

# KeizerOpinion

KEIZERTIMES.COM



## Show rationale for new district

Everyone likes parks, but not everyone uses parks on a frequent and regular basis. Parks do add to the quality of life of a city. Keizer has 19 parks from pocket parks to the jewel—Keizer Rapids Park.

There has been talk for several years now about how to fund our parks. By necessity the parks have been at the bottom of the budget list after the city allocates money for public safety and the infrastructure of the city (sewers, streets, etc.). Some think that is unfair and think that parks should get as much financial support as any other part of the city's operation. That's a nice viewpoint, but until the city is able to increase its tax base, our leaders will have to work within the revenue we have.

A few years ago there was discussion of adding a surcharge to water bills or some other existing fee that homeowners already pay, but that idea was dead on arrival. It seems there are people who have already decided that a special district is the only way to sustain funding for Keizer parks and they'll find a way to make it happen. Of course a parks district cannot be wished into existence, it will require the approval of Keizer voters to levy a new tax on themselves.

Those who propose a parks district concede that it will be a long process—researching existing parks districts in Oregon, deciding how to move forward with a master plan for all the parks and how the district would operate. A district would call for an elected board, equipment, staff

editorial

and operational organization. That's a lot of extra bureaucracy for 19 parcels of land.

A governing body of parks supporters with control over a pot of new money could easily go out of control. One

would expect there would be public hearings regarding budgets and how to allocate money to parks other than Keizer Rapids Park (KPR)—which really drives the whole parks district proposal.

The master plan for Keizer Rapids Park is really a blueprint for an amusement park. When we think of parks we think of opens spaces, trails, fields, benches, picnic tables, nature. With most of Keizer Rapids Park forest undevelopable, parks and athletic supporters eye the remaining land with visions of pavillions, soccer fields, tennis courts, softball diamonds and more. The more activities that are crammed into Keizer Rapids Park the further from its original intent it will be.

Residents like to have a park in their neighborhood they can walk to and use when they want. Would a parks district assure that every park gets equal attention?

If a parks district is placed on a ballot for voter approval, the public will have the final say on increasing their own taxes. In a political climate where cutting taxes is always a winning campaign platform, the rationale for asking Keizer households to add another financial burden had better be well thought—and planned—out. —LAZ

## Park district for Keizer?

To the Editor:

The *Keizertimes* had an interesting article about a parks district in Keizer

My first thought was "Here we go again, folks;" several people on the city council want more of your hard earned money. They are talking about forming a parks district. They are not satisfied with the money parks receives from the general city budget. Keizer is known for its frugal handling of your tax dollars but some folks want to get deeper into your pocket.

Forming a parks district will mean having to elect a board of directors, hiring a superintendent and maintenance staff, not to mention park equipment. Then there is the office space, office personnel and a variety of costs including things like insurance and legal costs.

The city would have to sell or give all of the park land to the district. I wish these people would get real and learn to live within a budget like the rest of us do. Richard Walsh was quoted as saying the park budget has to compete with sewer and water for funding. We all have to pay a fee for sewer and water completely separated from the general fund. Mr. Walsh knows this as he was on the city council. Such statements raise questions as to trustworthiness of future statements. The next thing you know these same people will want a police district and a library district in order to receive more taxes. This topic is like a vampire.

We put a stake in its heart several years ago and it is back again.

Bill Quinn  
Keizer

letters

## Parks district not a slam dunk

To the Editor:

So, some members of the Parks Advisory Board are considering forming a Parks District. Why? They say "to stabilize park funding," but what they really hope for is more funding and more autonomy.

Parks board member Richard Walsh and city councilor Marlene Parsons seem to suggest that competing with other general fund programs such as the police department is somehow unfair. There are few citizens that would put parks ahead of the police needs.

Walsh used examples of competing with the water and sewer departments. This is misinformation in the extreme. Both Walsh and Parsons know the parks do not compete with water and sewer. They never have.

The parks board would soon find out there are many duplicate administrative costs, now borne by the city, that they would have to cover before one additional penny is spent for the betterment of the parks. Costs such as an administrator, a secretary, field workers, a furnished office, heat, lights and water, insurance, legal support, annual audits, and the list goes on. The cost of a special election to establish the district would be an estimated \$30,000.

There is a funding solution if the parks board is up to it. That is to first convince the city council and then the general public that more money is needed at this time for the parks. That would mean more taxes in the form of a traditional levy.

Dr. Jerry McGee  
Keizer

## The marketplace chooses winners

By JOHN MORGAN

I am a specialist in community development working with cities all over the state. I also served as Keizer's Community Development Director from 1990 through 1998. I have some particular understanding in both how corporations make location decisions and in how local government operates.

