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OUR VIEW

Take off the mask

The first tell was the photo. When Responsible Growth Astoria created a Facebook page in July to protest a new Grocery Outlet, they posted a photo of traffic gridlock that could have been taken in Anytown, U.S.A. Knowing Astoria, if a resident or business was that fired up about a project, they could have gone down to Marine Drive on any afternoon and snapped a photo of traffic congestion with their iPhone.

The second tell was the anonymity. Responsible Growth Astoria refused polite requests to disclose who is organizing their campaign. They claim they don’t want to be harassed by the city or the Texas-based developer. We are First Amendment purists and see value in anonymous political speech. But there is no shame in Astoria, or anywhere else, really, for being against Grocery Outlet. No one will shun you if they find out you don’t want a national discount grocery chain at one of the few real traffic bottlenecks in town. After reporter Katie Frankowicz started digging, she found Facebook pages for a Responsible Growth Lake Stevens and a



A photo of traffic gridlock posted on the Responsible Growth Astoria Facebook page in July.

Responsible Growth Palmdale. While the states and targets are different — a new Costco in Lake Stevens; a commercial and residential project with a Sprouts Farmers Market in Palmdale — the email addresses, the messaging and the calls to action are nearly identical. The attorney for Responsible Growth Astoria, Karl Anuta, is also the attorney for Livable Lake Stevens, which changed its name the day after our story on the similarities between the groups. Anuta also represented Protect Pacific Northwest, another shadowy group, which challenged a Grocery Outlet in Seaside earlier this year. Digging some more, ties

emerged — through Andrew Grundman, a Sacramento, California, attorney — between Protect Pacific Northwest and several groups in California that have fought grocery projects. They all have nebulous, green-friendly names — Protect CEQA, Sustainable Mammoth Lakes, Sustainable Truckee — and seem only to speak through their attorney. Is it possible local residents and businesses in Astoria quietly got together to oppose Grocery Outlet and reached out to professionals who do these kind of legal and public relations campaigns for a living? Yes. Is it possible a grocery competitor, a labor union, or a deep-pock-

eted investor is behind all of these groups in Oregon, Washington state and California? Yes. Responsible Growth Astoria makes a fair point that they should be judged on their argument, not who is organizing their campaign. Others who object to a Grocery Outlet near Mill Pond have questioned all the attention the group has received. “Who really cares?” one asked. We care. We care for the same reasons we reported that Andrew Miller, the CEO of Stimson Lumber Co., provided seed money for #TimberUnity, or that the Service Employees International Union and other labor interests helped finance state Rep. Tiffiny Mitchell’s campaign last year. The information provides context and background to public policy and political debates. Knowing who is behind Responsible Growth Astoria would not invalidate their argument, it would inform it. Cyndi Mudge, a veteran local organizer and volunteer, put it best in a post on Facebook: “Astorians should not be used as useful fools for outsiders.” Responsible Growth Astoria should take off the mask.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

