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OUR VIEW

Partnerships preserve public spaces

In years to come, when the rejected option of actually disposing of Astoria’s city parks is mentioned, the overwhelming response from residents will likely be, “What *were* they thinking?”

Of course, city of Astoria officials who made such suggestions were doing their due diligence because of limited funds. The work of Angela Cosby, and her hardworking team at the Parks and Recreation Department, doesn’t appear to have the urgency of the police or fire departments. But step back and consider any image of a quality community and well-maintained public parks must surely be one of the highest priorities.

Economic times continue to be tough, despite signs of improvement. Municipal budgets never have enough money to properly supply everything that a truly caring society really needs. And most citizens don’t want to pay higher taxes, even for those services or amenities they would support.

So it’s enormously pleasing that the outcry over the possibility of disposing of these precious spaces or converting them to other uses has produced some creative solutions.

And, really, it’s also no surprise those strategies involve partnerships. Years ago, the “P” word was a mere buzzword used by innovative urban planners stymied in their dreams of shaping quality societies. Now it features front and center in public policy discussions. It is the



Patrick Webb/For The Daily Astorian
The Lower Columbia Preservation Society has promised the city of Astoria that its members will work to enhance the Custom House, a familiar landmark on the east end.

reality of modern times: nothing significant gets done without it. You just have to look at the way the city of Astoria worked with Columbia Memorial Hospital and the Astoria School District on John Warren Field to see what can be accomplished.

These latest park “adoptions” are on a smaller scale, but no less commendable.

Two “endangered” parks have solutions in place; two more are in the works.

The city has entered into an agreement with a neighboring bed-and-breakfast owner to maintain Post Office Park, on 15th Street between Exchange Street and Franklin Avenue.

The historic Tidal Rock site off

Marine Drive near the Astor Hotel is targeted for an art installation during the next year as others continue to discuss its longer-term future.

Birch Field in Alderbrook appeared almost heading to extinction until upset neighbors said they wanted to play a more active part in maintaining it. The details have yet to be worked out, but we join with City Council members Bruce Jones and Tom Brownson in applauding those willing to step up to the plate.

Back in 1992, locals crafted the Custom House, a reconstruction of the first such facility west of the Rocky Mountains. The wood was hand-hewn and hand-planed to keep it as close as

possible to the original.

The notion that the city would abandon the park area around the historical icon at the east entrance to town is almost shocking. Thankfully, the Lower Columbia Preservation Society has stepped forward. Its members hope to embrace earlier abandoned plans to make it more visitor-friendly and find a way to tell its story visually.

The preservation society has played a central and often crucial role in Astoria’s resurgence in the last two decades. It is immensely pleasing to see this assertive action by its leaders and we look forward to reporting on their success in transforming the site.

Perhaps our opening statement (“What were they thinking?”) was a tad harsh. City leaders do need to demonstrate flexible thinking to accomplish desired goals. This includes preserving a livable community while making the best use of limited revenue. We do need to consider all options when setting priorities. And in any organization the person who says “no” or suggests an unpopular option is often disregarded.

Whatever the process, the outcome points to the positive.

Healthy parks signal a healthy community. Beyond fresh air, and getting away from the computer screen, they offer an opportunity for exercise, meeting your neighbors and just relaxing.

They are indeed a joyous asset we should unite to preserve and enhance.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consider doing something different about drug addiction

For those who are willing to consider doing something different about drug addiction, please take 15 minutes and watch the YouTube video, “Everything we thought we knew about addiction is wrong” (bit.ly/1K4y2w8).

I know I probably won’t live long enough to see if it’s ever put into action, but perhaps it might get shared enough that it will someday, somewhere, make a difference. Happy listening.

DONNA GIBSON
Seaside

High school is highly stressful

Did you know around 25 percent of teenagers have some form of anxiety? For some, this means feeling anxious before high-stress situations, but for others, this means avoiding these situations all together. High school is one of these high-stress situations.

As a student with an anxiety disorder, I have noticed how unaccommodating some schools can be for students with anxiety and other mental illnesses. Yes, we do have a counselor, but not everyone needs to talk out their feelings. Most times — personally — I need a break, just a few minutes away from the people and the environment, so I can collect myself.

To further support students suffering from mental illness, we need to educate the staff of our schools on more ways to help students get through their anxiety and stress, in order to get a better education.

