

OPINION



the Astorian

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Water

Clatsop County is now in the midst of crafting their countywide comprehensive plan. Groundwater and watersheds are being dealt with in Goal 5.

Impacts of climate change on ground-water resources need to be considered. This includes potential drought and effects to agricultural needs, which are increasing in Clatsop County. Wildfire is a contemporary concern now, and must be addressed in this document. And then, there are watersheds.

Coastal water sources are vulnerable to timber company practices. Roads through these industrial forests contribute petroleum byproduct runoff. Cutting practices can erode slopes, ruin headwater streams and cause landslides, with the potential to destroy watersheds and community water systems. We can learn from the lesson taught by the Jetty Creek Watershed in Rockaway Beach.

The majority of many of the county’s community water sources are located within private timber. In Clatsop County, only Astoria and Nehalem have dedicated, sustainably maintained municipal forests where their water systems are located.

Other communities all have their watersheds located within private timberlands — at risk of pesticide, herbicide, rodenticide and roadway runoff, and all the way to total annihilation of the water source.

“Water is the life blood of the land — always in motion from the rain to the mountaintops, through the forests and plains to the sea, and so to the clouds again.” — Alice Outwater, “Water: A Natural History.”

PAMELA MATTSON McDONALD
Astoria

Best interest

I am writing to you to share my intentions in voting to reelect Tom Brownson for Astoria city councilor for Ward 2.

I am a born and raised Astorian who owns a home in Ward 2. Throughout the years, I have attended City Council meetings, design board meetings and zoning workshops because I believe if you’re going to have an opinion, you need to put it into action.

Through attending those meetings, I have an idea of what makes a great city councilor. It is someone who is kind, articulate and can see different viewpoints, and these are all qualities I know to be true about Brownson.

Something I really appreciate about Tom is that he very gracefully can listen and share with compassion and understanding.

I hope that my fellow neighbors in Ward 2 will vote with me in reelecting a man who has our community’s best interest at heart, and has no agenda other than wanting to be a public servant.

I am writing this because I know that Tom is the best man for the job, and I hope that by sharing my perspective that people will feel encouraged to vote in this next local election.

Also, I really would like to add that I encourage all people to vote. Whether you agree with me or not, we should all be proud to cast our ballots and let our voices be heard.

CARISSA CONKLIN
Astoria

Precaution

“First, do no harm.” In my decades as a registered nurse, I took this precaution very seriously, and have learned to try to apply it more generally. Could we now look at our county’s Resiliency Project with this in mind?

The county already owns land in the Warrenton business park that is zoned commercial and is out of the inundation area. Since the land will be disturbed anyway, let’s move the public works facility there, rather than the sorting yard.

There is a genuine and intact community, embracing both humans and wildlife, that thrives along the Lewis and Clark Mainline (a private, closed-to-the-public logging road). Let’s not literally and figuratively bulldoze our way through this area, requiring rezoning and opening up the area to commercial development. We can find a better way.

I don’t see much in this project to protect the communities that already exist. Couldn’t more be done to preserve what we already have, in terms of surviving the quake, tsunami and immediate aftereffects? Designated evacuation areas with some supplies stored and maintained? Routes for refugees to get there? Strengthening communications and medical facilities?

During this long season of a global pandemic, widespread and worsening financial losses, rampant misinformation is leading to mutual mistrust and civic unrest, even violence. Let’s please take a step back and carefully reconsider what is genuinely good to do.

CATHERINE MARTIN
Astoria

Real issues

This letter is in response to a mailer I received from Suzanne Weber. The information in the mailer was inaccurate and misleading.

Suzanne’s opponent, Debbie Boothe-

Schmidt, is endorsed by the Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon Education Association, Northwest Carpenters Union, Oregon AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union 503 and many more.

The support from these organizations is made up of voluntary small individual donations from members. For example, at my union, SEIU, our average political donation is \$7.

These organizations and Debbie all share the same goals, values and priorities, such as: protecting the environment and jobs; supporting education and teachers; improving the opportunities for small-business owners; and creating affordable housing here along the coast. Debbie is about improving the quality of life and opportunities for all people.

What Weber is distracting you from by making these outlandish claims is her donors and her lack of real solutions for our community. I worry that just like her radical Republican backers, Weber will put the needs of her big, out-of-state corporate interests before ours, letting our working families and small businesses continue to struggle.

Looking through her social media and website, she spends more time attacking Debbie than talking about the issues in our community, and how we can solve them.

We are living in a world of misinformation. Please do your research and join me in voting for Boothe-Schmidt, who is running a campaign on facts and the real issues of House District 32.

