

Editorial & Opinion

Make board meets public

More than once in recent weeks, the Welches School Board has skirted around possible violation of state open meeting laws. That's very dangerous ice.

At question are unpublicized meetings and hastily rescheduled meetings.

For instance, a May 13 executive session apparently was held without notification of the press. A May 19 regular meeting, originally scheduled for 7:30 p.m. apparently was rescheduled at the last minute for 4:30 that day. The press wasn't informed, and the head of the teachers' association was told only 90 minutes prior. A similar thing may have happened in April.

Other times board members may have met and discussed board matters away from school or in the superintendent's office after a regular board meeting, with no executive session announced.

What transpires at such impromptu meetings probably's on the up-and-up. However, it's hard to keep tabs on what our elected school board in Welches is up to, with all this confusion. Furthermore, it looks bad publicly to hold clandestine meetings, discuss board matters casually in group settings or otherwise conduct public business in some closet.

What's more, it's sometimes illegal. Oregon Revised Statutes 192.610 through 192.650 are clear on this matter:

"The governing body of a public body shall provide for and give public notice, reasonably calculated to give actual notice to interested persons including news media which have requested

notice, of the time and place for holding regular meetings. If an executive session only will be held, the notice shall be given to the members of the governing body, to the general public and to the news media which have requested notice, stating the specific provision of law authorizing the executive session. No special meeting shall be held without at least 24 hours notice to the members of the governing body and the general public." (192.640)

"The governing body of a public body shall provide for the taking of written minutes of all its meetings....(T)he written minutes must give a true reflection of the matters discussed at the meeting....(A)ll minutes shall be available to the public within a reasonable time...." (192.650)

The Sandy Post reporter assigned to cover activities of the Welches School Board has directly requested notification of meetings more than once. However, this local newspaper of record hasn't always received such necessary notification.

Considering key appointment of a new board member and superintendent recently, such veil of doubt over Welches School Board open meetings is serious. At the very least, the charge may be made that such a board who closets itself—wittingly or unconsciously—loses touch with the public.

In the public interest, we urge the Welches School Board to better publicize upcoming meetings and to hold all board member get-togethers where board-related matters are discussed in a public setting. (VB)

Roses to Sandy Highway crew!

Fair's fair, and we must give credit where it's due.

A while back we criticized the state Highway Division maintenance shed area by Jim's Big Apple in the heart of Sandy as untidy. Actually, weeds and trash on the lot made the big lot in the center of town a bit of an eyesore.

Well, you might logically think that highway maintenance workers have better things to do than pick up gum wrappers and mow down weeds where their trucks are stored.

These fine highway crew members, however, showed their true colors as civic-minded citizens by sprucing up their lot. They worked hard in the hot sun, and their work area now looks great.

In fact, it's a big inspiration to other downtown businesses and city residents to spruce up their lots in time for Sandy Mountain Days July 3-10.

After all, Sandy's going to play host to some 50,000 visitors soon, and we all should want to put our best foot forward with pride. (VB)

Senator's report:

Bill halts lemon car daze

by STEVE STARKOVICH
State senator, Dist. 14

Imagine that you have just purchased a new 1983 Ford station wagon for \$11,549. You drive it home and park it in the driveway that evening. The next morning you get into your car, start the engine and shift into reverse. It doesn't budge. Frustrated, you have it towed back to the dealer, who tries to fix it. But the problem recurs over and over. Finally, your warranty runs out, and you are stuck with a defective car—a "lemon."

This story is much more common than you might think. New cars that have factory defects are bought and sold every year across the U.S. Last year, the National Center for Auto Safety recorded 15,000 complaints about new cars that failed to perform up to the manufacturer's specifications. Even after numerous trips to the dealer's service center, many times the problems are not corrected.

Recently, the Legislature passed a bill that tries to remedy this situation. Known as the "lemon law," HB 2793 was passed unanimously by both the House and the Senate and now awaits the signature of the governor. Legislators agree that this may be one of the most important consumer protection bills passed this session.