KACIE KLEIN
Astoria

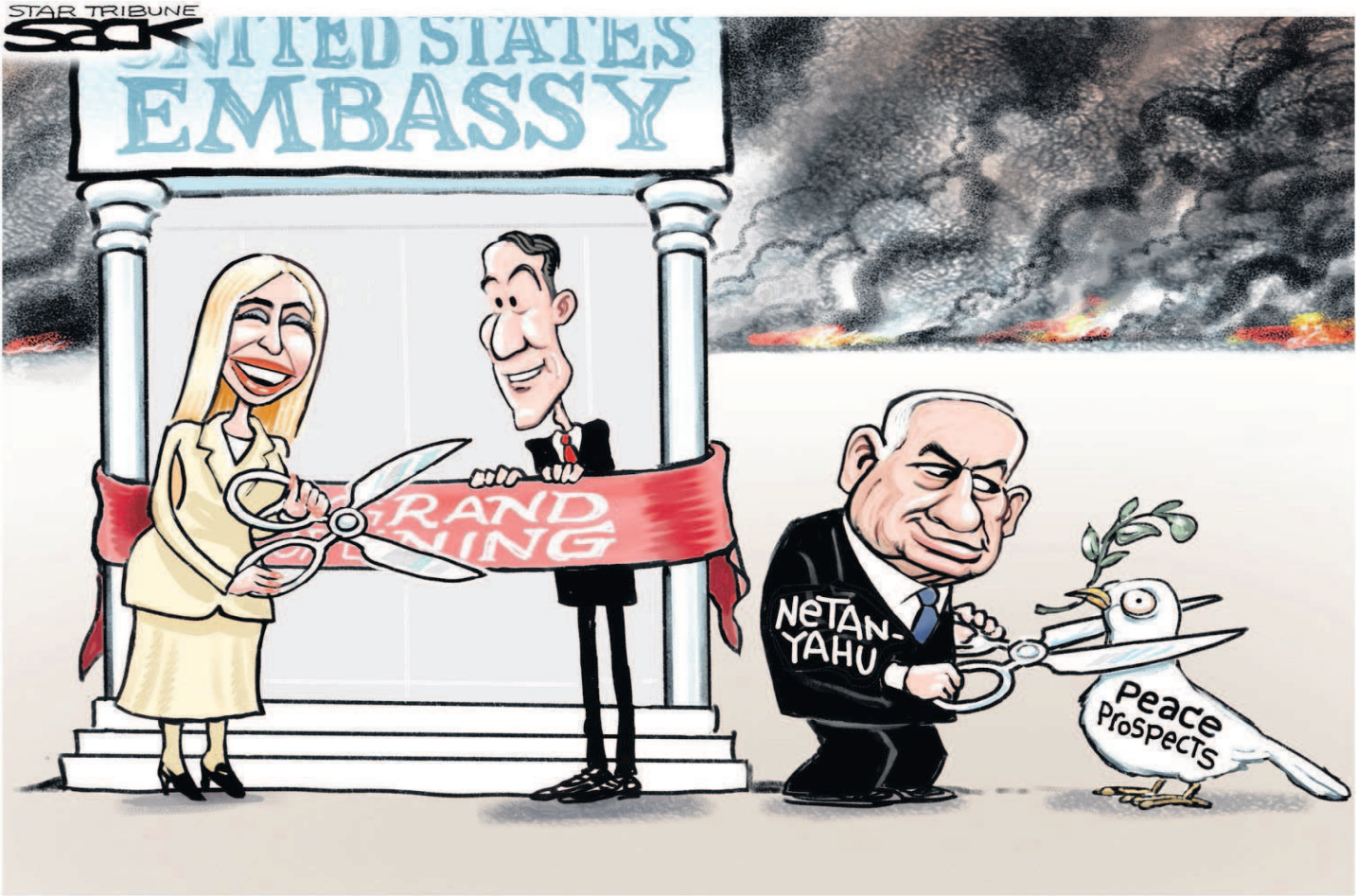
City pushes schizophrenic out of sight and mind

My friend, the city of Astoria, has pushed an elderly homeless schizophrenic out of sight and mind, and thus denied him the warmth of the friendships he’s long established.

Yes, John Wedell’s collection of junk is an eyesore. No doubt the town’s gentrifying sensibilities look upon it as a great aesthetic crime, not as a badge of honor to their humanity and tolerance, not as a reminder of their own luck, and not as an honest testament of times — the pressing concerns we are utterly failing to address.

It’s an indictment of the collective wisdom, intelligence and grit of our town that the only solution fathomable is to shove him out of sight. The Daily Astorian once had a piece on John Wedell, but obviously it wasn’t enough to humanize the man in the helmet indefinitely (What about John? Demystifying the most public private citizen in two communities,” July 26, 2013).

I remind the police they, too, have the ability to “just say no” when called upon to do something feudal and stupid, with their limited time and resources.



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

John has frequently acted as the demon at the gate of Godfather’s Books, a frightening figure which turns them away from the knowledge within. Sorry John, but we have buildings and beer to preserve, not our humanity.

MICHAELA A. “SASHA” MILLER
Astoria

Our roads are not garbage cans

When you are driving down the highway, you see so much garbage. Garbage on our roads is a big problem. If people didn’t think it was “cool” to throw their garbage out of the window while driving down the road, then our roads would be cleaner. We wouldn’t have to worry about plastic bags flying at us while driving down the road.

If you really need to throw something away, pull over when you see a public garbage can, and throw it in there. If you take garbage to the

dump, put a tarp over it so that it doesn’t fly out while you are driving down the road. Our roads are not garbage cans or your house.

Our roads need to stay clean. Pick up after yourself. Don’t throw your trash out the window — it will cost you. You can get fined \$500, go to jail, or even both. Throwing garbage out is not worth it.

MIKAYLA MORTON
Astoria

Dune management plan hijacked by homeowners

Cannon Beach’s Foredune Management Plan update has been hijacked by a small minority of beachfront homeowners. Let me show you how.

At the April meeting, the city planner stated that an Oregon Department of Geol-

ogy and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) study was commissioned to solely update the perimeters for dune grading for view enhancement. “If we were going to shut it down, we would not have spent the money on the Allan report.” This admission was shocking to me and many others.

The planner also revealed that he had made numerous changes to the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST) report, without direction from either the Planning Commission or City Council. When Commissioner Lisa Kerr asked why, the planner responded, “Once there was testimony from Breaker’s Point representatives that the numbers we had in a previous document was not going to be enough to break even with the accretion rate. So I boosted that number.”

Why are Breaker’s Point representatives dictating, literally, new Foredune Management Plan numbers?

Why spend money on the Allan report, only to take dictation from Breaker’s Point representatives?

Why allow beachfront owners, wanting to enhance their views, to turn our pristine beach into a permanent construction zone?

May 23 is Tom McCall’s Beach Bill’s 51st anniversary. McCall said “No local selfish interest should be permitted, through politics or otherwise, to destroy or even impair this great birthright of our people.”

The next Planning Commission meeting is May 24. Let’s celebrate the anniversary by demanding strong protection of our collective birthright.

DIANNA TURNER
Cannon Beach