

OPINION



the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Young blood good for a city council

When our family arrived in Astoria in 1987, we had two children in tow — ages 4 and 18 months. Not surprisingly, child care was the topic of the first three-part series The Daily Astorian produced after I became editor.

When our chief operating officer, sitting in Salem, saw the series, he said: “I see something has changed at the Astorian.”



STEVE FORRESTER

Our perceptions and our choices stem largely from our stage and situation in life. Day care was not top of mind for my father, who was in his 70s when he retired as editor. But for my wife and me, that need was in first place.

In 1991, Doug Thompson joined the Astoria City Council at the age of 40. He brought new perspectives and enthusiasm.

Thompson was a champion of the predecessor of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association. At Thompson's urging, the city did what was called the Tenth Street project — a demonstration of how street trees and curbing enhance a streetscape. He also promoted the Sixth Street project, which involved repurposing the former Bumble Bee Seafoods headquarters building.

Former City Manager Paul Benoit remembers Thompson's pivotal role in development of the Smith Point roundabout. Without Thompson's pushing, said Benoit, the Oregon Department of Transportation would have installed a traffic signal.

Also in the 1990s, a young woman named Jan Fletcher was elected to the City Council. Thompson remembers that, “She was a pretty strong voice for women, young families with both parents working outside the home, small businesses and early work-from-home technologies.”

At 33, Dirk Rohne joined the Clatsop Community College Board of Directors. Subsequently, he served on the Clatsop



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Odd Fellows Building owners Jessamyn Grace West, left, and Andrea Mazzarella dance and laugh together for a music video.

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County Board of Commissioners and now the Port of Astoria Commission. In each of these roles, Rohne has been a game changer.

Another younger face in local government — Mayor Henry Balensifer of Warrenton — has brought a fresh perspective to the future of that city.

I thought of Thompson and Fletcher especially after reading about Jessamyn Grace West's decision not to run for election to the City Council seat to which she was appointed in 2019. In choosing West, who is 43, city councilors were impressed with her background, and they sought a younger perspective.

West's decision not to compete for a full term is understandable. Being a city councilor is time consuming and a major responsibility. West has two other jobs.

No one comes fully equipped for the task of becoming a public person and a policymaker. Many of us were heartened by West's appointment to the council, and we would have enjoyed seeing her grow in the job.

There are many reasons for Astoria's remarkable comeback. At the top of the list have been new blood and young blood that have brought an infusion of energy and new ideas.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Think twice

Oregon parents should think twice about sending their children back to any school that opens.

Children frequently do not show symptoms. As more children are finally being tested, the reported infection rate is increasing. Recent research demonstrates younger children have a significantly higher infection load in their nasal passages, and are far more likely to transmit the virus to others.

Places without really good ventilation can spread the virus. Many schools have horrible ventilation, and no windows.

Younger children are less likely to be able to keep their bodies in line with the strict behavior requirements. Children will experience profound trauma, despite the best efforts of their teachers and aides — who are being forced to risk their health and lives.

Required to remain in spaces. No playing with friends. No playing with toys or looking at books. If a child becomes distressed or disruptive, the teacher cannot approach to calm that child.

School classrooms will be petri dishes waiting for disaster. If any child in your child's class tests positive for the virus, it must be assumed your child is infected. Your entire family is then at risk of infection.

Your child will likely be required to stay by themselves in a “sick room” for 10 or more days. No interactions with other family members. Your entire family will also need to be in quarantine.

Oregon's leaders want to open schools so students can get good test scores, and parents will have child care. Is this worth the risk?

NANCY WILLARD
Veneta

Important check

The Astorian is shutting down. No it's not, but what if it did? Throughout the country, newspapers are shutting down at an alarming rate.

The seemingly endless ad revenue they enjoyed in the past now goes to Google, Apple and other companies with no stake in local communities. Local newspapers serve as an important check on our elected officials and administrators. Municipalities tend to spend more money after their local paper shuts down. Where does the money go?

The Astorian has claimed they'll survive the sudden loss of advertising dollars as a result of COVID-19. Perhaps they'll be bought by a hedge fund that only prolongs their demise by laying off staff, and extracting what little capital remains until there is nothing left. Maybe they'll limp along and come out of this relatively unscathed. Maybe not.

If it weren't for The Astorian, how would we know what a mess the Port of Astoria had been, and how they've turned things around? Or that the county commissioners were a mess, and still are? Or that Bruce Jones, the mayor of Astoria, is no friend to those in our community who are struggling financially?

