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Bonamici disappoints

Congresswoman's LNG response sounds superficial and evasive

The prospect of a liquefied natural gas terminal at the mouth of the Columbia River is a burden that has been around more than a decade.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici's comments last week came off as superficial and evasive. She has not lived with this as long as we have.

Bonamici's predecessor, David Wu, was more forthright. He even mused about introducing legislation to cut off Federal Energy Regulatory Commission funding for the study of LNG projects on the Columbia River.

Asked to clarify her position for this editorial, Rep. Bonamici's aide said the congresswoman could not find time for such a conversation.

By contrast, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden reminded us that he had chided the CEO of Oregon LNG. On Wednesday, Wyden said: "Given how dismissive they're being about community concerns about safety, I have real reservations about whether they'll get the confidence of the community."

Added Wyden: "I want state and federal agencies to understand safety comes first."

In the Oregon Senate, Bonamici was renowned for her attention to detail. It was said that she actually read every piece of legislation that came before her in committee or in a floor vote. Perhaps Bonamici really does understand the nuances of

our checkered and somewhat sordid history of the LNG lease through the Port of Astoria on the state-owned property at Skipanon.

But it's true that experts can know every detail, but not grasp the essence of something. In listening to Bonamici's Warrenton remarks, it was as though this had just come about. She was telling us that some of her constituents are impressed with the construction jobs and the project's permanent jobs. Of course.

Does Bonamici know that LNG has been on a countywide ballot three times? And that in each case the pro-LNG side lost? Does she know the corrupt courthouse games that were played on behalf of LNG?

One of the basic premises of politics is that politicians don't take positions on issues unless they have to. That's why it has been a struggle to get our senators, members of Congress, governors and secretaries of state to pay attention.

It may be that Rep. Bonamici hasn't been in Congress long enough to gain the confidence to speak more candidly. Of course, some members never do more than play it safe (think Greg Walden). Our North Coast communities expect more.

Sharks in the water

Large predators attract and repel mere mortals

Sharks are always news — even though there is nothing new about their presence here along the North Pacific Coast.

Enduring public fascination with these top ocean predators was demonstrated again this week after deceased marine mammals with shark bites began washing up on local shores.

Humans are both attracted and repelled by any living things we can't completely dominate, hence the popularity of monster movies. For most of our evolutionary development, humans were at least as likely to be the prey as the predator. And there is nothing like the threat of being eaten to sharpen the mind.

In an age when any milquetoast with a few thousand dollars to spare can climb aboard a plane, fly to Africa and murder a giant lion with no risk except sunburn and bad publicity, sharks still represent a potentially mortal threat beyond easy control.

It requires little detailed knowledge of the ocean, however, to be aware that sharks have infinitely more to fear from us than vice versa. Old photos show truly giant specimens of great white and broadnose sevengill sharks killed in local waters, including Washington's Willapa Bay. Like the "June hog" salmon of old times, these enormous sharks now seem like legends from a faded and distant age.

Broadnoses were among shark species heavily fished along the West Coast in the mid-20th century — primarily for the nutritious oil in their livers — and their population is known to have crashed.

Here in the vicinity of the

Columbia River, fishing boats like the Trask were so loaded down with sharks that they listed down at the stern like the Hollywood prop boat at the end of "Jaws," except that it was sharks rather than men which were doing the dying.

Really accurate information about current shark populations is hard to obtain. There is a general belief in the science community that many species are in varying degrees of trouble, since they are targeted in their own right and because they rely on declining fish stocks.

A study issued this week by the World Wildlife Fund and the Zoological Society of London said the worldwide population of marine fish declined 50 percent between 1970 and 2012. Even if this scary statistic is overblown or inaccurate for the better-managed waters of the U.S., we still must take notice.

Apex predators such as sharks play vital but poorly understood roles in regulating ecosystems. Much as the long absence of wolves from Yellowstone is now known to have resulted in too many elk that ate young aspen trees, declines in shark populations here may be one reason there now are too many sea lions and seals eating too many salmon.

Therefore, the presence or absence of sharks deserves to capture the public's attention — just not for the reasons that people think. The chances of any of us getting bitten by a shark are basically nonexistent. But it's 100 percent certain our world will be a duller, unhealthier place without sharks.

GUEST COLUMN

Astoria School District shares strategy

By CRAIG HOPPES
For The Daily Astorian

Astoria School District's school year is off to a great start!

This is an exciting time of the year, as our students are progressing through our school system.

District staff truly appreciate the commitment of parents in getting their kids prepared for the school year.

