

# OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN  
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND  
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN  
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM  
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN  
Production Manager

CARL EARL  
Systems Manager

## OUR VIEW

# Homelessness not a license for misbehavior

Renewed discussion about low-level crime in the Astoria commercial district and how it interfaces with the issue of homelessness was inevitable.

Not only are there obvious violations of accepted community standards at some times and places, but similar annoyances are a common issue in metropolitan areas and some smaller towns along the entire West Coast. It would be more surprising if Astoria did not have these problems than that it does.

As our stories last week reported, neither police nor city leaders regard homelessness as a crime. By now most Americans are well-aware that housing insecurity is caused by an array of factors — running the gamut from mental-health issues to personal economic disasters.

Few would desire to go back to the old days of arbitrarily enforcing laws against vagrancy that in effect made it a crime to be very poor. These laws were often selectively enforced against people

of color or anyone who rubbed police the wrong way. The U.S. Supreme Court in 1983 outlawed such “arbitrary enforcement,” with Justice Sandra O’Connor writing that a California law allowed innocent people “to continue to walk the public streets ‘only at the whim of any police officer’ who happens to stop” them. Astoria has no interest in repeating this old, reprehensible mistake.

### The real issue

The real issue in Astoria, as elsewhere, isn’t that unkempt people lacking reliable dwelling places spend time in public spaces. Astoria famously cherishes the gritty along with the pretty. A port town without some component of colorful characters would be poorer for the lack of personality.

The actual issue are people — homeless or not — who flout laws and social norms by relieving themselves in inappropriate places, being obnoxious

toward others, allowing their pets to run loose, and engaging in other forms of unsavory behavior. This kind of wrongdoing can make others — residents and tourists alike — feel unsafe or unwelcome. This is unacceptable. Homelessness is not a license for misbehavior.

Astoria police correctly note that they have a broad range of responsibilities. There is always more to do than time and money allow. Without more manpower, something else would have to give. The citizens who came to the City Council requesting more emphasis on this problem reflect a broader consensus, one that a majority of council members agreed to address. With luck, periodic “emphasis patrols” may manage to make a strong enough point to offenders that they must mend their ways or relocate. Otherwise, citizens, downtown businesses and the council will need to find more funds for active enforcement all the time.

### Positive news

It is quite extraordinary that a city the size of Astoria may soon benefit from converting the former Finnish boarding house in Uniontown into a dormitory for homeless people looking to get back on their feet.

Helping Hands, a nonprofit with significant experience in helping people find jobs and housing, has entered a purchase agreement with Northwest Oregon Housing Authority to buy the large yellow house on Marine Drive next door to Motel 6. The facility could provide beds for 60 or 70 people.

Most homeless people aren’t troublemakers, so this housing is unlikely to have a downside for the up and coming Uniontown district. Nor, by itself, is it likely to address problems downtown. But it would go quite a long way toward addressing the growing need for short-term housing for those in the process of recovering from difficult life circumstances. We would all do well to support such an effort.

