

OPINION



the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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OUR VIEW

Historic ferry deserved a better ending

The Tourist No. 2 was worth trying to save.

Built nearly a century ago, the historic, wooden-hulled ferry took passengers and vehicles across the Columbia River between Astoria and Washington state before the Astoria Bridge opened in 1966.

The ferry, which had a cameo as a mine-layer at the mouth of the river during World War II, had a second life as the Islander of Pierce County on Puget Sound and a third life as the M/V Kirkland hosting cruises on Lake Washington.

After a fire in 2010, Argosy Cruises chose not to rebuild and sold the ferry to a colorful captain fond of maritime relics.

One of the gifts of Astoria's revival over the past few decades is the emphasis on historic preservation. Our city has tried to preserve authenticity and resisted the temptation to scrub away imperfections. Some of our favorite things — the old White Star Cannery boiler near Uniontown; Big Red, the net shed in Uppertown — are wreckage.

So we shared in the spirit behind the local campaign to purchase the Tourist No. 2 and bring it back to Astoria for events and riverfront cruises, even though the ferry was damaged and long past its heyday.

Experts waved bright red flags about the expense of improving the vessel for U.S. Coast Guard certification and the lack of maritime experience among the people involved in the campaign. But there was a sense of possibility when the old ferry pulled into the 17th Street Dock in 2016, the 50th anniversary of the Astoria Bridge.

That possibility slowly drained over the next few years as the nonprofit Astoria Ferry Group was unable to raise enough money to pay for



Lissa Brewer/The Astorian
The Tourist No. 2 capsized in late July at a dock near the Sixth Street viewing platform.

the restoration project. Estimates for the work ranged from \$500,000 to as high as \$2 million to \$3 million.

By 2019, the nonprofit declared that the project was in a “hold-steady pattern” and that the owner would mostly be taking charge.

From that point, the headlines only got worse. In 2020, the ferry abruptly left Pier 39 — towing a dock used for boarding — and relocated near the Sixth Street viewing platform. In late July, the Tourist No. 2 took on water and partially sank, spilling fuel into the river.

With the state looking to recoup some of the costs of a recovery estimated at over \$1 million, we understand this might not be the most convenient time for the prominent local people involved in the Astoria Ferry Group to raise their hands and remind everyone of their roles. But a bit more contrition is in order.

Abandoned and derelict vessels pose significant financial and environmental problems.

The R/V Hero, an old wooden research vessel that sank at Bay Center, Washington, in 2017, is costing taxpayers an estimated \$2.5 million to

recover.

Willamette Week reported this month on Ross Island on the Willamette River — describing it as the Portland metro area's epicenter of junk boats.

In Oregon, the Department of State Lands will ask for \$40 million in the next state budget process to remove hazardous vessels from waterways. Without dedicated funding, the department said money for cleanup comes out the Common School Fund.

“Oregon's schoolkids foot the bill for cleaning up abandoned and derelict vessels,” Vicki Walker, the director of the Department of State Lands, said in a statement. “Every dollar spent cleaning up these messes is a dollar out of the classroom.”

In our view, the lesson from the Tourist No. 2 is not that people shouldn't dream big and take risks to preserve our history. It's that people should take responsibility when it becomes obvious the dream is over.

Instead of spin like the “hold-steady pattern” and finger-pointing about ownership, we wished the people involved had made a collective appeal to the community over the past few years to take the ferry out of the water.

The idea to make the Tourist No. 2 an attraction on land — like the pilot boat Peacock outside the Columbia River Maritime Museum — had been part of the conversation since the day the ferry returned home six years ago.

One suggestion was even to place the ferry in the empty pit at Heritage Square. That seemed like dark humor at the time, since the City Council had just rejected a new library with the potential for housing at Heritage Square.

Today, with the Tourist No. 2 dead in the river, and the empty pit still at Heritage Square, it's not so funny.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Preventing the worst

Higher sea levels causing shoreline erosion and property loss, degradation of ocean water quality resulting in higher pH levels detrimental to fisheries, changes to forest ecology, species extinction, possible drought, reduction of air quality from wildfire smoke and potential flooding from torrential rain storms; the North Coast is already experiencing the impact of climate change, and it's only going to get worse!

These concerns motivated the Clatsop County commission of 2020 to pass a resolution to develop a collaborative climate change partnership “among cities, special districts, businesses, nonprofit service providers and members of our community.” It calls for both preparation for, and prevention of, the impacts from climate change.

The current commission recently hired an emergency management director, who will presumably deal with the preparation piece of the equation. It's high time for them to acknowledge that the climate crisis is real, and initiated a dialogue with the city and local citizens about slowing its impact. Converting to alternative energy sources and reforestation are imperative if the Earth is to remain habitable for humans.

Our county leaders can set an example by rejecting the notion that there is nothing we can do locally to help prevent it. They could serve us well by affirming that if we all work together, there is still time to prevent the worst, rather than just preparing for it.

