

Thank you Sen. Johnson

Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook counties are truly fortunate to have a powerful and compassionate advocate in Sen. Betsy Johnson. Because of her tireless commitment to meet our needs, Oregon lawmakers made decisions that protect and provide resources for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Community Action Team (CAT) staff and board members wish to express deep gratitude to Sen. Johnson for asking the hard questions, seeking our input regarding community needs, and for carrying that information to the legislative arena. Senator, please accept our many thanks for your unshakable loyalty in serving all of us.

LEANNE MURRAY
St. Helens

Studies waste money

I am wondering why the Astoria City Council seems to be so enamored of studies. For the last several years one issue that has been forefront in our community is the lack of workforce housing. Now that a large number of units are under construction in Astoria and Warrenton, the county and cities are spending \$100,000 to “study” the housing situation.

Hundreds of thousands were spent to study, and then restudy the library renovation, money that would come in handy now to do the actual work. The firm that studied and determined that downtown Astoria has adequate parking is obviously composed of healthy individuals who have never tried to park in the pouring rain to “shop locally.”

Some issues may warrant costly studies, but I’d like to see my tax dollars go to solutions, not costly study after study telling us what we already know.

TERRIE POWERS
Astoria

Iran’s missile test

Regarding “Trump Administration Debates Options on Iran Nuclear Deal” in The Wall Street Journal Sept. 21: Less than four weeks after the Obama-Iranian deal was implemented in January 2016, the Iranian government announced renewed access to \$100 billion in frozen assets, according to the Feb. 3, 2016 US News and World Report.

After the asset release, the sanctions lifted, and the prospect of billions in European Airbus sales to Iran was announced, Iran tested the resolve of the U.N. to implement “snapback” by firing ballistic missiles.

On March 29, 2016, Reuters reported that at or around the ninth of March, Iran tested ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear payload, in direct defiance to U.N. Resolution 2231, adopted Oct. 18, 2015 (<http://bit.ly/2xkwm13>).

Resolution 2231 “... calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.”

From the adoption of U.N. Resolution 2231 through the Obama-Iran deal, to the testing of ballistic missiles: 142 days. From the nascent Obama-Iran deal until the missile test? A mere 68 days.

WAYNE MAYO
Scappoose

Shameful ICE tactics

On Sept. 20 The Daily Astorian reported on how an Oregonian couple were wrongfully detained, after a court hearing, by plainclothes ICE agents (“Oregon man, US citizen, mistakenly approached by ICE agents”). The agents did not identify themselves. I gather from reading the article that to unsupervised ICE agents all Hispanics look the same.

It has become so bad that our Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Balmer has been compelled to send a letter to the U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly asking them to stop their agents from arresting people in and around Oregon courts. Let’s hope that federal agents operating secretly in our community are more responsive to our chief justice, than they have been to our local law enforcement.

The Daily Astorian reported on Aug. 31 how “Peninsula police shut off from immigration arrests” by the feds, refusing to give the police prior notice of operations in their police jurisdictions, despite Sheriff Scott Johnson’s written request to them for such notice.

Such prior notice is not just customary; it is necessary to the peace and safety. Just imagine a local police officer pulling up to a situation where one or more apparent civilians are holding guns on another civilian.

It is shameful that, as reported

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by The Daily Astorian on Sept. 18, our Hispanic community could not hold a cultural celebration, without very real fears of ICE agents targeting their event and sweeping up citizens and immigrants alike (“Heritage celebration, rally for immigrants in Astoria”). Can a society tolerate in silence such intimidation of a group, by a secret police and still be free?

It is time for city councils and boards of supervisors to get together with our local judges, district attorneys and local law enforcement to bring transparency and accountability to this process.

No more silence.

DANI WILLIAMS, ESQ.
Astoria

Trash problem growing

On my way down Williamsport Road to a Fishermen football game recently, I saw an old oak table on the downhill side and thought, “The lack of respect people have for our community and nature sure is getting bad. I’ll pick it up after the game. I can at least burn it.”

So, stopping for the broken table, I grabbed a flashlight and became thoroughly disgusted to see a trailer-worth of garbage going down the hillside. A mattress, rags, bags, more broken furniture.

Over the last few months I have noticed an increase in “oops” roadside trash, i.e. plastic bags, candy wrappers, soda cups. Some of this I can point to tourism for the blame, but the increase of broken furniture, toilets, tubs and unwanted items unfortunately seems to be growing.

I know your time and effort are valuable, but to disrespect nature, your community and your own children, let alone breaking the law has to stop. Please.