A focus for the Astoria School District during the 2014-2015 school year was the preparation and process of creating a strategic plan for the district. District staff spent time in valuable conversations with employees and community members throughout the year. These conversations centered on the direction of the school district and what we felt as a community was important for our students to know as they progressed through school and graduated from the Astoria School District.

The strategic plan is designed to guide our work, as it defines our existence, proposes what our district will look like if we are meeting our goals and priorities, and defines our essential principles that help us establish what is important in our work with kids.

Through a process that involved valuable input from district staff and community members, the Astoria School District Board of Directors adopted an initial phase of the strategic plan that includes a mission statement, vision statement, and core beliefs. The initial phase of the strategic plan includes the following:

Astoria School District mission statement

The mission of the Astoria School District is to prepare each student to his/her fullest potential for a life of learning, citizenship and work.

Astoria School District vision statement

The vision of the Astoria School District is that every student acquires the knowledge and skills they need to successfully and confidently transition through each level of our learning community. Our students emerge as engaged life-long learners and citizens of a greater community. They are fully prepared for the demands of life having been provided with a challenging and comprehensive academic program.

Core beliefs

- In Astoria School District:
- Every student can learn;
- All students, staff, families and

community members are essential partners in our educational community;

- Our schools will be a safe and healthy place for students to learn;

- Providing an early educational foundation is a key indicator of our students' future academic success;

- High levels of learning occur when best practice and engagement are the foundation of our instructional design;

- Working in professional and collaborative teams allows us to make a greater impact on student learning;

- Maintaining an equitable, comprehensive, and student-centered educational program is vital to achieving our mission and vision.

The Astoria School District Board of Directors also created three priorities based on the district's mission, vision and core beliefs. These three priorities include: working to reduce the achievement gap with our Hispanic students and students living in poverty, creating a culture of equity, and providing a student-centered education.

Hispanic students and students living in poverty are falling behind educationally compared to the rest of the students in the Astoria School District. This achievement gap is growing annually and is a trend statewide.

Astoria School District is on Year 2 of a plan to lessen this gap. The district has also provided special instructional training for staff and has changed the way student instruction is taking place for Hispanic students in the elementary schools. The district will continue to investigate programs that have high impact learning opportunities for Hispanic students and students living in poverty.

The second priority of the new strategic plan is creating a culture of equity. Are we providing the same opportunities for all students and families? If not, then why and what can we do as a school community to provide equity for all students?

The concept of equity will cause the district and our community to look at how we provide programs and services to every student in the Astoria School District. The district will also be providing specific training for staff members and community members that will emphasize how we provide opportunities for students, engage parents, and build on community partnerships.

The final priority the district will focus on is providing a student-centered education for all students. The district



Craig Hoppes

will monitor the educational impact of curriculum, technology, early childhood education, health, arts, cocurricular programs, and other programs and services that assist students with learning.

An example of a high impact program includes this past school year. Astoria School District worked in partnership with Clatsop Behavior Healthcare to provide mental health services to students. During the 2014-2015 school year, over 15 percent of the Astoria School District students and families received mental health services.

Although this percentage is surprisingly high to some it only touches the surface of the overall need for mental health services for students. This is one program that was added this past school year to provide needed assistance to our students.

The district will continue to analyze and evaluate new and existing programs to assure our students are receiving a student centered education.

As the Astoria community is quite aware, our school district continues to face more and more mandates from both the state and federal government.

The newly adopted Astoria School District strategic plan outlines what is important to our community and what is important for our students, regardless of the mandates.

To begin the 2015-2016 school year, Astoria School District has created our own assessment program for each grade that will provide teachers and administrators important ongoing information about the progress of each student. This assessment plan will provide valuable information to see if we are meeting our strategic mission, vision, and core beliefs.

Astoria School District students in grades three-11 will continue to participate in Smarter Balance Assessment, but the Smarter Balance Assessment will only be one indicator of student progress. The new district assessment plan will provide staff with data at least three times a year. This will allow us to adjust programs and services to meet the needs of all our students and carry out our strategic plan.

The Astoria School District strategic plan is a work in progress. District staff and the school board will continue to develop the strategic plan to make sure it is meeting the educational needs to students. Please feel free to contact me at 503-325-6441 or email at choppes@astoria.k12.or.us if you have any questions or want to provide me with feedback.

Thank you for your continued support.
Craig Hoppes is the Astoria School District superintendent.

Every student can learn.

The Iran deal players' report card

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
New York Times News Service

The Iran nuclear deal is now sealed — from Washington's end.

But since this has been one of America's most important foreign policy shifts in the last four decades, it's worth looking back and grading the performance of the key players.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Grade: A.

