

The Sandy Post

Editorial & Opinion

Scott Newton, editor
Kimberly Nelson, advertising representative

Tax base measures deserve support

An important tax base election is just around the corner. On Tuesday, May 20 the Sandy High School and Sandy Elementary districts will seek approval of tax bases that would allow them to run programs similar to what are presently being offered without having to seek levy approval each year.

We urge voters to approve the tax bases for both districts for the following reasons:

✓ The school districts lack continuity as a result of having to fight for levy approval every year. Community members are spending time getting a budget passed when what they would rather do is expend that energy doing something to better the school program or the community at large.

✓ We have confidence in the school program. Every resident in the district would do a few things differently, but overall there is a good program in place, both at the high school and the grade school levels.

✓ The economic health of the community depends on stable funding for our schools. The Sandy-Mt. Hood area is a great place to live, but qualified people in a number of fields are considering moving because they want their children in school — and not at home in the middle of the fall. We can think of no circumstances where the community benefits economically from school closures.

✓ There was a time when the economy was an issue. With cheaper gas and lower interest rates, that argument doesn't hold up.

✓ Boards of directors and budget committees determine the level of spending, and that is where the lion's share of the work should be done. Those people have worked too hard and have too much expertise for us to dismiss their contributions. And, we did after all elect these people to their positions.

✓ High property taxes are a state-wide problem. Closing schools to get the state's attention is somewhat akin to butting one's head against a wall.

This is an important election. If you support the school programs being offered — and are for stability — get out and vote yes.

JOLENE OBERG
5/01/86

Commentary

3-1 would make board accountable

by JOE STEIN

No branch of government in Oregon is older than Clackamas County — so old that nobody knows for sure what the name means. So old, it is overdue for reform. That's why Ballot Measure 3-1 is being put before the voters.

Of the state's largest counties, only Clackamas has not made its commissioners directly responsible to the voters in the district. Lane, Multnomah, Washington and Hood River counties made the change years ago. Their voters have supported it many times since.

Want to know why your taxes are high, or how you get action on zoning, health, welfare, crime, public works? Under 3-1 residents would have one person to hold accountable, a commissioner elected in one of five districts. The same as city, state and federal governments.

The present system relates each commissioner to all 250,000 county residents. If you can reach them between their constant round of meetings, hearings, absences, vacations and travels.

"Better government," claims State Senator Walt Brown, a lawyer and one of the sponsors of Measure 3-1. "We need commissioners more concerned with protecting our neighborhoods from infringement and deterioration, more effective crime prevention, and more economic development in all parts of the county."

"This measure will give much more effective voice to the rural residents, who make up a large share of our population. In fact, 82 percent of our 4251 small businesses are family farmers," Brown is chairman of the Senate agriculture committee.

Opponents complain that Measure 3-1 restricts the voters' choice to one county district instead of three at-large. By that system, three commissioners from Milwaukie, Oregon City and Gladstone — one urban district — have dominated the county for many years.

In total pay and benefits — \$210,000 a year — three commissioners have made themselves the highest paid in the state, even above the five commissioners of Multnomah County, who deal with more than twice our county population. Their benefits include medical, dental, life, accident and disability insurance; 4-6 weeks' vacation, liberal sick leave and retirement plans — a total of \$61,456 a year, reports the county finance office.

By comparison, Lane County's five commissioners get some \$163,000, and little Hood River's, \$15,000. Washington County, with the second largest population, pays its board \$120,000 total salary and benefits. Members from four districts work one-third time at one-third pay, but they say they spend 30 to 60 hours a week on county business anyway, much of it on night and off-duty hours. The chairman, who runs at-large and works full time, gets about \$40,000 a year.

Measure 3-1 divides the pay and benefits of Clackamas's three board members into equal shares for five members — cutting compensation from \$70,000 to \$42,000 average. Cost-of-living adjustments may go up or down, but it forbids any future raise without a vote of the people.

Measure supporters complain of the Clackamas board's inability to compete with the political power of Washington and Multnomah, the better-managed counties of Metro

Portland. Five members will put Clackamas on equal footing with the other counties in metro affairs.

Want to know how Clackamas rates in the inner councils of the Port of Portland, or Tri-Met, Metro Service District, Boundary Commission — the other so-called regional bodies which control it all for the Big City? No easy answer to such question, but easy to learn which one wags the tail of Portland's dog.

Because the three commissioners are so remote, rural residents know little of what they do. Rural voters of the other districted counties have favored this reform in election after election.

Measure 3-1 creates efficiency in more representative government. Each voter knows which board member serves his or her interests, which one to turn to for results, or oppose for bad performance.

The Clackamas board has had prolonged periods of dissension, two members pitted against one who, as a majority, can make official decisions. With 3-out-of-5 voting under the reform, such a situation would become virtually impossible.

"Measure 3-1," said Senator Brown, "will mean better government at no additional cost with real savings for taxpayers through a more democratic system. It will bring efficiency in government."

The system "makes specialists of us for each district," said one Washington County commissioner. Another described it as "a way to make democracy work — we have to thrash things out in dealing with each other. Better yet, we learn about the county from one another."

The measure does not deal unfairly with the three present board members. One member would run in

his home district as his term expires; two others will go on serving in new districts, where they live, until their terms expire in 1988. Anyone may run, but party precinct committees will name candidates in three new districts.

In the new districts, the east county — Mount Hood neighborhoods: Damascus, Boring, Sandy and Estacada — are in one large block running west to Clackamas and Interstate 205. The other districts combine Lake Oswego and West Linn; Oregon City, Canby and Molalla; Gladstone, Park Place and Redland areas; and Milwaukie and Oak Grove. Each district contains about 45,000 population.