TROY J. HASKELL
Astoria

How war is perceived

I read, in the Sept. 8 edition of The Daily Astorian, Jay Reeves’ and Felicia Fonseca’s comments on the Civil War, “We’re still fighting, more than 150 years after Appomattox.”

It is illogical to fight a war over slavery, especially a war one is bound to lose. What possible good could such a war bring. Take “reconstruction.” Was this designed as a way to sentence our black brothers and sisters to hundreds of years of virtual slavery? To drive a wedge between the races? Let us hope not, but ...

Today slavery flourishes in many nations where it is legal or illegal, even here in the U.S. I say without fear of contradiction that there are now more slaves in New York City than there were before the Civil War. Is anybody doing anything about this? Are they trying to start a war?

The part of the Civil War both sides wish to sweep under the table is the participation of blacks. The North encouraged blacks to join them in a fight for their freedom — more bodies for Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to lose, along with mercenaries from Europe. When Grant took over, the body count was 2-1 in favor of the Union. When the war ended, the South was ahead 2-1, despite having to fight most of that time short of ammunition, and other necessities of war.

Union blacks faced modern repeating gunfire armed with fake rifles with fixed bayonets. Blacks were thought not to be able to handle a real rifle. While Gen. William T. Sherman was marching his way across Georgia, a mop-up Union army evacuated its white wounded, but left its black wounded behind, to be massacred by civilians.

Both Union and foreign observers of the Confederate artillery, Gen

Robert E. Lee’s long arm, mentioned that many blacks were participating in this very effective contingent. One might well wonder how well an army would perform if it didn’t implicitly trust its artillery.

In conflicts, sometimes the side of right wins, sometimes the side of right loses. This may have a great deal to do with how a war is perceived, and why those who document history come to different conclusions.

BENJAMIN A. GREAVES
Seaside

Other side of rentals

I read Mayor Matt Brown’s letter with sadness (“What Gearhart repeal means,” The Daily Astorian, Sept. 22). Yes, I own a “political firm out of California.” But my wife, Sharon, grew up in Portland, spent her summers in this area, and has been coming to Gearhart for 60 years. We have owned a house in Gearhart for 17 years now, been part of the Homeowner’s Association, and support the volunteer fire department. We have paid more than \$200,000 in property taxes. We have known Matt for many years and consider him a friend, so this is not personal.

And yes, we use our home as a short-term rental — about 90 days a year. Why does the mayor make us out to be “outsiders”? What else isn’t being said?

The mayor is not telling you that our measure ensures that all septic and safety measures that already apply to every home in Gearhart will apply to vacation rentals, as well. He didn’t tell you that only 84 families will be able to rent their homes as a short-term rental — ever.

He didn’t tell you that your property values are being affected. One day you may want to sell your home and the buyer could say, “I can afford to buy this property only if I can rent it out occasionally.” But current law prevents a buyer from doing that. So in order to sell your house you lower the price ... a lot. Is this the mayor’s plan to provide more affordable housing in Gearhart, by lowering your property values?

Measure 4-188 does three things: It protects property rights for all Gearhart homeowners, not just the 84 who currently have vacation rental permits; it requires all homeowners to follow existing safety and septic rules; and it requires a vote of the people for any changes that restrict or take away property rights of Gearhart homeowners.

Vacation rentals have always been a part of Gearhart. They are not a threat to our “quiet residential community,” nor are they “high commercial use,” as the mayor claims — they are unoccupied much of the year.

These are distortions, like claiming that my wife and I are “outsiders.” The mayor has unfortunately proven that “the first casualty in war and politics is the truth.”

DAVID TOWNSEND
Gearhart

A terrific typhoon

Many years ago, I was a young, cocky, full of myself “I can conquer the world” merchant marine officer, until I met a terrific typhoon in the South China Sea.

When I came to the bridge that morning, all I could see were mountainous seas, over 100 feet, coming right at us with winds over 130 miles per hour. All of a sudden giant seas broke over the entire ship, tossing it about like a tiny toy. I was so full of fear that I hustled to my quarters, got down on my knees and prayed, “Lord, you know that I haven’t been the greatest person. Help me to

change and save our crew and ship.”

The point I’m trying to make is that oftentimes it takes a dramatic event to help us recognize that maybe we do need to change, and we do have a living, loving Lord who can help us change. I know, because he did make a real change in my life.

JIM BERNARD
Warrenton

Together we grow

The time is now to invest in a new Astoria Co-op. The then “community store” was one of the first businesses in town which I shopped at, and volunteered for, upon my entry into Astoria. As a long-term shopper and past board member, I am proud to see the continuing success which demands that the Astoria Co-op move toward a bigger, more beautiful and bountiful store and location.