## LETTERS WELCOME

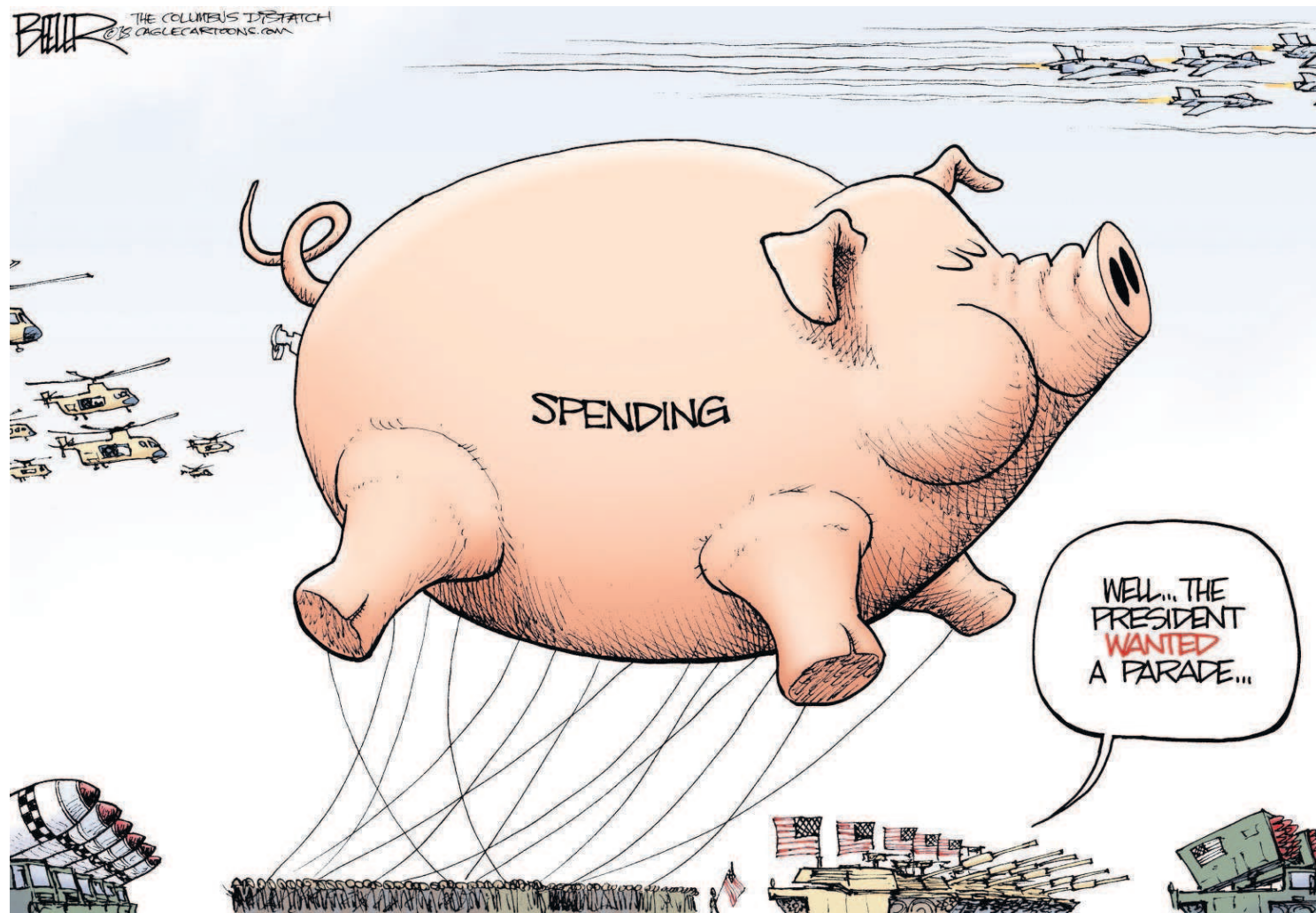
Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer’s name, address and phone number. 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 allowed 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. Letters in poor taste will not be printed.

Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at dailyastorian.com/submit\_letters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or 1555 North Roosevelt in Seaside, or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Thank you for remembering Seaside Sgt. Goodding

On behalf of the Seaside Police Department, we would like to thank those who attended the remembrance gathering on Feb. 5 to reflect on the two-year anniversary of Sgt. Jason Goodding’s line-of-duty death.

Several members of the community came out and braved our coastal drizzle, while paying respect to Sgt. Goodding’s life and legacy. We would also like to thank those police officers from other communities who were gathered with us. We thank you for your continued dedication and service to others.

The SPD knows and appreciates the support our community has shown over the years. Our department would not have been able to begin the healing process without the help of many professionals and the overwhelming support our citizens have given to us. Your understanding and patience has allowed us to know that your support is always there, even when we cannot see it.

As a member of the department which had to personally face this horrific event, the shock and recovery thereafter, I know that our journey is far from over. However, we will continue to grow from this and become even stronger in our service and dedication to our profession, and to those we swore to protect. Thank you to our community for being there for us. We do need you and greatly appreciate your unwavering support.

