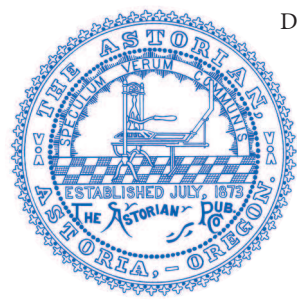


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Tracks are more than nostalgia, it's an investment

A century ago, running freight trains between Astoria and Portland made economic sense because there were bulk products — most notably logs, finished lumber and salmon — that originated here and were being conveyed into interstate commerce.

Nowadays, Astoria's rail corridor is treasured as a picturesque means to travel along the waterfront. It ties river frontage together into a themed package of maritime industry and sights.

In addition, a potential exists for industrial rail to become useful if Tongue Point ever achieves its destiny as a manufacturing/warehousing terminal, a dream that might also enhance the relevancy of re-extending heavy rail service to the Port of Astoria's main facilities in west Astoria.

As explored in our story last week, some vexing issues surround maintaining the parts of rail infrastructure that remain useful at this moment, while deciding how much effort should go into preserving and enhancing the tracks, bridges and other assets between Tongue Point and Wauna — where the paper mill makes use of the rail connection to points east.

Expensive to maintain

Largely running above or near water, the rail line between Tongue Point and the Port of Astoria is expensive to maintain. Downtown, emergency repairs are underway now in advance of a multi-year \$12 million renovation project scheduled to start next fall. Another \$950,000 is needed to bring bridge ends up to rail standards to allow freight trains to move along the waterfront.

Bringing the now-unused segment from Tongue Point east to Wauna up to snuff would cost even more — perhaps \$1 million a mile, with no sign that freight traffic will soon achieve anything like the 5,000 to 9,300 freight cars per year necessary to make the line economically feasible. The cost may climb even higher, depending on how water levels rise in a world with unstable icecaps.

West Coast cities once avidly competed to become the Pacific Ocean anchors for major east-west rail corridors. Astoria's justification for such an interconnection has always been undercut by the fact that ocean-going ships and barges can move freight far upriver at an even lower cost than rail.

The argument for rail freight service along the Columbia will grow in potency as population and industry fills the gaps between here and Portland. In addition, commuter passenger rail — last toyed with the years leading up to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial — could someday become a vital part of the transportation picture in northwest Oregon.

Make the case

We need to continue making the case to the state that spending on rail infrastructure is a good investment in our region's future. At the same time, it behooves us to recognize that our port, waterfront and Tongue Point all have much potential for multiple industries — not just tourism. This means that while we work to preserve views and enhance hospitality and retail options along the river, we also must stand up for the kinds of heavier industries that can make viable use of rail.

Supporting rail facilities must be about much more than nostalgia: We have to advocate on behalf of all the economic sectors that require affordable links to the Interstate 5 corridor.

Many other options

In response to the proposed amendment to the development code concerning accessory dwelling units, Section 3.020 ("Astoria seeks balance between housing, tourism," *The Daily Astorian*, Oct. 20), and the public hearing being held tonight by the Astoria Planning Commission: The city has set a goal of creating additional affordable housing units for Astorians, although there has been little communicated as to either actual number of units, nor desired price point.

A year and a half ago the City Council hoped to tackle a solution as part of the library expansion project. When bigger expansion plans died away, so did all talk of the city seeking ways to build apartments downtown.

Now the housing shortage is being directed toward the historic hillside properties, implying that the city's housing problem should be solved by individual home owners being invited to add the density of one or two additional families to their small lots. Long term homeowners are unlikely to add units at the cost of

their own privacy, and the integrity of the historic setting. The few units added will annoy neighbors without addressing the housing shortage.

On the other hand, let's again consider vacant properties on Duane and Exchange streets and Marine Drive. These might include the Dargold property, Merwyn Hotel, Lum's former space, the city's public works yards off Marine, and various empty lots along Marine.