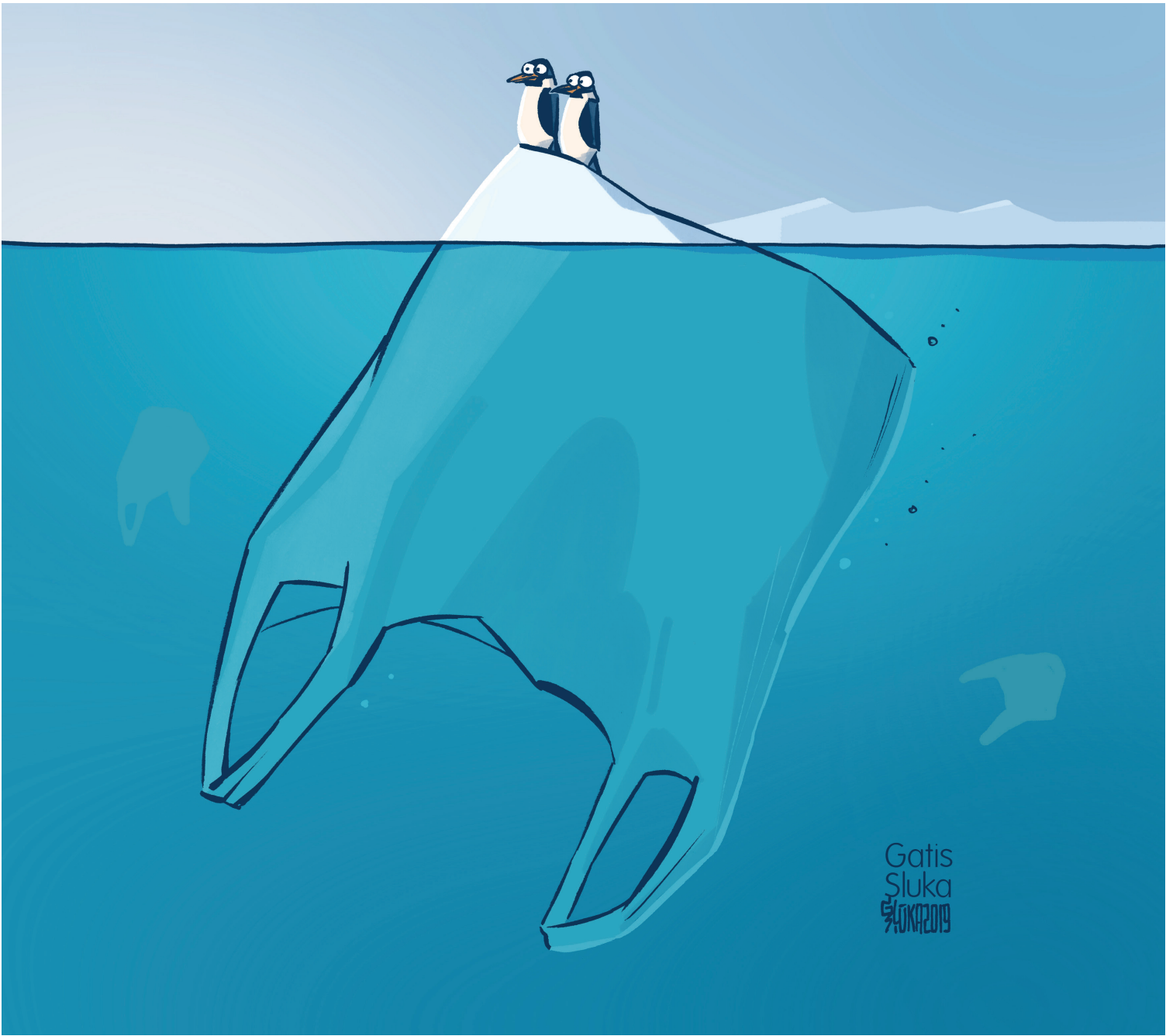
Tsunami exposure

The Oregon Legislature recently repealed a state law that prevented the building of new critical facilities within the tsunami inundation zone (“Legislature repeals tsunami zone building law,” The Astorian, June 24). In the case of Seaside schools, the state also requested the city of Seaside to redevelop vacated school sites to lower usages so that fewer people would have tsunami exposure. This request has been ignored by the city; the Seaside School District wants to get a maximum return when it sells this property. The city, per the recent county housing study, wants workforce housing. Per the city plan, workforce housing should be in R-3 zones, which allow 20 dwelling units per acre. The 11-acre high school site would allow 220 units that would house about 300 children (150 school age, 150 younger). So, we moved the 500 high school students out of the site so they wouldn’t be exposed seven hours a day, and we replaced them at the same site with 150 young children who are exposed 24 hours a day, and the other 150 school-age children, who will now be exposed 17 hours a day. It costs taxpayers \$125,000 a student to create a new, expensive hillside schools project that could potentially make area children 65% more vulnerable to the tsunami threat. The state Legislature is only now starting to recognize how poorly its past tsunami safety programs solve real problems. We need to temper people’s emotional impulses by electing better local leadership who can rationally analyze and formulate realistic disaster preparation.

JOHN DUNZER  
Seaside

A place for art

Regarding the sale and new plans for the “Old State Hotel” across the street from Vintage Hardware: The former owner, Bernie Bjork, has been using the spaces on the second floor as nice art studios for quite a while. The July 12 front-page article didn’t mention that good use, and I’m happy to say that I’m still there, as are other creative folks (“Church group purchases downtown building for housing,” The Astorian, July 12). The new ownership has assured us that the changes will happen sometime later, and I feel I have time to make new plans, but also a little more time to do more artwork there. I like the building, and believe it should be possible to be renovated for nice alternative housing. My



thanks to Mr. Bjork.  
MIKE TUELL  
Long Beach, Washington

Fair contract

As state representative for House District 32, and an Astoria community member, I stand in support of Columbia Memorial Hospital’s nurses in their fight for a fair contract. While I respect the position of CMH and their leadership regarding some of the obstacles they face in providing health care in a smaller market, the voices of our nurses deserve to be heard and respected as they speak out about the workplace issues that have a significant bearing on the health outcomes of our community. As a designated critical access hospital that receives enhanced public resources and financial supports, combined with a variable — yet sustainable measure of

profitability — CMH should be looking heavily into reinvesting those resources fairly to ensure that our hospital’s workforce is treated with dignity. The nurses’ asks are rational and just: To staff the hospital at a rate that allows adequate and safe patient care; to bring forth stable and predictable scheduling practices; and to help meaningfully fund recruitment, retention and training initiatives to help address our vital need for increased access to qualified care providers. As nurses who are on the forefront each day providing compassionate, high-quality care to patients across the greater Clatsop County area, these nurses’ steadfast efforts to strengthen hospital standards and reinforce safe working conditions are imperative to the well-being and overall health of our region moving forward. I am proud to support all CMH nurses, and encourage the community to stand

with them.  
TIFFINY MITCHELL  
Astoria

Ladder out of poverty

Donna Munro is right about the ladder out of poverty a renters’ tax credit would provide (“Renters’ tax credits” The Astorian, Aug. 24). The child tax credit and the earned income tax credit are two proven examples, bringing more people out of poverty than any program other than Social Security. Currently, there is a bill in Congress to make these two programs even more effective, the Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2019, HR 3157. By asking those who represent us to help pass this legislation, we can help millions of struggling Americans climb out of poverty. WILLIE DICKERSON  
Snohomish, Washington