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Others can help council with choices

Nothing looms larger for the Astoria City Council than Heritage Square and the prospect of building a new library or renovating the old one. Councilors reckoned with both topics in two installments Monday night and reached no definitive decision.

There are understandable reasons why the council is struggling with these choices. Even with 11 months under their belts, the working relationships among the councilors remain a work in progress. Two of the councilors — Cindy Price and Zetty Nemlowill — are freshmen, and Mayor Arline LaMear is in her inaugural year. Even more significantly, this is a very big choice the council faces, with a number of moving parts.

Especially startling, as Derrick DePledge reported Tuesday, was the high price tag of a project with all of the options — from \$29.7 million to \$38.7 million.

Here are a few ideas that could be useful in moving forward:

- The hole in Heritage Square is not an acceptable long-term strategy. It needs filling.
- A 21st century library, which Mayor LaMear promotes, would be the kind of asset that marks a community that wants to beckon a smart workforce.
- Combining library space with workforce housing in a downtown setting has enormous power.
- Finding a private developer

makes things happen.

It is easy to be cowed by the choices in front of the council, especially the financial ones. At times like this, it can be useful to bring larger players into the discussion.

Some 25 years ago when the Clatsop County Fairgrounds were being vacated, city leaders including Edith Henningsgaard, Willis Van Dusen and Skip Hauke invited Portland developers, such as Bill Naito, to spend a few hours here discussing what could happen on that property. Pacific Power helped make it happen by flying the Portlanders here on a corporate plane. The result was the Gateway Zone, with a movie theater, Aquatic Center and Oregon State University facilities.

The city needs at least one partner and maybe two to make a semblance of these possibilities happen. While vetting is essential, credible players are out there.

At times like this, it is useful to remember the admonition that Goethe offered: “Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!”

Time to scrap outmoded pot laws

The *Chinook Observer* finds itself in the position of being caught between the U.S. Justice Department and U.S. Postal Service when it comes to advertising legal marijuana in *Coast Weekend*.

Due to a question/complaint by a postmaster elsewhere in Pacific County, Long Beach Postmaster Mark Scarborough was similarly stuck between antiquated laws that put marijuana in the same category as heroin, versus the fact that marijuana is now a legal product in Washington, Oregon and an expanding number of other states.

Since the so-called “Cole Memo” of August 2013, the U.S. Justice Department’s position has been “federal government wouldn’t intervene as long as legalization states tightly regulate the drug and take steps to keep it from children, criminal cartels and federal property,” according to the Associated Press. Most assumed other agencies will take the same stance, since Justice interprets the law and makes enforcement determinations.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is leading the way in finding out why Portland officials appear to be throwing up a new obstacle to normalization of the legal marijuana business.

As it stands, the *Observer* felt obliged to leave this week’s *Coast Weekend* out of copies of its paper mailed to about 2,000 subscribers. (The *Observer* is somewhat unusual in selling most copies via local stores to non-subscribers, who did receive their *Coast Weekend*.)

Based on new indications that local post offices will not be expected by supervisors to make enforcement decisions on this matter, insertion of *Coast Weekend* in all *Observer* copies probably will resume next week.

Beyond this immediate controversy, it is time for Congress to scrap federal anti-marijuana laws in the face of a clear and widespread social movement toward legalization. The de facto law that exists in today’s reality is that legal marijuana is left to the discretion of individual states. Federal law should explicitly recognize this fact.

It’s no wonder the Postal Service is confused, considered the contradictory situation that exists in terms of federal statutes and enforcement.

Newspapers are adjusting to a digitized world, but they need to be operating on a level playing field with Internet-based competitors, especially when it comes to advertising. New businesses trying to reach a large number of local doorsteps are perfect candidates for newspaper advertising. But if longtime local companies are banned from doing what some of the largest and most powerful corporations in the world can do online, their ability to compete will be greatly diminished.

This small issue is just one more reminder that state-by-state legalization will be fraught with problems as long as federal authorities have a completely different understanding of marijuana.

It’s time to end this charade.

#You Ain’t No American, Bro

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
New York Times News Service

Two weeks ago, I was in Kuwait participating in an IMF seminar for Arab educators. For 30 minutes, we discussed the impact of technology trends on education in the Middle East.

And then an Egyptian education official raised his hand and asked if he could ask me a personal question: “I heard Donald Trump say we need to close mosques in the United States,” he said with great sorrow. “Is that what we want our kids to learn?”

