

OPINION

theAstorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

GUEST COLUMN

What is a parliamentarian?

Earlier this year, I was honored and delighted to be asked to serve as parliamentarian for the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners. This is a mysterious role to many people. Some wondered why there was a need for a parliamentarian when the county already had legal counsel. Others wondered what exactly does a parliamentarian do.



LARRY
TAYLOR

Parliamentary procedure is a completely separate body of knowledge from what an attorney studies when they pursue a law degree. It would be unusual for an attorney to study parliamentary procedure in law school. Parliamentarians advise and are experts on parliamentary procedure and the rules of democracy.

Parliamentary procedure is nonpartisan and is based on the concept of majority rule. Parliamentarians protect the rights of the majority, the minority and members that are absent from meetings.

During meetings, a parliamentarian is an adviser to the presiding officer. In normal circumstances, the parliamentarian sits near the presiding officer so issues can be handled discretely.

Outside of meetings, which is where most of the work of parliamentarians occur, a parliamentarian reviews items on forthcoming agendas, and prepares



the presiding officer on how best to handle items so that democracy is best served. This includes the processes for creating motions and the appointments to boards and commissions.

Many people find themselves in the role of presiding with no training in how to properly conduct meetings. County Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, the board chairwoman, deserves enormous credit for pursuing training and getting advice on how best to preside.

Are there problems in how commissions and councils are run? Examples I’ve observed of various deliberative bodies in my 20 years in Clatsop County

include:

- Adjourning meetings before the business is complete and without the consent of the council.
- Mishandling of motions, which includes new motions made before prior motions are disposed of, and multiple amendments improperly handled. This results in confusion and lack of clarity about what is being voted upon, which can lead to suboptimal decision-making.
- Absence of an adopted parliamentary authority, which results in a lack of clarity on what the rights of members are. With no or few rules, inordinate power can be usurped by the mayor

or presiding officer, marginalizing the members of the council.

- Speaking off topic or for excessive lengths of time, which abuses the rights of other council members to properly conduct business.

- Improper use of the consent calendar, which should only be used for routine or noncontroversial matters.

The rules of parliamentary procedure have been developed over hundreds of years to ensure democracy prevails when groups meet and make decisions.

As a resident of Clatsop County, I want my elected representatives to know their rights in meetings so they can effectively execute their role. Ignorance is no excuse for poor performance in office.

Once upon a time, parliamentary procedure was commonly taught in high schools because it addresses the application of democracy in civilian society. Clatsop County Community College is to be commended for allowing me to teach parliamentary procedure. It is the only college in Oregon’s educational system where any of Oregon’s six professional registered parliamentarians teach.

By learning and adhering to the principles of parliamentary procedure, our boards and councils can only improve in the administration of their work.

Lawrence David Taylor is a professional registered parliamentarian with the National Association of Parliamentarians.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lack of housing

We are all aware of our lack of affordable housing here on the North Coast. The cost of rent or mortgage payments has continued to climb due, in part, to the number of short-term rental properties. While this is illegal in Astoria, the practice continues with little to no enforcement.

There is also a need for senior housing, especially one-level homes, and this does not seem to even be on the radar.

It is nice to know this area is popular, and that tourism-related businesses are doing well. But little is being done for full-time residents. The tourism jobs are not high paying, and housing is the greatest cost in most budgets.

It is good to see some work finally happening at the Waldorf/Merwyn Hotel to provide some workforce housing.

I’m also happy to see homes being built, although frequently with a number of stairs to the master bedroom and utility room, and a relatively high price tag. Again, this multilevel level design does not allow a senior to “age in place.”

I heard that a development of a “cottage cluster” is proposed for Warrenton across Harbor Drive from the JoAnn Fabrics and Big 5 stores. This sounds like a great use of the property — affordable, one-level living.

I was delighted until I heard this cluster is proposed for vacation rentals. Say it isn’t so. We are in great need of housing for full-time residents. Or, are full-time residents not a priority?

MARCIA FENSKE
Astoria

Lum family

Thanks to R.J. Marx for the story of the Lum family (“Weekend Break: 50 years of Lum’s Auto Center,” The Astorian, Nov. 23).

This was a story of a great generation of people able to survive during times of discrimination. Judgment of people is wrong, but unfortunately we still see it today in 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Lum, for telling your story in a gentle way. You were able to express your feelings, and I, for one, know your beloved mother was a precious person.