BRUCE HOLT  
Lieutenant, Seaside Police Department

### Business disruption just starting in Astoria

Regarding The Daily Astorian story “Several Astoria businesses come and go

amid downtown retail ebb, flow” on the front page Feb. 1: Well, all of you folks who think Walmart is a good idea, it’s just starting. I’m not saying that these closings are a direct response to the new supercenter opening soon in Warrenton. All I’m saying is this is what happens when that billion-dollar corporation comes to town.

Quote: “With competition from the internet and larger retailers, Latham sees an inexorable march toward a more tourist- and service-oriented economy downtown.” Think Broadway in Seaside. Tourist T-shirt shops, tchotchke stores galore, and bumper cars at the old Astoria Event Center.

Looks like that’s what downtown Astoria could look like in the near future. But then again, as long as Walmart keeps ponying up those \$5,000 checks to the local food bank, I guess it’s all good.

Well, not really.

KEN MARSHALL  
Warrenton

### Regarding abortion, ‘legal’ doesn’t mean ‘right’

The Daily Astorian’s Jan. 23 editorial, “Abortion is a woman’s choice,” laments the ongoing struggle to protect the “right,” discovered 45 years ago, for women to destroy their unborn progeny free of any state interest to limit that right. The editorial uses its specious defense of this right largely to discredit the president for his political expediency.

Leaving that subtext aside, the editorial dredges up justifications for its position that are eerily similar to those of the Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott decision, affirming the constitutional rights of slaveholders. After all, slavery was legal under the Constitution, and had been for 70 years.

The only question about it at the convention was whether slaves were persons or property. The compromise written into the constitution assigned slaves a value of three-fifths of a person. Today, an unborn child is deemed to have the value of a wart.

Dante’s Inferno, an allegory of human redemption, lays bare the fallacy that “legal” translates into “right,” when speaking of the schemes of the Assyrian Queen Semiramis to license her fall from grace.

Today we seem equally determined to destroy not only the lives of unborn children, but our culture, as well.

ROBERT JOHNSTONE  
Astoria

### Bring science and faith together with Carbon Fast

In our fragmented world where things seem so divided, we are pleased to find unity of purpose in a project that brings science and faith together. Scientists have called for greater respect for creation and sustainable behaviors to protect the earth, and churches have seen springtime, the Lenten season, as a time for prayer, fasting and charitable giving. Combine those two and we have the Carbon Fast.

With a Lenten Carbon Fast Calendar and a Carbon Fast Report Form, we can take action in simple ways to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce the greenhouse gases that are changing our climate and earth for the worse.

Fasting is an ancient practice calling us to review our lives. Scientific knowledge also moves us to review our lives. Faith and science embrace the idea of stewardship, that we have a responsibility to care for that which we are blessed with, the earth, the atmosphere, the creatures of the earth.

To grow in that stewardship, and for more information, please go to Eco-FaithRecovery.org/carbonfast. It is open to all.

JOHN and JACKIE WECKER  
Astoria

### Show some love for parks

The city of Astoria continues to move toward selling our parks/historic sites for housing and perhaps parking lots, totally opposite from what the public told them in the city’s own park survey. This Wednesday at 9 a.m. our City Council will hold a special meeting to consider selling four sites: First Post Office, Tidal Rock, Custom House and Birch Field.

Their push for more housing sites may cause them to select the one-acre Birch Field, located at Birch and 50th streets. The staff report reads that either eight houses or 16 multi-family units could be built there. More housing means we need more parks, not fewer — especially for multi-family units without their own yards.

If the city required new standalone businesses to include a second story of housing units, we could save our parks/historical places.

Nearby businesses that want more parking may pressure the city to sell all or a portion of the Tidal Rock. Have they had formal talks with local and state historic boards? If people knew, during the park survey, that the money would go to the city’s general fund and not to the parks department, even more people would have opposed selling.

Let’s hope our city councilors show some love for all our parks and historic places on Valentine’s Day.

GEORGE (MICK) HAGUE  
Astoria