I tried to assure him that Trump would not be our next president — that America’s commitment to pluralism runs deep. But the encounter was a bracing reminder that what starts in Iowa shows up in Kuwait five minutes later. Trump, by alienating the Muslim world with his call for a ban on Muslims entering the United States, is acting as the Islamic State’s secret agent. ISIS wants every Muslim in America (and Europe) to feel alienated. If that happens, ISIS won’t need to recruit anyone. People will just act on their own.

ISIS and Islamic extremism are Muslim problems that can only be fixed by Muslims. Lumping all Muslims together as our enemies will only make that challenge harder.

But if Trump is wrong, is President Barack Obama right? Partly. He’s right that the only way you can sustainably defeat ISIS is with a coalition. We need moderate Sunni Muslim forces to go house to house against ISIS in Iraq. We need Sunni spiritual leaders to go heart to heart and delegitimize the ISIS message everywhere. And we need Iran to make clear it supports an equitable power-sharing agreement in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites, so moderate Sunni Arabs will fight ISIS rather than seeing it as their shield against Iran.

What Obama also has right is that old saying: “If you’re in a poker game and you don’t know who the sucker is, it’s probably you.” That’s the game we’re in in Iraq and Syria. All our allies for a coalition to take down ISIS want what we want, but as their second choice.

Kurds are not going to die to liberate Mosul from ISIS in order to hand it over to a Shiite-led government in Baghdad; they’ll want to keep it



Thomas L. Friedman



Mic Smith/AP Photo

A protester is escorted out by a police officer, in glasses, top right, as Republican presidential candidate, businessman Donald Trump, speaks during a rally coinciding with Pearl Harbor Day at Patriots Point aboard the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown in Mt. Pleasant, S.C., Monday.

The Turks primarily want to block the Kurds. The Iranians want ISIS crushed, but worry that if moderate Sunnis take over its territory they could one day threaten Iran’s allies in Iraq and Syria. The Saudi government would like ISIS to disappear, but its priority right now is crushing Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen. And with 1,000 Saudi youths having joined ISIS as fighters — and with Saudi Arabia leading the world in pro-ISIS tweets, according to a recent Brookings study — the Saudi government is wary about leading the anti-ISIS fight. The Russians pretend to fight ISIS, but they are really in Syria to protect Bashar Assad and defeat his moderate foes.

It’s not exactly the D-Day alliance. It’s a deck full of jokers, none of whose priority is defeating ISIS and replacing it with a multisectional democracy in Iraq and Syria, which is our goal. And yet, I worry: These ISIS guys are smart and wicked. The longer they control territory, the more likely they’ll acquire something really scary, like a dirty bomb.

Sufficient U.S. ground forces could easily crush ISIS, but the morning after — when we try to put in place a decent local government to replace our troops — we’d face those mixed motives of all of our coalition partners. So what to do?

I’d do a bit more of everything: Apply more pressure on our Sunni allies to join the anti-ISIS fight with troops on the ground; call on the Saudis and other Sunnis to loudly delegitimize ISIS; deploy more U.S. and NATO Special Forces; make clear to Iran that we might have to put the nuclear deal on hold if Iran is not a more constructive partner in Iraq and Syria; and stress that

while we know that the violent jihadis are a minority among Muslims, the notion that they’re a totally separate and distinct group is not true. ISIS ideology comes directly out of the most puritanical, anti-pluralistic Salafist school of Islam, which promotes a lot of hostility toward “the other” — Shiites, Jews, Hindus, Christians. Clearly, some people are taking permission and inspiration from this puritanical Islam to murder and sow mayhem. I can’t reform it, but a movement of Muslims must, because it is isolating their whole community.

What starts in Iowa shows up in Kuwait five minutes later.

There are some good signs. NPR reported Monday that “when a man wielding a knife stabbed three people at an East London subway stop on Saturday evening and shouted, ‘This is for Syria,’ as he was being handcuffed ... an onlooker yelled, ‘You ain’t

no Muslim, bruv!’ using slang akin to ‘bro.’ ‘You’re no Muslim. You ain’t no Muslim,’ he repeated.” The man who made the statement has not been identified, but the hashtag #YouAinNo-MuslimBruv’ began trending worldwide,” no doubt propelled by Muslims. That’s what we need more of.

As for Trump, well, he may be a dealmaker, but he’s no poker player ready for the Middle East five-card stud sharks. His xenophobic rhetoric and unrealistic, infantile threats of massive bombing make up the kind of simplistic hand you’d play in “Go Fish” — not in this high-stakes game. Beyond playing into ISIS’ hand by denigrating the U.S. presidency and our democratic ideals, Trump is doing real damage to America’s ability to lead a coalition, the only vehicle that can effectively address this problem.

