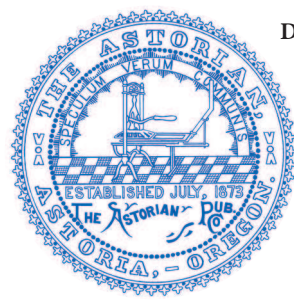


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OUR VIEW

The Daily Astorian

Seaside photographed in August 2016.

Seaside's urban renewal plans are not an overreach

It is a truism in the news business and a source of frustration to local officials everywhere that most of the public doesn't take notice of comment periods and other chances to weigh-in on important government matters until it's too late — or almost too late — for it to make a difference. Every newspaper editor in the land has been on the receiving end of irritated phone calls that start something like, "Why didn't you let us know?" when in fact there may have been several previous stories attempting to do just that.

In the case of Seaside's proposed \$68 million southeast urban renewal plan, our coverage began in earnest about a quarter of a year ago, supplemented by letters to the editor and other calls to action. The city conducted a number of public meetings on the matter. Nevertheless, a heated public hearing on the plan last week is a clear indication that the outreach process has been something less than a success as the City Council readies for an Aug. 28 vote.

Resident Maria Pincetich said there has been a lack of meaningful interaction with the city regarding the merits of the various projects the urban renewal plan — with an associated earmark of taxes — will be used to pay for. In her view, the process was slanted toward the narrower question of conformance with the city's existing comprehensive plan.

Just as citizens have a somewhat deserved reputation for not paying attention soon enough, municipal officials often have a reputation for putting an enthusiasm for growth and development ahead of other deserving public goals. It would be unfair to suggest that is entirely what's going on in Seaside, though some citizens clearly believe over-development and increased traffic congestion are possible consequences of the renewal plan.

Oregon voters have long supported growth-management planning. A key component is constraining cities within existing borders to the extent possible, while preserving forests, farms and other forms of open space around them. Urban expansions are expected to happen when needed, but within the framework of preserving community values and bearing in mind the ability to affordably provide urban-style services — everything from water and sewer to policing.

At least some of the dissent to Seaside's plan revolves around its inclusion of 32 acres of currently unincorporated forest, something that has recently attracted the attention of the Oregon Coast Alliance conservation group. This raises the prospect of an appeal to the state Land Use Board of Appeals.

However, local voters approved a new school complex above the tsunami inundation zone. One can argue that implicit in that decision is also taking steps to assure school access, something acquisition of the forestland will facilitate. Here on the coast where both tsunamis and sea-level rise are real concerns, it's reasonable to anticipate that more eastward expansion will be inevitable, irrespective of other policy goals.

Much of the new renewal plan deals with an estimated \$45 million for bridge improvements at avenues A, G, S and U. In this case also, it can be argued that better bridges might encourage growth. But it can be counter argued that better bridges are needed for tsunami evacuation and simple urban functionality.

Overall, it appears Seaside's plans are not an overreach. A case can be made, however, for extending the public-engagement period by 30 or 60 days to absolutely ensure citizens know what to expect. No plan will ever gain complete buy-in, though, and at some point the city's elected councilors are well within their rights and responsibilities to make a decision.

For many in the county, Seaside's decision to turn down a U.S. Highway 101 bypass will always go down in history as a sadly missed opportunity. But the city has made good use of past urban renewal funds, and this time promises to be no different.

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LBJ mastered a complexity that Trump barely glimpses

By STEVE FORRESTER
The Daily Astorian

When I'm asked to describe an experience that would surprise others,



was Oregon U.S. Sen. Maurine Neuberger.

In the fall of 1963, some weeks prior to the assassination of President John Kennedy, Vice President Johnson made a rare appearance in the Senate chamber. In the matter of a few minutes, Johnson made a procedural ruling from the presiding officer's chair. Because of the Senate's not-yet-amplified acoustics, the Republican floor manager, U.S. Sen. Thomas Kuchel of California, asked Johnson for clarification. Hearing Johnson's ruling a second time, Kuchel repeated the request.

Angry at having to repeat himself, Johnson asked to see the minutes of this episode as soon as they were off the typewriter. I was dispatched to the office of the Official Reporters of Debates, down the hall from the chamber.