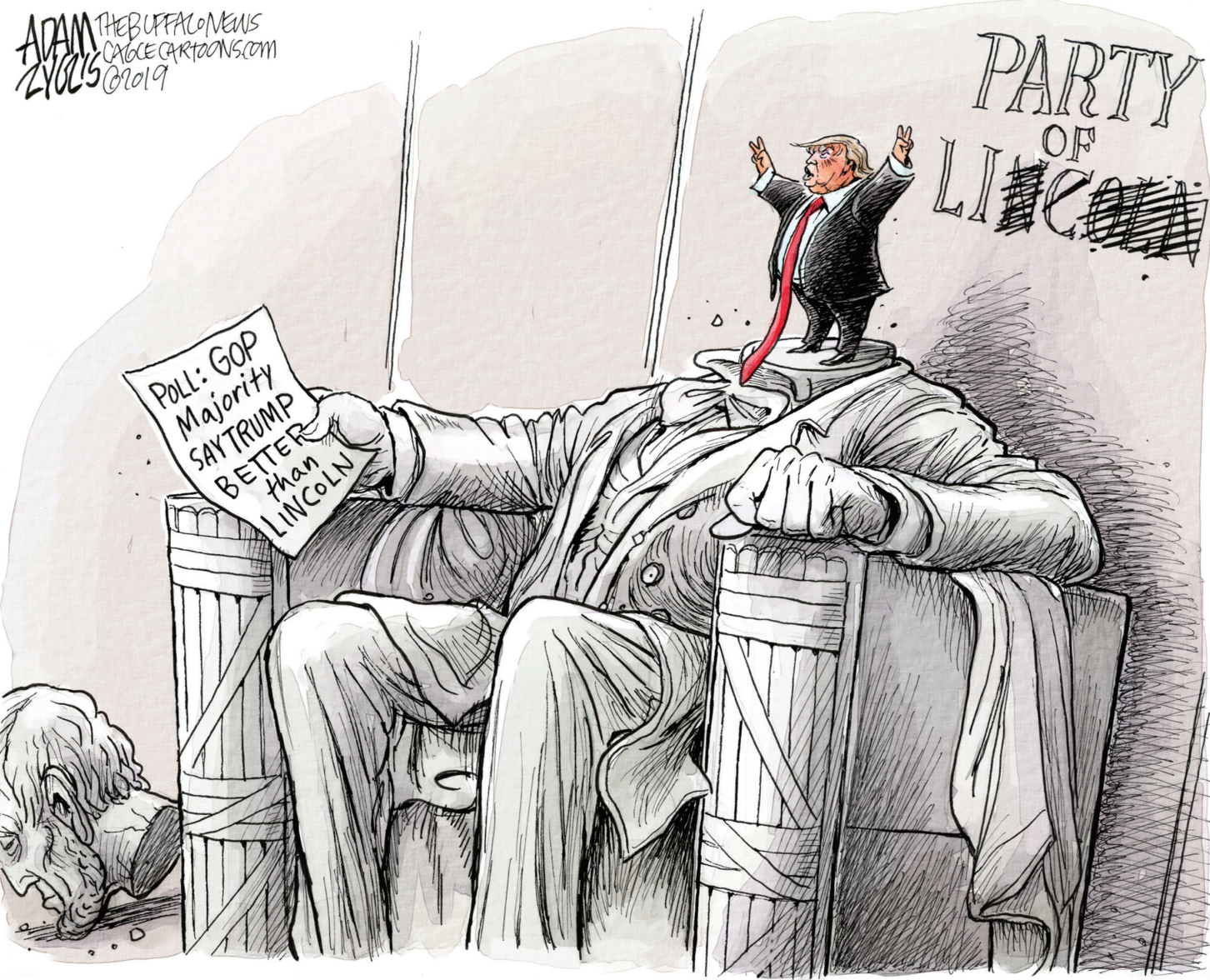
ARDATH FINUCANE
Astoria

Warrenton for Warrenton

I wish to object to the letter to the editor titled “Counterproductive” (The Astorian, Nov. 21).

I think the writer needs to do some detailed research before he attacks the Warrenton mayor in a personal public manner. I suggest he read the following link: bit.ly/2OQ4c6j to get a proper context of the mayor’s statement.

Once again, I see a private citizen of Astoria complaining about the growth process occurring in Warrenton. Astoria is



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The 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 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 mention-

ing 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.

Council members praised the “Warrenton for Warrenton” mantra, and was stated in front of the county commission when Mayor Henry Balensifer asked them to approve the major amendment to the Warrenton Urban Renewal Plan so Warrenton can invest in “Warrenton for Warrenton.” They commended the city for taking a closer look at livability, and a keener eye on development.

SCOTT WIDDICOMBE
Warrenton

Complicity

The pre-Thanksgiving edition of The Astorian carried a supplement advertising numerous semi-automatic handguns and assault rifles, the latter with 30-round magazines.

In view of the seemingly endless horror stories that the paper runs about mass shootings that almost always involve such weapons, how can The Astorian justify its complicity?

We have respected the paper for many years, and want to continue to do so.

ROBERT and KERSTIN ADAMS
Astoria

Giving thanks

This Astoria Thanksgiving, I give a shout out to city engineers and to Astoria Public Works.

They clear tree branches so lost tourists might see school zone signs. They put in a left turn lane on Niagara Avenue between Seventh and Eighth streets, so it is safer for both pedestrians and motorists, now that there is less guessing as to eastbound traffic intentions on Niagara.

City engineers and Public Works replaced the yield sign with a stop sign, so that downhill traffic on Eighth would finally yield at Irving Avenue to westbound traffic turning left to go up Eighth. They put up closed signs on Eighth on Grand and Franklin avenues on icy mornings.

What else is being done to make other roads safer? I don’t rightly know, but you can be sure our city engineers and Public Works are working at this never-ending task. So on this Thanksgiving holiday, we can all say to them, “Thank you for your service.”

DANE JACONETTI
Astoria