The bill forces a manufacturer to give a buyer a new car or to refund the full purchase price of any car that remains unrepairable after a "reasonable number of attempts" at repair. The definition of "reasonable number of attempts" is spelled out as follows:

1. The time period during which the attempts to repair the car be either one year from the purchase date of the car or when the mileage reaches 12,000 miles—whichever comes first; or
2. The defect continues to exist even after four or more attempts to repair the defect;

or

3. The vehicle is out of service for 30 or more business days.

Hopefully, this definition will cover complaints about cars that are defective from the time of purchase. The law will apply to all cars purchased after Jan. 1, 1984.

HB 2793 has received support not only from many consumer groups, but from many car dealers, as well. They stated that with such a law, "consumers will feel protected, and that's got to be good for business." Consumers stated that manufacturers have a responsibility to make good-quality cars, and when they turn out a "lemon," they have the responsibility to replace it with a car that is free of defects. The "lemon law" will help guarantee the right of every consumer to "get what he or she pays for."

If you have any questions about issues relating to consumer protection or any other issue, please contact my office by calling 378-8897 or writing Senator Steve Starkovich, State Capitol (Room S-216), Salem 97310.



Representative's report:

Shiprack opposes sales tax proposal

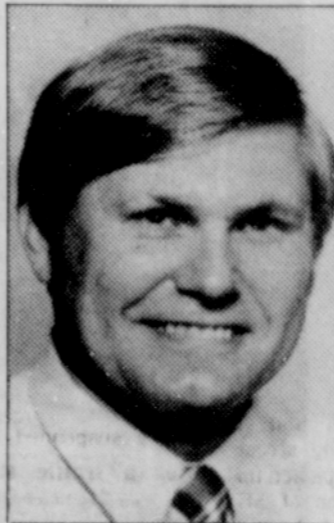
by BOB SHIPRACK
State representative, Dist. 23

The House of Representatives June 21 on a 31-29 vote, approved a 4 percent sales tax that would be referred to the voters. The measure was sent to the Senate where it is not expected to emerge, as the Senate leaders have voiced extreme opposition to it.

That morning before the vote, House members not on the revenue or sales tax committees got to review the plan. My doubts about this new tax were confirmed at that time. Since this probably was the major vote of the session thus far, I want to explain my "no" vote on the sales tax.

The tax, if approved by the voters, will raise \$1.08 billion in the remainder of the biennium. Of that, \$126.6 million would be used for administration, retailer discount, low-income credit and renter relief. Approximately 300 persons would have to be hired for administration.

The \$953.4 million left over would fund an across-the-board 45 percent reduction on all properties on property taxes. One can separate the property tax relief into two categories—homeowner and business. Extensive research was done on homeowners, which concluded that people with tax rates above \$21 per thousand



generally would do better than those under \$21. District 23, on this basis would be a net loser.

The greater the value of the home and the amount spent on consumer goods become variables that must be considered. It was my perception that middle-income people would be adversely affected.

The business impact is much harder to predict. No figures were ever developed to show the impact, however assumptions can be made. Large property owners would gain the most, since the relief would be the same percentage of current property tax liability. Materials used in the manufacture of goods are exempt, so the retailer and wholesaler of finished goods would pay a disproportionate amount. I felt that small businesses would lose under this plan.

In the final analysis, there were several negatives aspects to the sales tax plan. First it was not tax

reform, with little guarantee that property taxes wouldn't raise in a short time. Consumers would end up paying for the whole plan with little regard to ability to pay. A new expensive bureaucracy would be set up. There are examples that show a sales tax is not "elastic" to economic recessions. Look at Washington and California. Some 5 percent would come from government—that is, the taxpayer. Finally, I believe a sales tax isn't at all what the majority want for property tax relief and would be badly defeated at the polls, since it is another tax.

I will be working with others to bring about real tax reform and property tax relief. If you have any questions or suggestions on any issue contact me by writing Bob Shiprack, Room H292, State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310 or calling 378-8784.

