines in both, suggesting MFD's constituents are now vulnerable in ways for which they were previously protected. The engine could be used as primary pumper on a structure fire. It could also be staffed by a single qualified responder to begin effective control of a burning semi and its fire spread, without leaving the driver's seat. It was spec'd to

HR Farmers Market



Gorge Grown Food Network's Hood River Farmers Market was held in the old Hood River News parking lot on Oct. 2, as Hops Fest was taking place in its usual spot. The market has returned to the Fifth and Columbia parking lot, and runs through November. Trisha Walker photo

fit easily through the Mosier Twin Tunnels, which none of MFD's recent apparatus purchases can do. It was not intended to leave the district except in limited and infrequent circumstances. It was meant to work hard and fast for MFD's constituents, taking into account the longstanding and current reality that our volunteers simply do not respond quickly as a group, while limited staff can safely initiate a distributed, effective response quickly. Reasons for this sale rely on recommendations — not requirements — for all agencies nationwide. Proof of the error of this decision can be found early in the Mosier Creek Fire. A home near the origin of the fire was left unprotected, reportedly because Mosier's recently purchased engines were too large to negotiate switchbacks on the driveway. Meanwhile, “the squad” sat in a station. It is optimally suited for the conditions which kept larger

equipment from engaging.
Jim Appleton
Mosier

County confusion

Klickitat County Board of Commissioners confuses “Local Authority” with “local politics.” The story in the *Columbia Gorge News* on Sept. 29 stated the Klickitat County commissioners wrote a letter to Governor Inslee about how unhappy they were he took away local control of mandates. It's a matter of record, the week before, the local authority of the board of health, county health director and county health officer all supported the mandate. The BOCC letter is clearly a political move to support local politics and not local control. It is so frustrating that a vocal few people whose feelings are hurt over not getting their way can change the minds of politicians. All politics is local is the saying,

but definition of local should be those most likely to cause trouble and not those who have the verifiable credentials of authority.
Vern Harpole
Lyle

Big wheel turning

The wheel of big government is turning. The heavy weight of the grindstone crushing our freedoms, one grain at a time. Masks, mandates, and trillions in socialist spending to keep able-bodied, working Americans and businesses under the weight are the lies, leaving a fine dust on the halls of Congress. The dust is useless to our way of life, the European model is stale, the nutrients and unity bleached out, starving anyone who consumes it. The heart of the grain falls to the inside, that grain powers the mind and bodies of the free Americans, it has been so for many generations. The yeast of our fight for liberty lives

in the air we breathe. We knead and beat the woke and socialist agenda out of the dough. The bread is braided together in freedom and unity for all citizens. The scent of the bread draws us home again, the breaking of the loaves is our love for each other. Memories of the struggles we have endured to keep our independent and free way of life. The taste of the whole grain, our truth. The wheel turns against us, our enemies wait outside, sharpening their knives, watching for the cracks that are forming in the policy's and leadership of our nation, waiting for the wheel to break. Will we be ready? Can we fix the wheel and unite before it is too late?
Sheilah Nelson
Hood River

Washington education leaders call for civility

OLYMPIA — The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) and the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) have responded to increasingly hostile and aggressive public behavior in school board meetings and online discussions, as well as in-person confrontations directed toward school board members and school district leaders. “COVID-19 has presented enormous challenges to our schools, districts, and communities, but one of the most concerning trends is the erosion of civility in many communities where interactions with school district leaders and school board members have turned ugly,” said Joel Aune, WASA executive director. “School superintendents and board members are doing their best to safely operate schools for in-person learning, and serve students based on the guidance of health policy experts and requirements set forth by the state. Unfortunately, many individuals in the community are politicizing the state requirements — which fall outside of local control — to the point where the act of simply holding a public

meeting to conduct district business draws threats of violence, verbal abuse, aggression, and intimidation,” he said. “This kind of behavior has no place in our schools or communities, and is particularly counterproductive to the work needing to be done to help students recover, learn, and grow during this difficult time,” Aune added. “It is imperative that the adults in our communities model the kind of behavior we ask of our students. Right now, this is not happening in a consistent fashion across our state. The students are watching, and what they see in all too many instances is in conflict with the kindness, civility, and decency we expect of them.”
Tim Garchow, executive director for WSSDA, said, “Decisions being made right now undoubtedly have a big impact on students, staff and families. Some of those decisions can be made locally by school boards, but many of them are made at the state level and beyond the authority of individual districts. It is important for families and community members to share their concerns with their school district. It is important for families to have

their voices heard. “However, it is equally important to do so in a way that sets an example for students of how to advocate in a civil and respectful manner. Aggressive, abusive, or hostile language and behavior do not demonstrate a desire to do what is best for children,” he added. “School directors and superintendents are working incredibly hard to fulfill the demands of their local community, state regulations, and in some cases also federal obligations. Our school leaders are doing everything they can to maintain the safe operation of schools in the face of a constantly changing virus,” Garchow continued. “The fact that children under the age of 12 are not yet eligible for a vaccine makes dialog between schools, districts, families and the communities that much more important. The process of conducting the business of a school district has never been more vital. “When it comes down to it, we all want many of the same things. We want to be able to keep our schools open, our children safe, our staff employed, and a return to normalcy as soon as possible. However, when we

let our passions degrade one another, it prevents us from achieving our common goal of doing what is best for children. “We must put an end to ineffective and inappropriate forms of communication,” he said. “We will not tolerate threats of violence, whether in person or online. This behavior has no place in our schools, where educators are working tirelessly to

keep children safe and focused on learning. We owe it to our students to model the kind of leadership and civil engagement that is expected of adults in trying situations,” Garchow said. “It is time to restore civility to our schools and our communities and find a way to move forward, together.”

Want to write a letter?

Columbia Gorge News encourages readers to submit letters to the editor for the weekly opinion page. Letters on all topics are welcome. Writers must include their name and hometown (for publication) and daytime phone number (for verification, not for publication). Letters from an agency or group must be credited to the author or a contact person. Anonymous or “name withheld by request” letters are not accepted. Letters must be 350 words or fewer; generally, the briefer the message, the better. Opinion pieces longer than 350 words may be published as a guest commentary at the discretion of the editor. Letters are published as space

allows, and efforts are made each week to provide as much space as possible. Deadline for letters is noon on the Friday prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit all letters: Letters must be civil. Vulgar or inappropriate language will not be considered, nor malicious, false or misleading statements. Letters attacking an individual, rather than an opinion, are not acceptable. Letters criticizing a particular business over a particular complaint or grievance will not be considered.

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