GUILLERMO ROMERO
Warrenton

Wholeheartedly

As someone who lives in Ward 4, I appreciated the unique voice that Jessamyn West brought to the Astoria City Council. I am wholeheartedly endorsing Joshua Conklin as her replacement to the City Council.

Josh is already a voice for the people of Astoria. Most of us know him as a person who listens to small-business owners, as well someone who advocates for social issues. We need someone who values cooperation and not division.

In listening to the candidate forum this month, I was struck by the fact that Josh had many positive, well thought out ideas, and did not have negative things to say about the current City Council members, who have generously volunteered their time to make Astoria better.

Cooperation on the City Council is what allows the most innovative ideas to rise to the top. It is how to get things done. Josh is hard-working, and I am confident that he will dedicate himself to the city he loves.

MEGAN HODGES
Astoria

Concern

I’m writing out of concern that the town hall meeting on Oct. 2, regarding the recent COVID-19 outbreak at Pacific Seafood, wasn’t a transparent exchange of information in both directions.

It seemed to instead be an opportunity for the Oregon Health Authority and Pacific Seafood to control the narrative regarding the situation, and I did not walk away with any sense for how workers and the public will be safe going forward.

Workers continue to share small living quarters with questionable ventilation, and are shuttled to and from work without clear social distancing potential or mask enforcement.

I’m additionally concerned about how shared eating quarters, laundry and other hygiene concerns are being addressed, and did not find the answers provided in the meeting to be sufficient.

If part of worker agreements includes accommodations and transportation, then this also needs to be included in any coronavirus safety protocol. Without addressing these issues, Pacific Seafood and OHA cannot provide a safe environment for workers, and are creating a risk for the entire community.

EM ADAMS
Astoria

Take issue

Suzanne Weber is accused by her opponent Debbie Boothe-Schmidt of wanting to reduce school funding because of her stance on the Student Success Act or corporate activity tax affecting Oregon’s small businesses. As a certified public accountant, business consultant and tax preparer, I take issue with this accusation.

In my tax practice, I already see the effects of this tax on our small businesses. Debbie’s partisan rhetoric response that this will make large corporations finally pay their fair share and provide money for education proves how little she understands this tax and its implementation.

All business — not just corporations, as the name implies — with over \$1 million in gross receipts are subject to the tax. When applying a tax to gross receipts, \$1 million is still a small business. It is the locally owned market, appliance store, contractor, pharmacy and many others. This tax is effectively a

sales tax on Oregonians.

The tax has already increased costs for our schools, businesses and the people of the state of Oregon on items they are purchasing every day and current construction projects. How can Debbie say this tax has not affected her business?

As of yet, no money has been provided to education. Will the money ever be provided to schools? We need someone who uses common sense, experience and a nonpartisan approach to review this tax and the other issues facing our schools, small businesses and all of Oregon.

My vote for representative of House District 32 is Weber.

GRETCHEN ALLEN
Astoria

Fine men

I would like to express my support and belief in two fine men running for Astoria City Council in the November election, Joshua Conklin, Ward 4 (Uppertown), and Tom Brownson, Ward 2 (Uniontown).

I have known both worthy candidates over 10 years as friends and co-workers on community projects. My time with each illustrated qualities of excellent communication, cooperation, inclusiveness and kindness. My experience with both allows me to say, without a doubt, their motivations are for the betterment of all, not just their own lives, businesses or cronies.

Both have demonstrated great commitment to our city; Tom during his time on council, and Joshua through years of local volunteerism and his work in the community.

Joshua and Tom are insightful, intelligent and focused, making them more than capable to address and tackle, as a team, the problems, concerns and needs for all Astorians, not just a select few.

During these turbulent times, our city needs to continue on its course to create a safe, prosperous and inclusive environment for all citizens in the community. Please help continue the forward projection of our current sitting City Council; do not let the momentum turn upside down, or be derailed for new agendas.

Vote for Conklin and Brownson.

JUDITH P. NILAND
Astoria

Facts matter

Facts matter. In an Oct. 15 story in The Astorian, Floyd Holcom claimed the Astoria City Council lacks business experience.

For the record, Councilor Roger Rocka has owned a dinner theater employing 50-plus people since 1978 in Fresno, California; the business is temporarily closed during the pandemic.

Councilor Jessamyn West owns two businesses, including the Astoria Arts and Movement Center, which she founded in 2010. She also co-owns the Odd Fellows Building downtown, currently undergoing a spectacular restoration.

I co-founded and co-managed Bikes & Beyond downtown for 14 years with my former husband, the late Richard Fencsak.