Incentivize developers to purchase properties and develop housing units to meet the city's specific needs at desired price points. Their design could incorporate appropriate parking capacity and, with economies of scale, be delivered at a per-unit cost considerably lower than the per-unit cost that would be experienced by individual homeowners building accessory dwelling units.

This process would provide affordable housing within the downtown core, while filling vacant properties and preserving the historic hillside neighborhoods of which Astoria is justifiably proud.

Before rushing to a "code amendment solution" which by the Com-



The media's moment of truth

By FRANK BRUNI
New York Times News Service

The media's responsibility for Donald Trump's political success will be debated for a good long while, with the network honcho Les Moonves' words about Trump's candidacy ("It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS") front and center. But almost from the moment Trump entered the 2016 presidential race, he has been a justifiably huge



story. A lead in the polls became a lead in the delegate count and then, surreally, the nomination of the Republican Party.

Was he ridiculous? Beyond measure. Relevant? Beyond doubt. As long as the reporting about him was skeptical — and, after a certain point, the bulk of it was — there was more reason to train the spotlight on him than to pull it away.

That's about to change — bigly. He is bound to lose the election, and we in the media will lose the rationale that his every utterance warrants notice as a glimpse into the character of a person in contention for the most consequential job in the world.

But he will remain the same attention-whoring, head-turning carnival act that he is today. And we will face a moment of truth: Do we care chiefly about promoting constructive discussion and protecting this blessed, beleaguered democracy of ours? Or are we more interested in groveling for eyeballs and clicks?

Just as Trump is a candidate like no other, he may be a test like none before him.

Mitt Romney didn't cause any ruckus after his defeat four years ago, and even if he had, he was Mitt Romney: a decent man and an able public servant but hardly box-office gold. He moved on. So did we.

The situation was much the same with John McCain in 2008, John Kerry in 2004 and Al Gore in 2000. Once they had definitively lost their bids for the presidency, they no longer asserted any claim to center stage, and none had lifted the media's fortunes to a point where letting go of him could be seen as a financial risk. Trump has been a singular boon and singularly potent drug.

New rules

We need rules for quitting him, guidelines for the circumstances in

which coverage of him is legitimate and those in which it isn't. That distinction is all the more crucial because he seems poised to undermine important institutions and the democratic process itself. We can lend that effort more credibility or less by paying rapt attention to it or not.

The closest contemporary antecedent to Trump is Sarah Palin. As McCain's running mate in 2008, she attained a loopy celebrity that transcended both the campaign and politics, and the appetite for her — in the media and the electorate — didn't wane after Election Day. Nor did her zest for notice. She kept venturing out in various ways, and there were various signs that she'd become a symbol and a spokeswoman for a sizable political constituency. We didn't quit her.

But she never loomed as large as Trump does, and her reach was abridged in ways that his might not be. She didn't have, around her, the sorts of advisers and ready-made media machine that Trump has assembled, especially since he brought Breitbart News' Stephen Bannon onboard. She didn't have Trump's money. She didn't have his decades of practice at manipulating journalists.

He's already teeing up a stunt: his possible rejection of the election returns. How much should we indulge this tantrum, and for how long? If Trump actually marshals the necessary strategy and resources for legal challenges in states where the results allow them — if he hires lawyers and files paperwork — that's an indisputably newsworthy development. If he simply rages? That's not.

He may well be using this campaign as a pivot into a new media venture, which would be a bona fide business story. But it would not be an excuse to record his every insult or attend to his nonstop naysaying about politics and government.

His perspective will continue to matter — within limits — if there's proof that he's commanding a real political movement: rallies, infrastructure, the cultivation of candidates in his mold. Without such evidence, he's merely what *The Weekly Standard's* Jay Cost branded him last week: the windbag in winter.

Maybe the media will be spared any tough decisions by Trump himself. He could go gentle into that good night (hey, stranger things have happened). Or he may have finally exhausted the curiosity and

patience of all but a tiny fraction of Americans, so that journalists have no economic incentive to stick with him.