Or that Brett Estes appears to go above and beyond in his job as city manager? What about Michael McNickle, our public health director, who was dismissive of the pandemic in the beginning, and now seems to be fighting tirelessly for the health and safety of our community?

The Astorian is still in business. Let's hope it stays that way.

ED MORGAN
Astoria

Portland agenda

To those of you who are moving to the North Coast in order to flee unrest and high taxation, I would like to ask you to kindly vote for candidates this November who will continue to protect the peaceful quality of life that attracted you to our area.

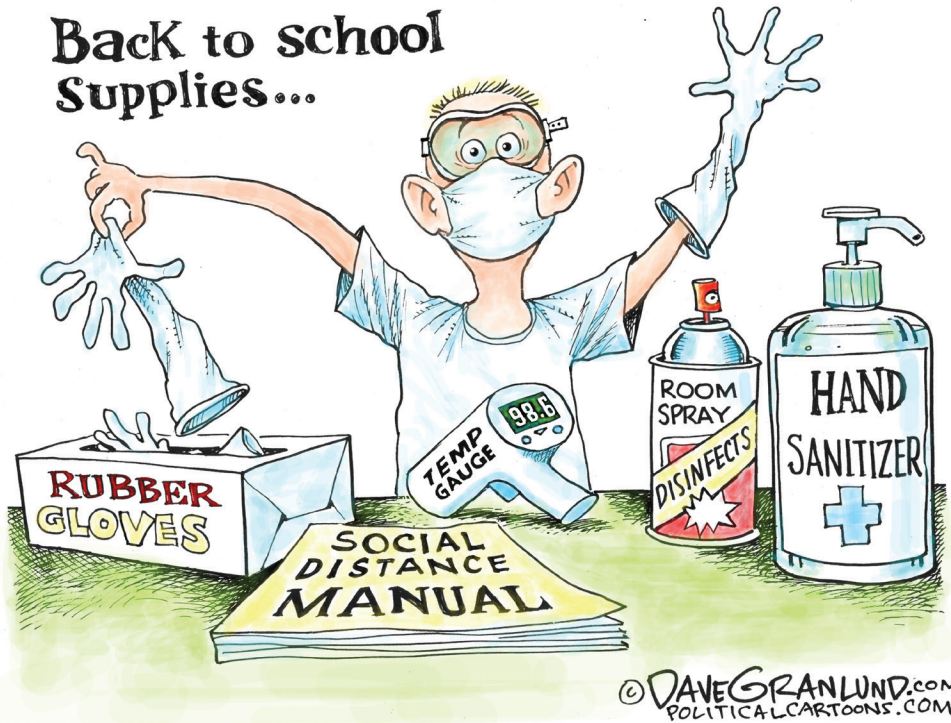
These candidates are people who are loyal to local, collaborative neighbor-to-neighbor politics. They are not candidates whose loyalty lies with a fully-financed, outside, Portland agenda.

The case study regarding the recent shameful betrayal of our local union workers by Debbie Boothe-Schmidt should be a cautionary tale for anyone new to our area who may wonder for whom to vote in the next election. If you are not familiar with this, please do some research.

Boothe-Schmidt's betrayal, and her loyalty to the Portland agenda, clearly demonstrate the threat to our way of life here on the coast. We do not want Astoria to become Portland.

Boothe-Schmidt's cautionary tale should warn you to consider your previous voting patterns, and the way that those patterns created an environment that compelled you to leave your home and to move here. Don't repeat those patterns

Back to school Supplies...



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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 mentioning the writer

here.

This November, please connect the dots and have the courage to consider a new way of looking at local politics. Vote to protect the reasons that attracted you to move here by voting for candidates who clearly demonstrate loyalty to protecting our way of life in this, the most beautiful part of the world.

CYNTHIA MALKOWSKI
Seaside

Political debate

As our Founding Fathers struggled to form this great nation, a number of important principles were agreed upon. As a hedge against tyranny and dictatorship, opposing political views would be heard. In fact, lively discussions were not merely

suggested, they were required. Incredible ideas and solutions would be the result of what we now call a political debate. However, forcing someone to participate, only to exclude their ideas, and the insistence of only one correct view, takes a wrecking ball to democracy. Further, if you belittle your opponent with shouting, cuss words and insults, you replace the debate with character assassination. If you form a dog pile to ensure your victory, you are not a patriot, but a coward.

The moral high ground of a debate is reached through honor, dignity and respect. You will never make America great again by trashing your opponent verbally or physically. In fact, by refusing to play by the rules, you make America hate again.

TIMOTHY J. BISH
Astoria