

PARKLAND IMBALANCE

In his Viewpoint [11/14] "The Civic Solution," Eben Fodor proposes that the city purchase Civic Stadium with Parks and Open Space Bond funds because south Eugene has a relative deficiency of park facilities. City purchase is also supported by Donna Taggart's Viewpoint [11/14].

Fodor is correct that we need to continue to purchase parkland to match population growth and there certainly is interest in preserving Civic Stadium. As for south Eugene needing more parks, that

area has much more than its share!

Here are the facts: A report shows that the south Eugene planning sub-area having 18 percent of Eugene's population and 39 percent of the acreage of developed parks, 2.2 times the city average. South Eugene's parks and open space acreage is 2.4 times the city average. (Table C-1 of the November 2004 draft of the Eugene Parks Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan.)

Recent parkland purchases haven't eliminated the imbalance. A report to City

Council a few weeks ago shows that 66 percent of parkland is found in the four south council wards and 33 percent is in the north wards.

New student housing around the UO might create an argument for more parks, but other parts of the city are seeing our greenfield sites developed for single and multifamily housing as well. It would be interesting to know which parts of Eugene are really growing faster.

There are good arguments for saving Civic Stadium; let's not detract from

them by incorrectly claiming that making it a park will improve the geographic distribution in the city. The reality is that more parkland should be purchased and developed in north and west Eugene to reach parity.

Jon Belcher

Co-chair,

River Road Community Organization

Jerry Finigan

Chair,

Santa Clara Community Organization

DISPATCHES FROM AFGHANISTAN BY JAKE KLONOSKI

The Loya Jirga

WHAT HAPPENS IN KABUL THIS WEEK WILL REVERBERATE

Today, Nov. 21, thousands of elected officials, community leaders and respected elders from around Afghanistan will gather at Kabul Polytechnic University, braving IEDs that already targeted the gathering, to discuss and debate the U.S.-Afghan relationship beyond 2014. Five hundred miles away in Herat, U.S. forces wait to find out if our current tours will mark the last of this 13-year mission or if we keep our Roshan phone contact list up-to-date for the replacements coming behind us.

The Loya Jirga, Pashto for "Grand Council," is "the highest manifestation of the will of the people of Afghanistan," according to the Afghan Constitution. The Loya Jirga is intended to form consensus around momentous national questions by bringing as many political and social voices into decision-making as possible.

With the future of the international presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014 in question, and sensitive issues regarding prosecutorial jurisdiction over U.S. service members and the commitment of those service members to protecting Afghanistan's territorial integrity unresolved, a national decision is needed. The continuation of negotiation deadlock between the U.S. and Afghanistan could force a full U.S. withdrawal, as it did in Iraq in 2011.

It is not an exaggeration to say most decisions in Afghanistan, important and trivial, are on hold pending the outcome of the Loya Jirga. There is little else on the public mind. "We'd like to expand our ice cream distribution to Farah," one Herat business owner told me two days ago, "but we must see what happens in Kabul this week."

In contrast, U.S. negotiators use the possibility of stateside public debate as a negotiating tool, cautioning the Afghan government that if the security guarantees to Afghanistan are too definitive, the agreement will have to be debated in Congress rather than implemented by the president alone. The resulting public discussion from such a debate concerning a military commitment of up to 16,000 troops for another decade is presumptively undesirable.

The September 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) legally permits the American effort in Afghanistan. It passed with only one dissenting vote while the wreckage of the World Trade Center burned. The authorization has so far empowered two presidents over four terms to continue the fight here.

Shortly after the AUMF passed, President Bush asked the American people for "your continued participation and confidence in the American economy" and to

"get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed" as a response to 9/11.

In the years since, little else has been asked of Americans generally and much has been piled on the shoulders of a few, to the frustration of many. Meanwhile private military defense contractors have taken the mandate to participate in the American economy to heart, transforming the American way of warfare in Afghanistan and then Iraq. Though President Obama has refocused the military effort here, as a country we have largely failed to have conversations about this war of necessity, and the consequences of that failure ripple throughout Afghanistan.

While monitoring a Herat development project, I watched two U.S. contractors engage in an exchange that symbolizes much of what the effort here has become.

As a result of a failed 2012 project, one contractor had physical control of a rented ambulance as well as significant debt owed by a now-bankrupt company. A second contractor, planning a risky rural development mission for which the ambulance could provide village medical treatment and emergency response, employed a few personnel from the bankrupt company. The first contractor refused to release the ambulance to the second without payment on the past debt. The second contractor balked and sought an Afghan court order mandating the ambulance be turned over. After going through legal channels, the second contractor threatened to have the Afghan National Police force enter into the first contractor's secure compound to seize the ambulance, despite the possibility of a firefight. A tense two days resulted.

After we calmed the situation, the second contractor offered partial payment on the old debts, to be charged to the U.S. government. The first contractor blanched. Back and forth they negotiated, with threats intermingled, all with U.S. government funds. Finally, with profit margin at risk, the second contractor simply declared it would proceed without an ambulance and the first contractor sent the vehicle back to Kabul. Without enough time to procure another capable ambulance, the development project's prospects dimmed, as did the prospects for the Afghan villages it was intended to aid.

The disappearing ambulance tail lights on Highway 1 boggled my mind. Within the military, there are petty



scuffles over resources but protecting lives and mission accomplishment win out. In an Afghanistan where U.S. military numbers are on the decline and public attention is elsewhere, contractors do much of the work and tangled lines of corporate responsibility stretch everywhere. Profit often rules the day.

It need not be this way. Back in Salem, the first public memorial to this war is already seven years old, a statement of community determination to connect to this fight. Through two tours, I have witnessed tremendous support from people back home, for me and for the Afghan people. During my first tour, a seven-soldier humanitarian effort raised over \$1.6 million in donated supplies for refugee camps, children's hospitals and primary schools. In the first months of this deployment, support from family and friends has been overwhelming. Even as tension spiked between Stanford and Oregon, generous care packages continued to arrive from my former classmates.

There is a thirst among Americans for an opportunity to impact this effort, even if opinions vary on how to proceed. It is remarkable that Afghan deliberations about how this conflict transitions next year are more vibrant and inclusive than our own. As we preach democratic governance to the world, it would behoove us to practice it ourselves. Whether America departs Afghanistan abruptly or commit for years to come, we are making the decision now. Service members who cannot engage in the discussion depend on the citizens and public officials who can.

America bungled the endgame in Afghanistan through inattentiveness before, to terrible effect. It should not happen again.

Jake Klonoski is from Eugene and has been a U.S. Navy submarine officer since 2002, serving in Italy, Bahrain, Japan, Kosovo, Afghanistan and plenty of time at sea. He left active duty in 2010 and was mobilized after graduating Stanford Law School in June 2013 for service in Kabul assisting in economic development and stability operations.