Councilor Tom Brownson, whom Holcom is challenging for a council seat, has worked in numerous businesses over his lifetime.

Although Mayor Bruce Jones does not have “business” experience per se, he held three operational commands during a 30-year Coast Guard career.

Holcom also claimed the council lacks “real Astorians,” meaning someone who was born here. Really? I would offer a different definition.

Real Astorians are those who choose to move to and stay here because they love the community. And, because they love the community, they give of themselves by volunteering for sometimes thankless positions in service to the community.

Councilor Brownson is a true Astorian. He does not have an agenda, other than serving the community, which he has done faithfully and capably for the past four years. South Slope residents would be well served by reelecting Tom to a second term.

JOAN HERMAN
Astoria

Independence

I served as a nonpartisan county commissioner in Clatsop County for eight years. I know how hard you have to work to fight to make sure your community is heard when bigger, more affluent communities try to work their will on the process.

Partisanship can’t cloud your judgment. You have to do what is best for the people you represent, not what some party boss tells you is important.

That’s why I’m endorsing Mayor Suzanne Weber for state representative. She has the experience, the drive and the know-how to get things done for our community, because she has been doing exactly that for nearly 20 years.

I’m impressed that not only is she a Republican, but she is also nominated by the Independent Party of Oregon.

That’s also why I’m opposing Debbie Boothe-Schmidt. The hundreds of thousands of dollars being dumped in her campaign by the Democratic Party of Oregon is disturbing. Instead of trying to reach across the aisle, Debbie seems to be putting up partisan walls while her political party pays for her campaign.

The bizarre attacks she seems to be leveling at Mayor Weber all seem to be paid for by the Democratic Party, as well as the political action committee set up by Debbie’s partisan leaders.

We can’t afford more partisanship. We need independence. We need Weber.

PATRICIA ROBERTS
Gearhart

American lives

I fought in the Vietnam War, when there was a lot of resistance and demonstrating against it. During our involvement over two decades, 58,220 American lives were lost.

So far in the first 10 months of 2020, about 220,000 American lives have been lost to COVID-19.

It would appear that past leadership was more concerned about the loss of American lives in a foreign war than today’s leadership is concerned about American lives in the current pandemic.

Cast your vote like your life depends on it, because it just may.

WILLIAM BELL
Astoria

Support law enforcement

The mayors of Astoria, Cannon Beach, Gearhart and Seaside unanimously oppose Measure 4-205, making Clatsop County a “Second Amendment sanctuary.”

Clatsop County Sheriff Matt Phillips and District Attorney Ron Brown have publicly opposed this anti-law and order, anti-law enforcement measure. It ties the hands of county law enforcement.

With few exceptions, it makes it illegal for detectives investigating crimes to track illegal firearms used in the commission of a crime, prevents the county sheriff from seizing as evidence a firearm used to unlawfully menace, and subjects deputies to civil liability penalties for enforcing firearms-related laws supported by the majority of Americans.

Measure 4-205 would put our communities at risk by preventing deputies from executing legal, temporary confiscation of firearms from distraught individuals expressing suicidal or homicidal intent. It would prevent the county’s enforcement of virtually any limitation on firearms or firearms accessories such as silencers.

Though this measure would apply only to county personnel, our cities are directly affected by what happens throughout Clatsop County.

Support local law enforcement. Support law and order. Support our county sheriff and district attorney, and vote “no” on Measure 4-205.

BRUCE JONES
Mayor of Astoria
SAM STEIDEL
Mayor of Cannon Beach
MATTY BROWN
Mayor of Gearhart
JAY BARBER
Mayor of Seaside

Responsibilities

Every right that we enjoy in life comes with inherent responsibilities. Because we live in a society, we often write those responsibilities into laws. Measure 4-205 is an attempt to override laws so we only have rights, and no responsibilities, in just one facet of life.

As societies grow and become more populated, interactions become more complex and conflicts increase, therefore the need for regulations increases, not decreases.

Could we next write a measure to exempt just me from property taxes and land use regulations?

DAVID FITCH
Astoria

Lashing

At the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners meeting on Oct. 14, there was a lashing to the public about some of the letters to the board being harsh.

There is no doubt that as residents, we are frustrated. Having no other avenue to voice our opinions about moving public works is harsh. The lack of transparency of this project is harsh.

The reality that this project has changed the dollar amount saved three times in two months, the name change from countywide bypass to Resiliency Project and recently to recovery routes is harsh.

The fact that there is to be nothing implemented in this plan for the saving of lives is the harshest reality of all.

Who is this project resilient for? The public, or just public works?

SUZETTE BERGESON
Astoria