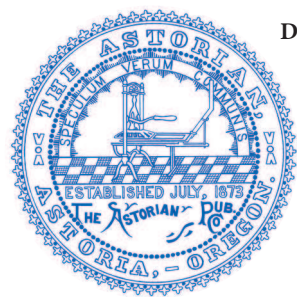


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OUR VIEW



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Astoria, pictured here, and other cities on the North Coast have struggled with housing.

Strategic steps afoot to confront housing crunch

While the region's housing crunch isn't going away anytime soon, several recent events show the North Coast's leaders are taking strategic steps to confront it, regionally and in individual cities.

Last week, for instance, Clatsop County commissioners and Seaside city councilors each made an impactful decision to join a \$100,000 regional housing study. The comprehensive study can now proceed and will help all involved understand the type, size, location and price of housing that the county needs. Seaside joined Astoria, Warrenton, Gearhart and Cannon Beach, each signing on with a \$10,000 pledge, and the county agreed to foot the remaining \$50,000. The report will be modeled after a study previously conducted in Tillamook County and its recommendations have been credited with helping its leaders address some of the same housing issues.

The regional initiative is an outcome of a rare, but much needed summit on housing that came at the urging of County Manager Cameron Moore. Although some may question why the study is needed when each city has conducted other studies of their own, none have had a broad, birds-eye view of the situation across the entire region. Taking a regional approach makes perfect sense because individual cities can develop strategies with a better picture of the overall region in mind. It also comes at a comparatively bargain price for each.

As Jason Schermerhorn, the interim city manager for Cannon Beach, said, "It's not just a problem in this county, it's statewide. Being involved will help us have a broader idea on how to handle it."

At the same Seaside meeting, city councilors also agreed to study system development charges, which are large fees developers pay the city to connect to essential services like water and utilities. Developers often cite those charges as an impediment to housing growth, and the fees in Seaside haven't been reviewed since 2008. Much has changed since then with increased housing demand, infrastructure changes and population growth.

And in Warrenton, which has land available even with some 500 housing units either under construction or in the permitting stages, city commissioners decided to raise building permit and planning review fees, but only slightly with an average increase of \$57 per house. They also have given indications they may look at Warrenton's system development charges to ensure they aren't a barrier.

None of the actions are a solution to the crunch, but reflect movement rather than complacency. For the momentum to continue — and it must to find solutions — it's vitally important that once the comprehensive study and the other reviews are completed that they don't just sit on a shelf like old books gathering dust. The recommendations will need close study to determine what best can be done, and each city must continue taking steps to remove barriers that may prevent solutions from rising.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

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.

Submissions may be sent in any of these ways:

E-mail to editor@dailyastorian.com; online at www.dailyastorian.com; delivered to the Astorian offices at 949 Exchange St. and 1555 N. Roosevelt in Seaside or by mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.



Spicer's makeover at the Emmys

Chris Pizzello/Invision

Sean Spicer speaks at the 69th Primetime Emmy Awards on Sunday at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles.

By FRANK BRUNI

New York Times News Service

I'm an awards-show geek who usually spends the morning after the big event nattering about



who was unjustly robbed, who was unwisely dressed and whether it's a felony in Hollywood to consume more than

300 calories a meal, because it sure looks that way.

But not on Monday, because what I and anyone else who tuned in to the Emmys on Sunday night saw wasn't good fun. It was bad news — a ringing, stinging confirmation that fame truly is its own reward and celebrity really does trump everything and redeem everyone.

Object of ridicule or object of reverence: Is there a difference? Not if you're a proven agent of ratings and likely to deliver more of them. Our commander-in-chief took that crude philosophy to heart and rode it all the way to the White House. Sean Spicer took a page from the president and then a bow on the Emmys stage.

Not exactly a bow, and there are Emmys production folks and television industry figures who are telling themselves that during his fleeting appearance at the ceremony, Spicer was being slyly demeaned, not sanitized.

What bunk. The message of his presence was not only that we can all laugh at his service and sycophancy in the Trump administration, but that he's welcome to laugh with us.

For anyone who missed the show or hasn't caught wind of the brouhaha since, Spicer came onto the stage behind the kind of lectern that Melissa McCarthy used in her impersonations of him and told the Emmys host, Stephen Colbert, "This will be the largest audience to witness an Emmys, period — both in person and around the world."

His words alluded, obviously, to his fictitious claim — at his very first news conference as the White House press secretary — about the crowds for Trump's inauguration. But that claim wasn't merely ludicrous. It was precisely and perfectly emblematic

The embrace of Trump's alumni says that proximity to power and widespread exposure are accomplishments in and of themselves and will always pay off. One day you're trending on Twitter. The next you're at the Emmys.

of Trump's all-out, continuing assault on facts and on truth itself. And it signaled Spicer's full collaboration in that war, which is arguably the most dangerous facet of Trump's politics.

Reportedly, Colbert himself had the idea to include Spicer in the Emmys, and that's especially rich, as the Brits like to say. On his late-night talk show, Colbert has flamboyantly mined his ostensible contempt for Trump and outrage over the president's misdeeds to find a spark that was missing from the program and a viewership that had eluded it.

On top of which, it was Colbert, years ago, who coined the term "truthiness," pointedly exposing — and skewering — politicians' self-servingly cavalier relationship with reality.

Truthiness was a pale, wan forebear of Trump's pathology, distilled in Spicer's inauguration boast. But at the Emmys, Colbert abetted Spicer's image overhaul and probably upped Spicer's speaking fees by letting him demonstrate what a self-effacing sport he could be. The moment went viral, and I suppose that's the point. You grab the eyeballs however you can. Trump taught America that, too.

This is bigger than any one awards show. More than ever, someone who arouses curiosity or makes you gape can monetize that as easily as someone who inspires admiration can profit from your genuine regard. Fascination comes in many shades, and at this morally addled moment in America, the bright ones and the dark ones are almost equally lucrative.

So Spicer and Anthony Scaramucci and Corey Lewandowski are all graduating to greater recognition and riches, never mind that they willingly promoted, ignored or sugarcoated actions and pronouncements by Trump that went well beyond the established norms of partisan politics.

Spicer and Lewandowski will be fellows at Harvard, never mind their volitional submission to someone whose lack of character, grace and basic maturity was just affirmed anew by his retweet of a video of him hitting a golf ball into Hillary Clinton and knocking her over.

By teaming with Trump, they stood at the apex of the government, in an intense spotlight. By surviving him, they're reaping the same dividends accorded the former aides of far nobler politicians.

Both Harvard and Hollywood are probably trying to shed the tag of elitism, and Harvard is no doubt reasoning that to close itself off from this president's enablers is to forfeit an opportunity to understand why so many Americans voted for Trump.

But there are other, better ways to make that gesture and explore that phenomenon, ways that don't play down and pretty up the ugliness of Trump's ascent, ways that don't bestow rewards on operatives who stomach stuff and peddled wares that no responsible patriot, regardless of his or her political leanings, should.

The embrace of Trump's alumni says that proximity to power and widespread exposure are accomplishments in and of themselves and will always pay off. One day you're trending on Twitter. The next you're at the Emmys.