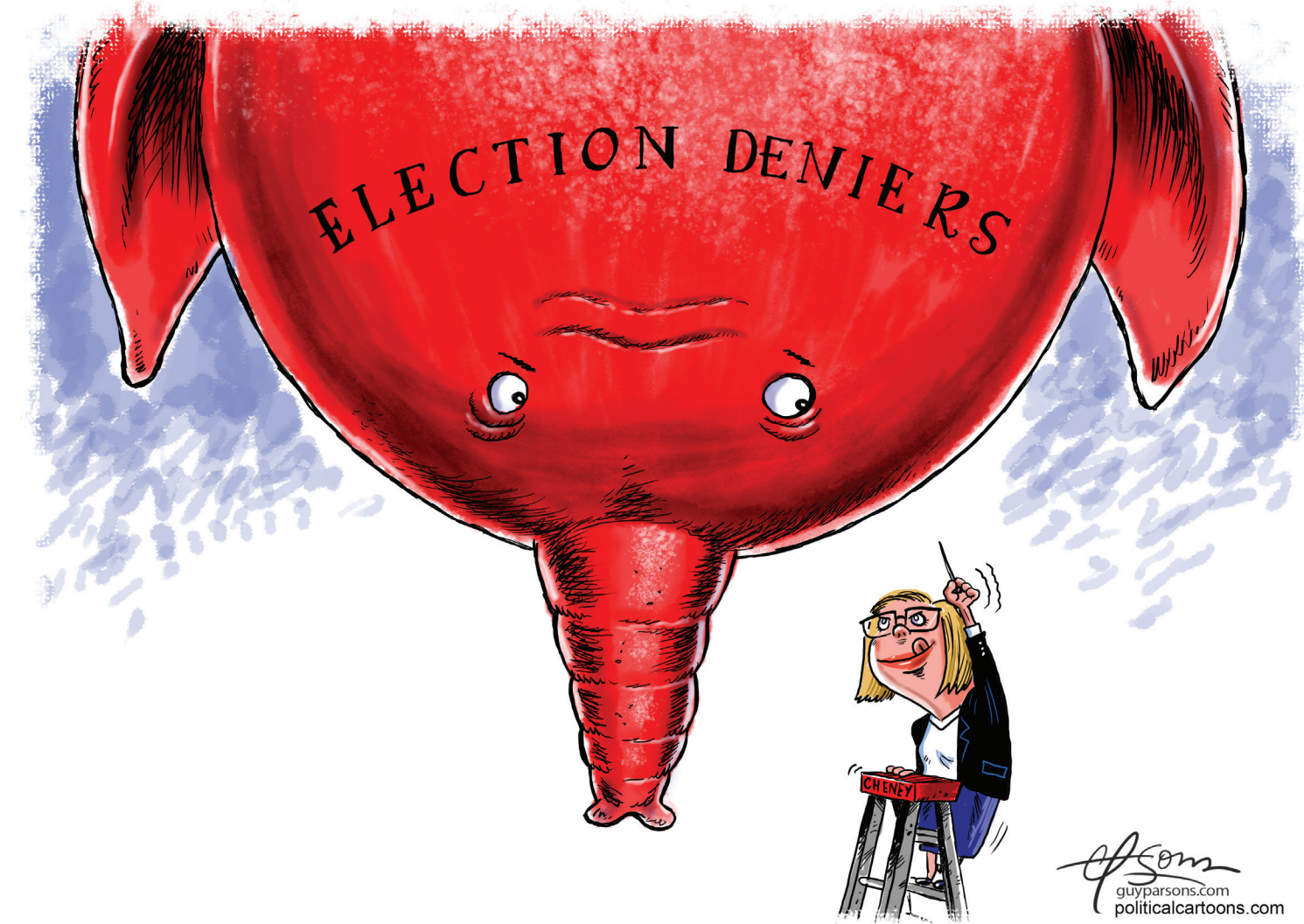
ROGER DORBAND
Astoria

Dedicated

My wife and I are writing in support of Melissa Busch's candidacy for state senator in our district. We are grateful to have such a dedicated person to run for office, especially since she's a working mother who cares enough about the issues to sacrifice time that could be spent with her family.

As a professional in the health care field, Melissa has been affected by the pandemic in ways that many of us have not. As a nurse, she had to deal with unimaginable situations complicated by COVID-19. She has seen the weaknesses in our health care system, and is ready to address them as our senator.

Her experience in this field has given her insight far above what her Republican opponent might have. She will also be an advocate for abortion rights, which her



LETTERS WELCOME

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to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

opponent opposes.

As a working mother, Melissa knows about the child care desert that we live in. Working families are struggling with affordable and safe options for their children. An elected senator, Busch will give her full attention to this, and other issues, that families are dealing with including elder care problems that she sees in her job as a home health nurse.

As former educators with grandchildren in public schools in Astoria, my wife and I are very concerned about getting schools back on track in the wake of the pandemic. Melissa will be a strong sup-

porter of teachers, schools and students readjusting to being in school daily.

NED and LULU HEAVENRICH
Brownsmead

Dismayed

My brother and I were dismayed at the tone of the article about the challenges at Avamere at Seaside in the Aug. 16 edition. Our mother, who has dementia, has been a resident there for the last six years, and has never had better care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a

hardship for everyone. There have been many times when we could not visit with her in person, but the Avamere staff has gone to extremes to find ways for us to keep in contact, and to see her. At no time have we felt that our mother was not receiving the best possible care and attention.

We have been well aware that Avamere has been facing staffing and leadership challenges, especially with administration turnovers and staff shortages. The current senior administration has been personally involved with our mother's care, and has kept us informed at all times.

Much of the article seemed to focus on Avamere's shortcomings in keeping up with bureaucratic reports and documentation. While this may be important for record keeping and administration, it does not reflect on the values and strengths that we have seen with our mother's care at Avamere.

They have kept our mother safe, comfortable and as happy as she could be, given her condition. We are forever grateful to them for this, and are confident that they can, and will continue to provide their residents with capable, loving care while satisfying the state administrative guidelines.

DARLENE BOARD YOUNG
Long Beach, Washington