Therefore, I finally have to step in to short-circuit the belief city governments pick the stores that locate within a community. It seems many people think the Keizer City Council or staff will choose who goes in the vacant Albertsons/Haggen building, or at least will actively market the building. I am afraid it does not work that way, nor should it.

Cities only regulate private market decisions through zoning restrictions, and only proactively engage in market decisions in extraordinary situations. Cities will get proactively engaged in the context of a major redevelopment of a substandard district. This is a classic role of urban renewal. Even

guest  
column

in Keizer's major urban renewal efforts for the River Road Corridor the focus was on creating a more attractive busi-

ness district not on the city becoming a developer. There was the rare exception of a small delegation of business leaders and me talking with the folks at Shari's to encourage them to locate in Keizer, which was successful.

You have to look to projects like Salem Center, where the city of Salem bought out that whole block and actively marketed it to specific retailers, including Nordstrom, recognizing it was key to the redevelopment of downtown Salem. It was a multi-million dollar public investment.

The Albertsons/Haggen situation is far from that. It's a vacant store owned by a private party and being marketed by them as aggressively as they see fit. That's no different than the Roth's site or any vacant store-

front on River Road. It is a private market situation and a private market decision to be made. If the people of Keizer want to influence the decision that's great. But the interest must be focused on the potential tenants, not on city hall.

Continue to pour letters and phone calls into Winco and other desirable retailers. Find out who owns the property and ask that person if and how the community can help. If there is any pressure to be brought on city hall, it is to raise the level of urgency to have the city be more aggressive with the overall River Road redevelopment program. The city can help create an even more attractive district and then let the market do its thing to fill Albertsons, Roth's, and all the other vacant spaces. That is what works and it should be where all this great energy is focused—looking forward to the grand opening of the wonderful new stores the market creates.

(John Morgan, of The MorganCPS Group is executive director, of The Chinook Institute for Civic Leadership.)

## Foreign policy brought to you by Facebook

By DON VOWELL

It seems sad how little encouragement it takes to return me to this page. A long-time friend at church asked why I have been absent so long. I told her it was because I realized that I'm an idiot. Not going so far as to deny that, she did say she sometimes agreed with things I had written. Good enough. Let's continue on. My new premise is that we are all idiots to some degree. See, you've already found something with which you can disagree.

Facebook has been a major contributor to my growing belief that I am only one among many in a crowd of idiots. Somehow any restraint shown in face to face conversation is jettisoned in Facebook commentary.

My Facebook "friends," of whom I know much about, are similar to me in many ways. Most of us have the standard American high school education, perhaps with some college thrown in, have stable income, a decent living space, and the security of American freedoms as protected by the most able military ever seen. Despite our common origins each of us believes we have the answers, hostile to any bold enough to disagree. I'm not sure how we all became so singularly brilliant.

a box  
of  
soap

Not for the first time, I recommend humility. If you are contemptuous of compromise that implies belief that you are right, others are wrong. There are more than three hundred million of us in America. You can't find one of them that agrees with you about everything. If there is just one right way to do things the odds are three hundred million to one against you being the one with the true path. The odds are the same for me. The odds grow even longer if we are magnanimous enough to include people of other nations.

Facebook lives in the now. France is our forever ally and we support them in their grief by coloring pictures of our face with red, white, and blue. Never mind "cheese eating surrender monkeys" and "freedom fries" when France resisted going to war with Iraq. It could be that that war with Iraq created the swamp from which ISIS was brewed. Anyhow France is again our original and best ally, a recognition that can be switched on and off as needed. Facebook has the attention span of a gnat.

Facebook also shows that ISIS is succeeding in making us believe they are Islam. Their bloodthirsty and hideous terrorism is not aimed at encouraging religious conversion but at provoking holy war. Christianity and Islam have coexisted for a very long time. Now we are seeing a terrifying slide toward religious hostility toward all Muslims. We are reacting just as ISIS hoped. There are lots of tough guy American Facebook posts about bombing them and shooting them if they come down our street.

Given all that I am willing to concede that I don't know what I'm talking about, and willing to believe the same of you. This is a representative democracy. The president was twice elected and fairly by a majority of Americans. He has sources of information and intelligence that you and I don't even know about. He has complete access to all military branches, the State Department, intelligence agencies and diplomats of every foreign country. He is advised about Middle Eastern history, geography, finance, resources, religion, governments and military threats.

We are armed with Facebook memes. Recognize your limits. (Don Vowell lives in Keizer. He occasionally gets on his soapbox in the *Keizertimes*.)

## Don't feed the Islamic State narrative

By MICHAEL GERSON

As careful as we should be in drawing lessons from tragedy—and there is something particularly disgraceful in mounting a political soapbox at a funeral—the horrors experienced in Paris demand a renewed dedication to the prevention of future horrors.

Islamic State terrorists have goals beyond a blood-drunk love of carnage: to discredit the Syrian refugees (whom they hate) and to encourage the perception of a civilizational struggle between Islam and the West. They are currently succeeding in both.