With paper in hand I returned to find Johnson. He was standing at the end of the long narrow room that was the Senate Lobby. I approached the towering figure of the vice president, saying "Mr. Vice President, I have what you wanted." Partially turning, but not looking at me, Johnson said: "I've already seen it."

Like myriad others who had served Johnson over his long career, I left his presence feeling diminished. Of the complex Johnson persona, his former aide Bill Moyers has said that the president was 13 of the most interesting persons he's known.

Within weeks of my errand, Johnson would become president. To a joint session of Congress, he proclaimed that he wanted the Civil Rights Act that John Kennedy had proposed. In that moment, Johnson surprised all who had watched him for years as a loyal member of the Southern bloc — a defender of segregation. All of those Southerners knew that LBJ would be a formidable force. Johnson knew Congress as well as or better than they did.

Johnson was not book smart. But his emotional intelligence was that of a genius. As majority leader, he had mastered the Senate in a way that no predecessor had.

Watching Donald Trump stumble in his relations with Congress has made me appreciate the difficulty of what Johnson accomplished.

The occasion on which I witnessed President Johnson's raw power first hand came when the Senate considered what was called the Mundt Amendment — named for Republican U.S. Sen. Karl



AP Photo

President Lyndon B. Johnson reaches to shake hands with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. after presenting the civil rights leader with one of the 72 pens used to sign the Civil Rights Act in Washington, D.C., in 1964.

Mundt of South Dakota. Mundt wanted to prohibit loans to Communist countries. It was a code word for Hungary — a Soviet satellite on the edge of the USSR.

Johnson aimed to defeat Mundt. But what went down was much more. On that day in 1963 as Christmas approached, the new president artfully pulled senators' strings. The one-act play I watched that afternoon included the Republican leader, Everett Dirksen, who produced a letter that was allegedly from "our late beloved president" urging Dirksen to oppose the Mundt Amendment. Dirksen also recounted an alleged conversation about the Mundt Amendment — an encounter he and JFK had days prior to the assassination in Dallas.

After the roll call, I observed

Johnson distilled national grief over Kennedy's death into fuel to move the Civil Rights Act

a beaten Sen. Mundt sitting at his desk. The message of that afternoon was simple: Johnson was back. And he had distilled the national sentiment over the murdered president into fuel for his legislative drive that was just beginning.

The Mundt incident came to my mind as I watched President Trump berate Republican senators for not passing Obamacare repeal and replace. Weeks later, Trump would belittle the Republican majority leader, Mitch McConnell.

Here is the difference. While Trump plays a televised and tweeted version of being president, Johnson knew the substance of the job. Upon LBJ's sudden accession to the presidency, some observers said that no other president had come to the job

better prepared.

President Trump's role in the fumble of the attempt to remake the Affordable Care Act also reminds us that President Johnson enacted Medicare — a benefit which the lion's share of Americans prize.

On Terry Gross' radio show "Fresh Air," the former Johnson aide Moyers recently talked about how the president worked Congress intensely to get Medicare. Moyers said Johnson pressured senators over breakfast, at lunch, over cocktails and at dinner. Other presidential aides have described how Johnson put in the equivalent of two complete work days — broken by a late afternoon nap — every day.

President Trump betrayed his legislative ignorance when he said he was waiting, "pen in hand" to sign a health care bill. A president who wants something from Congress does much more than wait. In Robert Caro's "The Passage of Power," we learn the intricate story of how Johnson moved the Civil Rights Act of 1964 through a thicket of procedural challenges in both House and Senate.

One of the many lessons we are relearning in 2017 is that the Constitution is a profoundly conservative document. To those of us who are not constitutional scholars, the simple way of putting this is that moving legislation is difficult in the best circumstances. Moving something as massive and complicated as Medicare or the Civil Rights Act was monumentally difficult. Repealing the Affordable Care Act and replacing it is just as difficult.

Trump sold himself as an outside player — a successful businessman who could make deals. And that has been a cherished notion of many Americans — the outsider who could make Washington work. Sadly, and to America's detriment, that belief in the amateur president has led to legislative disaster and disappointment.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Daily Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

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All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two

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Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a

respectful manner.

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