The Post gratefully acknowledges essays and written opinions from readers to appear on this page—separate from the unbiased news reports on other pages of this newspaper. Your opinions generally will be printed as letters to the editor, while ours generally will appear as editorials. Occasionally, we are able to print guest editorials. We attempt to print all signed letters of good taste, legible form and reasonable length. Our deadline is noon on Tuesdays.

Personally speaking:

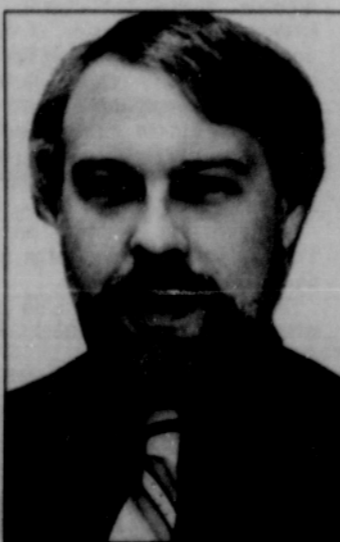
Stop answering machines

Tired of those silly little answering machines? You know the ones. That's the robot who shucks and gives you, when your car breaks down and you call for professional help. Or it's the unsympathetic voice you reach when you try to call your doctor, lawyer or spiritual advisor during crisis.

Answering machines couldn't care less. They aren't programmed for sympathy or any other emotions needed for interpersonal relations—or interfacing, to use the lingo of brother machines.

I can never tell when to start talking. Do you wait for the beep or try to fit in everything in a few seconds without breath before you hear that beep? I dunno. Part of the trick is being able to understand the person who made the recording. And then you must believe there's enough room on your segment of the recording to hold your entire message. I mean, some people take the longest pause between their last word on the recording and the blasted little beep—your signal.

I suspect some people don't even check their machines for answers. And if they do, the messages are probably too old to have meaning in the work-a-day lives of people. The messages have equal non-importance to the machines in charge, of course. Each one takes up an equal number of sectors on the record disc.



by VON BRASCHLER

Hal-9000, the sneaky computer who took charge of a space ship in the movie, "2001," told us where smooth-talking machines are coming from. Eventually, he took over the ship and the astronauts inside. He apologized, of course, for having to take things in his own hands. But he was better equipped to cope. Oh, his voice sounded so smooth and practiced—like those nice telephone voices you hear, when no real people are left in charge to chat with you.

We people communicate one-on-one poorly enough, without letting machines screw things up

worse. So please, record-a-message owners: Return my quarters for all those calls that went nowhere and said nothing to no one who heard or cared.

It's time to get even with those blasted answering machines. I have a plan, and everyone can join my fun.

I propose we all ban together as some sort of club like "Humans against Machines Speaking (HAMS) and zap them right back. Here's all we need:

Find some bright young kid in an eighth grade science fair who could build us a "Reply Machine" to talk back to those answering machines. Then simply put a taped message on the machine. The machine would interface with your phone receiver.

When your reply machine detects another machine on the line, it plays a previously recorded message for the answering machine. Of course, it sounds like your voice. In fact, you may use your own voice to cut down costs.

At the end of your reply, YOUR beeper hits some wild notes that totally fry the circuits of the answering machine at the other end.

It's sort of like a radar detector, only you get to stop the cops.

OK, young space-age whiz kids—wherever you are. Let's build an Intruder Alert computer game the whole world can use. And after the robot phones are destroyed, maybe we all can get down to serious one-on-one talk once again.

Letter answers charge:

Deer, elk sighted at Alderwood Park

Concerning the article of the proposed Alderwood Mobile Park in last week's edition, I would like to take exception to the remark by Paul Rice that no deer or elk have been in the area since the highway was built.

During the past three weekends, I and two of my

children have observed deer grazing between the highway and the treeline near his parcel on two occasions. Yes, the Department of Fish and Wildlife does know what it is talking about.

Dennis Cox
Brightwood