The measure will mean a major reform for a county whose history began with the Oregon Territory under British rule. Oregon City, its capital, was virtually the only city in the vast wilderness.

When it came under the American flag, the county (then one of four) included great tracts east into Wyoming and north into Canada. Statehood lopped off portions of Clackamas territory in the formation of Multnomah and Hood River counties, cutting to its present size, 1879 square miles.

Elevations range from Oregon's lowest to its highest: near sea level at Milwaukie to the Mount Hood peak, 11,235. About half of it is forested wilderness and remote mountains. The borders reach east over the Cascades into the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, and west of Wilsonville to Yamhill County.

"From end to end, as beautiful as anything in the Northwest," it is often described by those who live here — Clackamas deserves something better than its creaky, archaic government system.

Letters to the editor

Teachers keep politics out of the classroom

It has been implied in a recent letter to the editor that teachers in the high school and elementary districts will be promoting the May 20 tax base in their classrooms.

Though we feel very strongly that the passage of a tax base would add stability to our schools, we have not and will not use the classroom as a vehicle for promoting passage of any levy or tax base.

We, as a group, will be working along with other community groups

to encourage passage of the May 20 tax base measures. However, this work is done strictly after working hours. Anytime a patron has a complaint or questions regarding this or any other issue, they should feel free to contact the appropriate school administrator.

Miriam Mann
Sandy Elementary Teachers Association
Bert Key
Sandy Education Association

Crisis: Teachers are leaving

As a parent, patron and supporter of the Sandy School System, I have a great concern about the numerous requests for letters of recommendation that the school district has received during the last few months.

These teachers are all tenured and have played an active role in the education process of our children. Any company, school district or enterprise is made up of dedicated people. In the case of a school district, these people are the role models of our children and responsible for the development of their futures.

We now have a crisis on our hands. Without stable financing, these teachers are seeking employment in other districts. It takes four years for

a teacher to be groomed and evaluated into our system with the designed goals and ideals desired and required by the board of directors into teaching our children. Is this what we really want? This process is not only very expensive but is critical to the success of the school district.

Another aspect of this process is the dedication, motivation and involvement of these people in our community. I really believe this is what we want for our children and our community. Support the levy and vote yes on May 20th.

Terry Lenchitsky
Boring
Editor's note: Lenchitsky is the chairman of the SUHS board of directors.

Family will miss Hutton

At a recent student assembly, Sandy High superintendent, Roberta Hutton, announced her resignation. I was told that some of the students cried while some clapped and cheered.

Both reactions are high praise to a competent and dedicated professional. The tears speak for themselves. Those students knew that Mrs. Hutton cared about them and their future. They knew they had suffered a loss at Mrs. Hutton's resignation.

Those who cheered knew that Mrs. Hutton had closed the campus, increased class work loads, initiated a tight attendance policy and disciplined rule breakers. A drug abuse pro-

gram didn't sit well with some. In other words, she took her job as an educator seriously and tried to communicate the importance of education and its disciplines through her actions.

Some of the cheerers might have seen the light in time. Some never would, but that is their problem. Mrs. Hutton is an outstanding educator and this community would be fortunate to see the likes of her again.

The Kruger family regrets Mrs. Hutton's leaving. We appreciate what she stood for, what she did for the school and students, and for what she attempted to do.

Bill Kruger and family
Boring

Where to write

State Representative Bob Shiprack, D-Dist. 23, 22610 Forest Park Rd., Beaver Creek, Ore., 97004. 631-3817.

State Senator Steve Starkovich, D-Dist. 14, 52 Willamette Green, Canby, Ore., 97013. 263-8551.

Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Oregon, 711 Hart Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. 202-224-3753. Portland office phone 221-3386.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, 259 Russell Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. 202-224-5244. Portland office phone 221-3370.

Letter to the editor

Small group disrupting school program

My husband and I moved to the Sandy area approximately 16 years ago, mainly because we felt it was a nice area to raise a family. We now have two children, one in the Elementary School District and one not yet in school.

I am appalled at what is happening in our community. I would like to know why more people, especially those with children, are not doing something, at least vocally, to express dissatisfaction.

I would like to know how much longer this group of persons in our community is going to be allowed to harass and cause trouble for our school personnel, our children and our community. It is unspeakable that a small group of people should be able to disrupt and run an entire community and I think it is absolutely criminal that this is being allowed to continue.

It is true that I do not have children

at the high school level yet, but I do care about our high school system. I do know that Roberta Hutton is a fantastic administrator and a lovely person. She spends a tremendous amount of time doing a superb job at the school. It does not seem to matter what time or what the occasion, be it a minor injury to a student or an activity at school, Roberta is always there, day or night.

I am sure most intelligent people realize how important education is to our young people. Who do you think is going to be running this country of ours in the future? How much money do you think it costs to fund young dropouts that turn into lifelong welfare projects?

Is it essential that we have a good educational system. If people would stop fighting over education and look at a solution, we might be able to get someplace. Why not look into O.E.A.'s 5 percent sales tax proposal,

which earmarks the funds for education and reduces property taxes.

Please give our young people the chance for a good education. Stop fighting and acting like a bunch of squibbling children. Sign the peti-

tions at local schools and start acting like a community that really does care about our children and their future.

Linda Herrell
Sandy

Policy on letters

Letters to the editor should be typed, double-spaced and signed. An address and telephone number should also be provided, although only the name of the letter writer and the city or area he is from will be published.

Letter writers may also wish to include a title or office held if it is appropriate considering the subject matter of the letter.

The news deadline of noon, Tues-

day is also the deadline for letters to the editor.

Letters should be accurate, free of libelous remarks and in good taste. This newspaper attempts to publish all letters it receives from area residents.

We reserve the right to edit letters to conform to style guidelines or for length. A preferred maximum length is 300 words.