

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



(medical emergencies) requires signing a public (marriage) contract, private (living together) agreement or power of attorney. This is about financially benefiting from discrimination.

In the military, I lived in barracks, got the dangerous missions and often flew on holiday eves. One fellow officer with the same job description and paygrade had a sanctioned relationship. His dependents back home got free a rental suburban home, utilities, education, medical, recreational facilities, military travel, insurance, subsidized food, etc. If I got killed, I got a funeral; for him, his “dependents” would be taken care of for life.

The Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue health insurance states: “This benefit extends to the spouses and children of the eligible employee, again at no cost to the employee. Health insurance benefits include medical, dental and vision coverage.” Their two full-time fire engine driver/operators receive identical salary; but one gets \$5,000 medical benefits and the other, having dependents, gets \$17,577

(FY14 Budget). The SVFR openly practices wage discrimination and just enacted a tax increase for such extravagances.

Try demanding your private boss to pay \$10,000 to \$50,000 extra just because you cohabitate; it works for public workers. Many single military personnel enter “marriages of convenience” where the dependents kick back some of the extra booty. Those in a government “licensed” cohabitation with no other change are given more benefits from government jobs, Social Security, welfare, insurance, retirement, loans and so on.

You want a lover and/or kids, let’s not dump the costs on the taxpayer. It’s time to eliminate this costly public benefits discrimination.

Keith Stanton
Florence

RATCHET UP THE FUN

Nothing says entertainment like watching people frighten and assault someone much smaller and more delicate than themselves! That’s why I’m going to the Cottage Grove Rodeo July 12-13.

VIEWPOINT BY BOB EMMONS

Emerald Meadows Impact

INCREASED NOISE AND TRAFFIC HURTING FARMERS, RESIDENTS

My friend and former Congressman Jim Weaver, who lives on Seavey Loop Road, called me about a month ago asking what might be done, if anything, about the summer events in Buford Park that seemed to be multiplying exponentially. He told me about an event last year that backed up traffic from the park to I-5 and kept him from getting out of his driveway.

I told him I’d look into it and asked one of our LandWatch Lane County board members if she’d see what’s on file at the county’s Land Management Division (LMD). What the record revealed is that the gatherings last summer and this summer at Emerald Meadows have been piggybacked onto a 2003 county permit for a small campground and caretaker’s residence that was renewed and expanded in 2010 with no public input.

On the face of it, that permit is not relevant to the sorts of gatherings that impose traffic, noise and other pollution on Weaver and a host of other neighbors and native wildlife. When this was brought to LMD director Matt Laird’s attention, he said that because the county owns the land he thought additional permits were unnecessary.

Apparently, he’s not concerned about the difference between low-impact campgrounds and the five festivals from late June to early September that feature amplified music well into the night, alcohol and, likely, drugs — and lots of people needing toilets, parking spaces and possibly medical care.

The Kaleidoscope Music Festival from Aug. 23-25 includes “electronic, indie rock, hip hop, bluegrass, reggae and more.” And the “Tribal Run” scheduled for Sept. 7-8 is an all-night event that features “drumming, dancing” and “war-crying.” Kaleidoscope alone is expected to attract over 10,000 attendees. Promoters describe the site as desirable because it’s “beautiful” and “tranquil.”

Virtually sharing the stage with these self-described “meaningful, fun-filled” performances and “adventures” are Jim and Mary Evonuk of J&M Farms, whose house is 200 feet away. They typically retire early in order to rise early and grow the corn, strawberries, other fruits and alfalfa that residents and their animals all over Lane County have benefited from for decades.

During this season, when their work is demanding and their rest essential, they’ve been unable to sleep because so many others are having amped-up adventures on into the late hours of the night. While “the tribe” is drumming and war-crying and others in other venues are sleeping off one too many nips and tokes, Jim Evonuk is up at 3 am moving irrigation pipe to keep his crops alive. With traffic jams at the beginning and end of festivals, he’s been unable to get from one field to another.

And though Kaleidoscope, for example, may be scheduled for three days, Evonuk told me that it’s actually more like two weeks, what with the setup and testing of electronic equipment and other necessities days before official commencement, and then breakdown time at festival end.

Main ingress and egress for the multi-thousands of festival comers and goers, many of them likely less than sober, is along narrow Seavey Loop Road.

None of this appears to Laird and his bosses, the Lane County commissioners, to be a problem, nor, apparently, does it trouble Chris Orsinger, executive director of Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah, under whose direction the park has been admirably restored to native habitat. In contradiction to the park’s master plan positing passive recreation, and in an apparent exchange for a handful of cash from the festival venues, Orsinger seems content to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the concerns of his neighbors, as well as the good faith of hundreds of volunteers and others who over many years helped him restore the area to a nearby natural refuge from urban stress.

The state, however, is concerned enough that it requires a permit and a public hearing for gatherings of over 3,000 people. It allows only four a year and one every three months.

LandWatch is concerned as well. Lane County, including area Commissioner Faye Stewart, is so far willing to be bribed by a kickback from the events to ignore state law and abandon the neighbors and wildlife to “tribal” war whoops and drumming all night long; to days and nights of hip-hop, reggae, rock and other music and to impeding, dangerous levels of traffic, not to speak of sanitation and other pollution associated with large gatherings. Therefore, as a first step, on July 1 LandWatch filed a “notice of intent to appeal” to the Land Use Board of Appeals. The appeal challenges the LMD director’s decision in 2010 to expand the number of campsites permitted in 2003 as sufficient to address the regulation of mass gatherings. This was done without regard to a state statute limiting the annual amount and frequency of events attracting over 3,000 people and requiring a public hearing. Jim Weaver and Jim Evonuk are the neighbors with standing in the notice.

Meanwhile, as the beat goes on, those who feel that the commissioners’ cavalier attitude toward neighbors, passive recreationists and the environment may be a tad short-sighted, self-serving and unfair should remind them who the real bosses are come election time.

Bob Emmons is president of LandWatch Lane County, a group that seeks to protect Lane County’s soils, air and water so that farms, forest lands and natural areas will be healthy and productive far into the future. www.landwatch.net.