His prediction last week that Israel won't be around in "25 years" was perfectly timed to complicate President Barack Obama's effort to get the deal through Congress. Khamenei is a bad guy. When I asked a Middle East expert friend to explain Khamenei's behavior, he invoked a Yiddish curse on the Iranian: "May all his teeth fall out, except the ones that hurt."

But he's also a clever guy. Through this deal Khamenei gets Iran out from under crippling sanctions, which his people want, by pushing the break-out time for Iran to make a nuclear bomb from two months to a year — but getting the world to bless Iran's "peaceful" nuclear enrichment program, even though it cheated its way there. And he's done it all while giving his hard-line base the feeling that he's still actually against this deal and his negotiators the feeling that he's for it. So all his options are open, depending on how the deal goes.

Hat's off, Ali, you're good. When I sell my house, could I give you a call?

But here's a note to his parents: "Ali got an A, but he has a tendency to get cocky. He is confident that he can pull off this deal without any transformation in Iran's domestic politics. I suggest you buy him a good biography of Mikhail Gorbachev."

Dick Cheney. Grade: F.

I cite Cheney because his opposition

to the deal, which he's been peddling along with a new book, was utterly dishonest, but in a way that summed up much of the knee-jerk Republican opposition: This is a bad deal because Obama was a wimp.

No, this deal is what it is because it reflects the balance of power, and the key factor in that balance is that the Iranians came to believe

America would never use force to eliminate their nuclear program. But that's not all on Obama. Republicans, and Cheney personally, played a big role in the loss of U.S. credibility to threaten Iran with force.

After briefing Congress on Sept. 10, 2007, Gen. David Petraeus told Fox News that Iran was supporting and directing Iraqi Shiite insurgents who have "carried out violent acts against our forces, Iraqi forces and innocent civilians." Iran was cited for making specially shaped roadside bombs responsible for killing hundreds of U.S. troops. Yet, even though our commanders said that publicly, their bosses — George W. Bush and Dick Cheney — refused to ever order retaliation against Iranian targets. Iran noticed.

Ditto on nukes. As Peter Beinart wrote for *The Atlantic* last week, Cheney stopped by "Fox News Sunday" to bash Obama's nuclear deal, "but moderator Chris Wallace, to his credit, wanted to ask Cheney about his own failings on Iran. On the Bush administration's watch, Wallace noted, Iran's centrifuges for enriching uranium 'went from zero to 5,000.' Cheney protested, declaring that, 'That happened on Obama's watch and not on our watch.' But Wallace held his ground. 'No, no, no,' he insisted. 'By 2009, they were at 5,000.' Cheney paused for an instant, muttered, 'right,' and went back to his talking points."

Note to his parents: "Dick has a problem telling the truth, and he's not



Thomas L. Friedman

alone. Some Republican critiques of this deal should be looked at, but they'll never be taken seriously if the party isn't straight about its own role in our loss of deterrence vis-à-vis Iran."

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: Grade: C.

No one had more impact in getting the world to impose sanctions and take

Iran's nuclear threat seriously than Netanyahu. But his reckless spat with Obama, which went beyond substance to openly endorsing Obama's Republican rivals and colluding with Republican House leaders to address Congress — without the president's support — hurt him, Israel and the deal.

Had Bibi hugged Obama, he could have made Israel effectively the sixth party in the P-5 side of negotiations with Iran and stiffened every spine. Instead, Netanyahu marginalized Israel. And by calling elections in the middle of it all, and forming a far-right Cabinet with extremist Jewish settlers, Netanyahu is playing right into Iran's hands: Iran wants a one-state solution, where Israel never leaves the West Bank and is in permanent conflict with Palestinians and Muslims, so Iran can better delegitimize and isolate Israel.

Note to Netanyahu's parents: "Bibi won't be punished for any of his mistakes; domestic U.S. politics will ensure that. But beware: That will only increase the odds that he'll lead Israel into a permanent, corrosive occupation of the West Bank, make support for Israel an increasingly Republican cause and lose the next generation of American Jews."

President Barack Obama. Grade: I (Incomplete).

Note to Obama's parents: "This deal makes sense; it can keep Iran away from a bomb. But Barack should go to bed every night for the next 15 years worrying whether Iran is living up to it. That's the best way to ensure that he, his party and his successors will stay vigilant and put in place an effective deterrence to Iran ever building a bomb. I hope he gets an A, but only history can give it to him."

'May all his teeth fall out, except the ones that hurt.'

Yiddish curse invoked on Ayatollah Ali Khamenei