What are the elements of the Islamic State's strategy? Sunni terrorists have fought in local civil wars across the Middle East—exploiting the tribal politics of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and Sunni resentments against a petty Shiite despot in Iraq, and a civil war against a brutal, Iranian-sponsored despot in Syria—to gain a territorial foothold and raise the black flag of global jihad. They are stoking religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in order to attract recruits, including from Western countries. And one way to encourage the appearance of civilizational conflict is through spectacular acts of murder that somehow (horribly) appeal to a Sunni Arab sense of historical disempowerment.

This raises a serious, medium-term prospect for the terrorists: to gain in morale, territory and recruits until they have the nonconventional capabilities to sabotage the great Western advantage and vulnerability—the global economy. Consider the effect that a radiological or biological weapon might have on London or New York—and on our world order of trade, investment, banking and travel. All of it is built on a fragile foundation of confidence.

With the rise of the Islamic State in the ruins of Syria and western Iraq—wealthier and more capable than any terrorist group in history—the U.S. has a fateful decision to make in the Middle East. Destroying the Islamic State is necessary. But does America fight in effective cooperation with

other  
views

European countries that are up for the fight, while countering Iranian influence?

A rapprochement with Shiite radicalism to defeat Sunni radicalism (which was America's approach during last year during the Iraq emergency) would be a terrible mistake. It would effectively ratify American irrelevance in the Middle East—giving legitimacy to the Iranian bid for regional dominance.

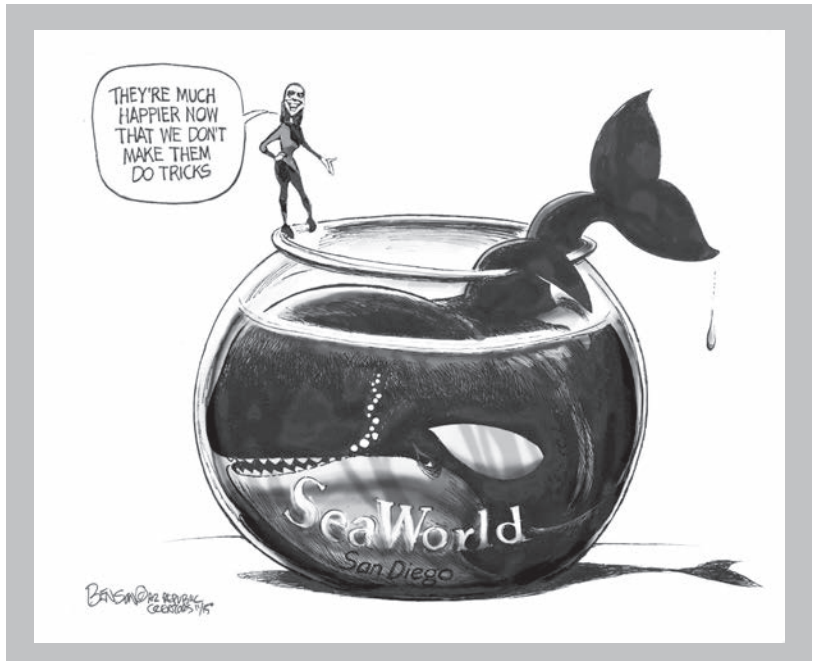
Adopting a "let them fight it out" approach is to encourage a regional Sunni/Shiite civil war in the Middle East, with Iran funding militias and supporting proxies (while we tacitly approve) and Sunni powers (secretly or not so secretly) funding Sunni militias and proxies of their own. This battleground is good for Shiite radicalism and for Sunni radicalism. It strengthens both through perpetual, sectarian jihad. And it could eventually produce people and movements that strike America and Europe in ever more ambitious ways.

This is the hard fact. Americans

don't want this role, but it needs to lead an alliance of Sunni powers (the Gulf States, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt) and NATO countries to crush the Islamic State. The current strategy of train, equip and bomb is not containing the threat. And we can't rely on Iran and Russia to do the job without inviting new problems.

And all our efforts are undermined by declaring Islam itself to be the enemy, and by treating Muslims in America, or Muslims in Europe, or Muslims fleeing Islamic State oppression, as a class of suspicious potential jihadists. Instead of blaming refugees, we need to make sure our counterterrorism and intelligence policies give us a chance to screen and stop any threat. But if American politicians define Islam as the problem and cast aspersions on Muslim populations in the West, they are feeding the Islamic State narrative. They are materially undermining the war against terrorism and complicating America's task in the Middle East. Rejecting a blanket condemnation of Islam is not a matter of political correctness. It is the requirement of an effective war against terrorism, which currently means an effective war against the terrorist kingdom in Syria and western Iraq.

As of now, that war is not being won. (Washington Post Writers Group)



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