Audience power

The greatest power resides with the audience — which bears much of the culpability, too. Never before have news organizations been able to judge so quickly and accurately what our consumers respond to. If those consumers hadn't demonstrated such intense interest in Trump, we probably wouldn't have, either. And if they turn from Trump, they can be sure that most of us will, too, without much equivocation or delay.

But we can't place all of this on their doorstep. There are adjustments we should make, regardless of metrics.

One is tonal. Trump's mendacity, viciousness, vulgarity and lack of preparation encouraged a kind of political journalism that wasn't just adversarial but outraged, urgent, mocking — and rightly so. An uncommon peril called for an uncommon approach. The pitch of the commentary had to match the peculiarity of the moment. But that style can't become the new normal, not in a country that's already this polarized. We should dial it down after Trump.

And if he remains catnip to readers and viewers? We should show some courage and restraint.

Yes, it's an economic necessity — a matter of survival — that we mingle popular fare with more important stuff, using the former to fund the latter: pet videos for Pentagon reporting; a Kardashian for a Khamenei. But Trump isn't harmless fodder, not if his words and actions after the campaign match those during it. He has the potential to do great damage and is threatening as much.

We can't outright ignore him, because there are important post-mortems to be written, because he's a central character in the drama of where the GOP goes from here, and because he has captured the imaginations and vented the frustrations of tens of millions of Americans.

But we also can't roll over for him, the way we've sometimes done over the last 16 months, chronicling even those speeches and rallies that amounted to sales pitches for his properties and products. His reckoning comes on Nov. 8. Ours comes shortly after that.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

munity Development director's own admission is not likely to yield adequate numbers, let's look at the many other options that would more predictably address the need for affordable housing.

TED and WENDY OSBORN
 Astoria

Brown for Gearhart

It's been almost 100 years since Gearhart Park, a destination resort for transient vacationers, liberated itself from that status and became the city of Gearhart, a real community committed to independence, self-reliance, and the public peace, health, safety, and welfare. Both permanent and seasonal residents were the immediate beneficiaries of that sea change under the administration of the new City Council, which included William Badger, the first African American to hold public office in the state of Oregon, and the first mayor, P.A. Lee.

Running for mayor this year is Matt J. Brown, who knows and stands for the traditions of our unique community. He was raised in the heart of Gearhart, on the Ridge Path, in

the house his father — a fisher, logger, carpenter and member of our heroic Volunteer Fire Department — designed and built with his own hands. Matt has followed in the tradition of service, putting in years on the Gearhart Planning Commission and serving as its chairman. He knows the city's organization and laws, recognizes the Comprehensive Plan as the city's covenant with the community, and supports it 100 percent.

Matt Brown's advice and experience were helpful to the city as it recently legislated the great compromise on short-term rentals — a compromise that grandfathered current transient rentals that could have been declared illegal, while gradually reducing their number. Matt, a businessman sensitive to the housing needs of his employees, argued persuasively that this legislation would result in more long-term rentals, making much-needed housing for permanent residents more available and affordable.

Matt Brown promises to be "true to Gearhart"; he envisions an era in which all residents, east and west, permanent and seasonal, participate

in the life of the community. Experience is not his only strong suit; Matt is well-known and liked throughout the area, and I do believe he'll accomplish his goal. He's won my vote, and I hope he has yours.

BILL BERG
 Gearhart

Thanks to God

Regarding the headline "Pacific Storm fizzles after dire warnings" (*The Daily Astorian*, Oct. 17), and sub-headline "Why wasn't it so intense?":

No. 1, God is sovereign and controls the weather.

No. 2, a simple yet effective prayer — "God, please divert the storm from this area and cause it to dissolve and fade to nothing; please keep the power on for life sustainment" — subdued the intensity of the predicted storm.

No. 3, it was a powerful demonstration of his protection, strength and mercy to us. He deserves a standing ovation. Let's give him one.

MARJ SNYDER
 Astoria