#You ain’t no American, bro.

Liberalism’s gun problem is where it ends

By ROSS DOUTHAT
New York Times News Service

I do not own guns, and the last time I discharged a firearm was on “Second Amendment Day” at a conservative journalism program many years ago. (Yes, dear reader, that’s how conservative journalism programs roll.)

My political commitments are more communitarian than libertarian, I don’t think the Constitution guarantees a right to bear every kind of gun or magazine, and I think of myself as modestly persuadable in the gun control debate.

Of course that doesn’t mean I really am, since we’re all tribal creatures and gun rights advocates are part of my strange and motley right-wing tribe. But at the very least I understand why the idea of strict gun control has such a following, why it seems to many people like the obvious response to mass shootings — whether the perpetrators

are ISIS sympathizers, mad right-wingers, or simply mad — and why the sorrowful public piety of Republican politicians after a gun massacre drives liberals into a fury.

That fury, though, needs a little more cool reasoning behind it. It’s fine to demand actions, not just prayers, in response to gun violence. But today’s liberalism often lacks a clear sense of which actions might actually address the problem — and, just as important, a clear appreciation of what those actions might cost.

Sometimes, it’s suggested that all we need are modest, “common-sense” changes to gun laws: Tighter background checks, new ways to trace firearms, bans on the deadliest weapons.

This idea was the basis for the Man-

chin-Toomey bill that failed in 2013 in the Senate. It was also, though, the basis for two major pieces of gun legislation that passed in the 1990s: The Brady Law requiring background checks for handguns and the assault weapons ban.

Both measures were promoted as common-sense reforms — in the case of the Brady Law, by none other than Ronald Reagan. But both failed to have an appreciable impact on homicides — even as other policies, like hiring more police officers, probably did. That double failure, some gun control supporters will tell you, has to do with the loopholes those two laws left open — particularly the fact that individuals selling guns aren’t required to run background checks when they sell within their home state.

But that claim’s very plausibility points to the problem: With 300 million guns in private hands in the United States, it’s very difficult to devise a nonintrusive, “common-sense” approach to regulating their exchange by individuals. Ultimately, you need more than background checks; you need many fewer guns in circulation, period. To their credit, many gun control supporters acknowledge this point, which is why there is a vogue for citing the Australian experience, where a sweeping and mandatory gun buyback followed a 1996 mass shooting.

The clearest evidence shows that Australia’s reform mostly reduced suicides — as the Brady law may have done — while the evidence on homicides is murkier. (In general, the evidence linking gun ownership rates to murder rates is relatively weak.) But a lower suicide rate would be a real public health achievement, even if it isn’t



Ross Douthat

immediately relevant to the mass shooting debate.

Does that make “getting to Australia” a compelling long-term goal for liberalism? Maybe, but liberals need to count the cost. Absent a total cultural revolution in America, a massive gun collection effort would face significant resistance even once legislative and judicial battles had been won.

The best analogue is Prohibition, which did have major public health benefits ... but which came at a steep cost in terms of police powers, black markets and trampled liberties.

I suspect liberals imagine, at some level, that a Prohibition-style campaign against guns would mostly involve busting up gun shows and disarming Robert Dear-like trailer-park loners. But in practice it would probably look more like Michael Bloomberg’s controversial stop-and-frisk policy, with a counterterrorism component that ended up heavily targeting Muslim Americans. In areas where gun ownership is high but crime rates low, like Bernie Sanders’ Vermont, authorities would mostly turn a blind eye to illegal guns, while poor and minority communities bore the brunt of raids and fines and jail terms.

Here the relevant case study is probably not Australia, but France. The French have the kind of strict gun laws that American liberals favor, and they have fewer gun deaths than we do. But their strict gun laws are part of a larger matrix of illiberalism — a mix of Bloombergist police tactics, Trump-like disdain for religious liberty, and campus-left-style restrictions on free speech. (And then France also has a lively black market in weaponry, which determined terrorists unfortunately seem to have little difficulty acquiring.)

Despite their occasional sympathies for Gallic socialism, I don’t think American liberals necessarily want to “get to France” in this illiberal sense.

But to be persuasive, rather than just self-righteous, a case for gun control needs to explain why that isn’t where we would end up.

Liberalism often lacks a clear sense of which actions might actually address the problem.