This type of business expansion is unlike any I have seen in our area. It exemplifies the power of co-operation when members are being asked to get involved and invest in order to see a successful project come to fruition. This level of involvement and commitment from the residents of Clatsop County and beyond is inspiring; something you would not see from the chain grocers in our area.

And why? Because co-operatives are more than the businesses they operate. They are a unique business model involving individual and family members in order to support its local community and economy. When you join a co-op you play a role in the way the business looks, feels, operates and more importantly, when it comes to a food co-op, the quality of nutrition and health it provides.

We the Astoria Co-op community were notified last week that the 4,000th member had joined; that is nearly half of our city’s population. And if that does not inspire you, then the staff of the co-op, led by Matthew Stanley should; he is a successful leader whose passion for the co-operative movement is infectious.

I encourage those who are currently co-op members to look into investment; to join those of us who have invested to financially support something that truly fosters our local community, economy and food choices. If you haven’t found a reason to join as a co-op member, the reason is this, and the time is now. Together we grow.

TRACY ERFLING
Astoria

The health care mess

How can making health care a single payer system ever happen, when America spends \$3.2 trillion on health care in 2016, with a cost of \$10,345 per person? Congress now wants to get rid of the problem they created by throwing it on the states. Wow, I would hate to see states handle that one.

Americans need to get the government out of health care completely, just for the fact it would stop the corruption they generate. So that leaves the hospitals, health care professionals, private companies, local governments, insurance companies and you to work out the solution.

I believe hospitals and health care professionals are working to reduce costs the best way they can. They must get away from the health insurance mentality, though. Pharmacy issues need to be resolved drastically. Private utility companies, including electrical power, natural gas, garbage, cable TV, phones, water and sewer should all be free to hospitals and health care facilities.

I agree with competition within

the insurance industry, but all insurance companies must sell health care policies, no matter what — instead of four, there should be 40 — and they can cross state lines. Since insurance companies provide a community service, their investments should go back into the health care system instead of nonhealth investments, helping to reduce health care costs and provide better health care.

Insurance providers to hospitals and doctors need to be eliminated or come way down as well; if they don’t, then attorneys should pay for all our health care expenses.

We can start by eating healthier, exercise consistently, put less stress in your life (if that is possible), and a yearly checkup. You should be able to just Google up your symptoms, it will tell you what is wrong, what you need to do to correct it, fill out the prescription and send it to your local pharmacy, no doctors required.

There you go, free health care, and no act of Congress required. Or, go back to the days before health insurance ever existed, which might not be such a bad idea. I can raise chickens.

RAYMOND GARDNER
Warrenton

‘No’ on Measure 4-188

David Townsend, out-of-state political strategist and owner of a vacation rental in Gearhart, is a supporter of Measure 4-188 which will appear on November’s ballot. If approved, this measure would repeal and replace Gearhart’s law limiting and regulating short-term rentals. This measure would allow all homes in Gearhart to be converted into transient rentals. Think about it. Short-term rentals could take over our entire community.

The repeal and replace measure would satisfy the vacation rental agencies like Vacasa, securing them more units in Gearhart. Townsend’s agent, Oregon Beach Vacations, has contributed \$4,000 to his war chest for Measure 4-188, according to the Oregon Secretary of State. More rentals mean more money for these agencies and absentee landlords.

Short-term (less than 30 days) rentals are a commercial activity not permitted in Gearhart’s single-family residential zones, but they are grandfathered by law pending eventual sale of the rental properties, which then revert to much-needed permanent residences following existing Ordinance 901. Ordinance 901 also does double duty as a solution to the existing (permanent) housing crisis.

In Gearhart, properties in a residential zone cannot be used for commercial purposes. Transient rentals such as short-term vacation houses are commercial uses, therefore illegal. Those who buy property zoned residential are entitled to expect their neighborhood will remain residential, not to become commercial hotel-like zones.

The existing Gearhart law that regulates and limits short-term rentals has been upheld by Oregon’s Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA). This validates the city’s right and obligation to follow its Comprehensive Plan (1994, p. 1), to wit: “The City will recognize the importance of the City’s residential neighborhoods and the need to protect them from the negative impacts of transient rental property, and to discourage increased levels of traffic and similar disruptions.”

Help protect our property values and our neighborhoods from proposed unlimited short-term rentals. Vote no on Measure 4-188. Keep Gearhart residential.

JEANNE MARK
Gearhart