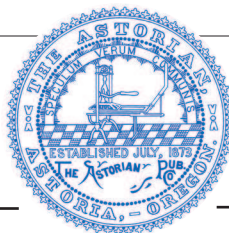


OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGES
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Issues looming for the Columbia-Pacific area in the new year

Each year, countless Americans and businesses make resolutions for the coming year, everything from individuals wanting to lose weight and join a gym to businesses wanting to be more productive and profitable.

At The Daily Astorian ours are centered on readers, website visitors and our advertisers, rather than ourselves. We will strive to serve each reader, visitor and customer better than we have before to meet increasing expectations in print and online, provide excellent customer service in all aspects and remain faithful to our core values.

For the coming year we've resolved to be even more of an active and representative regional voice and a more inclusive advocate for those who live and work throughout this dynamic Columbia-Pacific area.

We will also continue to pay special attention to a variety of local and state topics. Some have been with us for years — in some cases moving toward resolution, while others show only scant signs of progress. Few things worth doing are ever susceptible to permanent fixes. Sometimes the only way to achieve anything is making certain they remain a visible and active item on our "to-do" list.

Top of the 'to-do' list

One of these important ongoing issues is the housing crunch. It can be said that some genuine progress was made during 2017 in making certain everyone finds safe and affordable places to live. But much remains to be done in 2018 and for many years beyond.

Awareness of the problem has spurred private investments in housing — perhaps most notably in Warrenton — while local governments and housing advocates are making at least some progress in addressing the need for innovative solutions. In Long Beach, Washington, for example, construction will soon start on new subsidized apartments. Much more will need to be done to maintain a healthy mix of housing for different income categories, especially as our region gains in terms of positive publicity and resulting in-migration.

Also relating to housing — as well as commercial and government buildings — the issue of historic preservation has for more than a decade been a value promoted on this page. In 2017 two developments, sought for decades, took root. They are the Flavel properties on either side of the 900 block of Commercial Street. In 2018 we anticipate more visible progress on those projects. The res-

urrection of those two street fronts will make an enormous difference in the visitor's introduction to Astoria.

Elsewhere in the region, 2017 saw the completion of the town of Chinook's remarkable effort to restore its beautiful 1920s school complex, which now serves as a venue for south Pacific County events and houses a new branch office of the Long Beach Peninsula Visitors Bureau.

A number of environmental/regulatory issues remain very much on our region's agenda. In some cases, vital industries are at the whim of state agencies, as is the case for Willapa Bay's oyster growers, who await approval to stem loss of tidelands to burrowing shrimp. Also in Washington, rural homebuilding remains at a near-standstill due to court-imposed restrictions on well drilling, which await legislative action.

Other issues that remain in need of attention continue to include local and state political dysfunction and the use of scarce tax dollars, children's well-being in all matters, emergency preparedness, planning and preparation that can save lives, environmental issues like climate change, mental health treatment and the need for greater standards of care, and homelessness and the need for strategies to help those who need it.

Readers — including political leaders — can expect much additional coverage and comment on all these matters during the coming year.

'Resolve to solve'

We hope those in state and local political leadership make a few and keep them too. They include:

- For all state and local leaders to adopt a

simple motto for themselves to "resolve to solve" problems.

- For Gov. Kate Brown to resolve to become a more visible, problem-solving leader for all Oregonians, as she was elected to be. With the next legislative session only weeks away, Brown needs to step up and be at the fore-

We hope our local governments resolve to work together more diligently to develop solutions for common problems like housing, economic development and emergency preparedness on a regional basis.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Workers renovate housing units at the Alder Court Apartments complex in Warrenton. Affordable housing remains one of the region's top issues.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

The Waldorf Hotel building adjacent to Astoria City Hall will likely become about 40 units of low-income housing.

front of finding and advocating solutions for longstanding issues. These continue to include reforms of the enormously underfunded Public Employees Retirement System, state taxation and revenue generation, sustainable funding for education, transportation and infrastructure improvements, and raising the bar for the leadership in key state agencies to solve performance, personnel and functionality problems that have been highlighted in recent state audits. Brown has an enormous career opportunity that many in the political arena aspire to have but haven't achieved. Unless she steps up her performance, she should certainly face serious competition in her 2018 election race.

- For Oregon state representatives and senators, who like the governor, need to resolve to put their partisanship aside during the upcoming session and seek solutions. Voters in the last election made it abundantly clear they're tired of seeing politicians kick the can down the road for others to solve sometime in the future while they continue to push their own personal agendas in the present.

Closer to home

- We hope our local governments resolve to work together more diligently to develop solutions for common problems like housing, economic development and emergency preparedness on a regional basis. Individually

and collectively, they need to think strategically and compare notes to get results that can raise the quality of life throughout the region. We also hope that in-fighting and grandstanding between members of some of those entities — and between some of the entities themselves — comes to an end. They need to stop wasting the public's time and to show far more professionalism and civility in their interactions with each other. They also need to remember that their duty is to serve the public rather than themselves. When interests conflict, individual members of some of those boards resort to lobbying insults at each other or at staff rather than working together. Some of those entities would rather use scarce tax dollars and human resources to pursue litigation against each other than negotiate settlements. None of that is in anybody's best interest.

- And finally, for taxpayers to resolve to hold our leaders at all levels more accountable, and to mandate that they put performance above partisanship when making decisions on the issues that impact each of our lives. Voters must hold ourselves accountable for electing the best public-spirited leaders available in 2018 to help guide our nation and region through perilous and confrontational times. The still-unfolding consequences of the 2016 election vividly demonstrate the importance of electing qualified leaders at every level.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Best wishes

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our customers, volunteers and those who train from Tongue Point Job Corps, a very Merry Christmas and a hope that the New Year will see the fulfillment of all your wishes and hopes.

On Jan. 8, we hope that all those who wish to learn more about their brain diseases (what people call mental illnesses) will take the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA). Meetings are generally held on the

first Monday of each month at Columbia Memorial Hospital, Conference Room A, from 7 to 9 p.m.

This could be a great start to your New Year. We need to take this new year to raise awareness of the mental health problems within the community, and spread the news of what we are doing to provide help to those with this illness.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our many customers at PennyWise Thrift Store for their continuing support in this past year, and look forward to providing your needs in the com-

ing year. And, not to be forgotten, Elleda Wilson of The Daily Astorian for her assistance in putting our letters to the community into that publication.

For those customers who have been diagnosed with diseases (cancer, heart problems, etc.) know that our prayers are with you, and we will continue to be here to support you in any way we can.

PETER and PATRICIA FESSLER
Facilitators, DBSA of North Oregon and South Washington Coast
Astoria

