

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Pendleton council looking for a way out of the woods

Don't know how to fix Pendleton?

Well, you're not alone. Pendleton city councilors can't agree on how to do it either.

Tuesday's council meeting was meant to get members on the same page, but when the gavel came down to call the meeting to a close, they were as divided as ever.

There is some agreement on a few issues at least. Adding a \$5 utility fee to every home and business in the city, for one.

Look for that to be finalized and tacked onto your bill soon.

But as for everything else — a big question mark.

The city needs to squeeze a lot of money from a population that has been stagnant for decades, has just recently shrugged off the last vestiges of the recession and is suffering through a disastrous growing season.

That is a tough environment in which to rally taxpayers, especially voters who have grown more and more suspicious of council action.

The last gas tax — which was used to construct Barnhart Road and came off the books in 2013 — remains an understandably sour subject. And the latest suspect swing for the fences — renovating the long-neglected Eastern Oregon Airport into a drone testing facility — moves forward at a glacial pace that has yet to bring economic benefit, despite significant city investment.

But at the same time, Pendleton residents are acutely aware of the

sorry state of city infrastructure. They know it costs money and they know council has been kicking the maintenance can down the road for years.

Voters are divided then, too. Unhappy with city government, yet sick and tired of the city's sick and tired roads.

It would be hard, intensive work to garner support and convince voters to back a gas tax. And a harried council has fewer than five months before ballots are in the hands of voters.

Jane Hill, the best organizer and community leader on council, said rushing the tax onto the November ballot is not something she can support. Other councilors don't see a short-term failure as a long-term setback, and note the needs are too

great to wait any longer. In this mess of mixed messages, the gas tax will move forward in November.

And that's not all. The city is trying to cobble together consensus to move forward on more voter initiatives, including a new multi-million dollar fire station and millions more for deferred facility maintenance.

All of these decisions are difficult, and it is a good sign that there is robust debate each time one comes before city council. But eventually debate must make way for consensus and a distinct plan. Yet it's painfully clear that the city has not yet arrived there, even as they ready to stick out their hand and ask for our hard-earned dollars.

**Voters are divided too. Unhappy with city government, yet sick and tired of the city's sick and tired roads.**

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Now that it's here, let's make legal marijuana work

The (Ontario) Argus Observer

It's a green new world in Oregon. Recreational marijuana has been legal statewide for a week.

The Argus covered various aspects of the new law throughout the week.

We outlined legal and illegal activity, explored fears that legalizing marijuana could make it easier for kids and teens to get their hands on the drug, and looked at how different workplaces are handling pot-related policy. We've covered action in the Legislature regarding marijuana and talked to people who consider its legalization in Oregon as historic as Woodstock or the moon landing.

There are more stories to tell — and there are some things too early to tell.

Local law enforcement officers on both sides of the state line have been bracing for marijuana's legalization ever since voters approved Measure 91 in November. They've predicted a rise in crime and challenges for staffs that are already stretched thin.

Whether that will prove to be the case has yet to be seen. Certainly our border community could face unique challenges other cities throughout the state won't have to deal with. Certainly there will be people who

abuse marijuana, just as there are people who abuse other legal drugs, including prescription medication and alcohol. We're hopeful, however, that by and large, those who do choose to use the drug will do so responsibly.

We're also hoping that decriminalizing recreational marijuana could have a positive impact on law enforcement. It could actually free up officers who might otherwise be tied up arresting someone for pot possession to assist on other calls. Police or deputies who might previously have faced a dangerous situation alone could have more backup available.

Now that it's legal, access to marijuana has become an issue of personal liberty. We may not personally want to light up a joint of our own, but by golly, we support your right to do so — out of sight on private property if you're older than 21, of course. Freedom of any kind always goes hand in hand with responsibility.

We know if given the choice, Malheur County wouldn't have approved Measure 91. Sixty-nine percent of those of us who voted on the issue in November opposed legalizing pot. But it's here now, and it's up to us to make sure this new road travels as smoothly as possible.

## LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

## OTHER VIEWS



# Seattle on the Mediterranean

Oh, the ceaseless Seattle sun. June just set another record — the hottest ever recorded in this city, closing out the warmest first half of a year.

Seattle is farther north than Maine and Montreal, and yet, over the past month or so, it has been hotter here than in Athens, Rome or Los Angeles on many days. We had eight days at 85 degrees or higher in June. On Sunday, east of the Cascade Mountains, it hit 113 degrees in Walla Walla.

London and Paris, two cities with a climate similar to Seattle's, both set heat records this week — 98, the hottest July day in British history, and 103.5 in the City of Light.

As a native Seattleite, I've always wondered what it would be like to live in a place where it's sunny every day. Now that I'm experiencing something close to that, I feel out of sorts in a strange land. Wildfires burn today in the Olympic Mountains west of Seattle, a forest zone that is typically one of the rainiest places on earth.

Sure, my backyard grapes, my tomatoes, my Meyer lemons and my rosemary plants love it. This is Sicily in Seattle, with nearly 16 hours of daylight. June, known for its cloudy gloom, was "probably the sunniest month in Northwest history," wrote University of Washington atmospheric scientist Cliff Mass on his weather blog.

The experts, Mass among them, do not think the broiling of the Pacific Northwest can be attributed to climate change.

Rather, they credit a huge dome of high pressure to the west and warm ocean temperatures. But they say that what we've experienced over the past 16 months is an indication of what this part of the world will be like after the Earth has warmed by several degrees.

So, what's not to like? For starters, brown does not fit an emerald city. Not just every homeowner's lawn, now the color of a baked potato, but alpine meadows, fields and deciduous trees that have given up for the year, shedding potato-chip crisp leaves as if it were October.

As anyone in California could say, get used to it. Or get a fake lawn. Or grow cactus plants. Summers in the Northwest are usually dry, mild and humidity-free — this is just an extreme version. Stop complaining.

In the withering heat, I can still look south and see the glaciers of Mount Rainier, holding the frozen legacy of winters long past. Water, as snow or ice, is not just the master architect of the Northwest but the main reason the islands, the mountains, the forests of this place are so beautiful.



**TIMOTHY EGAN**  
Comment

Take away the snow and change happens quickly. Salmon need cold water. Cherries, apples, peaches, wine grapes — all of which the Northwest grows in abundance — need that snowmelt as well. In mid-May, a statewide drought emergency was declared, after the snowpack in the Cascades was measured at its lowest level in 64 years.

Ahead, we could face major wildfires, in places where 500-year-old trees are draped with tendrils of green.

Salmon-spawning rivers could be shallow and warm in early fall — lethal to this region's iconic symbol.

Here, at least, it's fish and trees that are stressed. Elsewhere, it's people. More than 1,000 people died in Pakistan last month in one of the deadliest heat waves in history.

All of this has made me curse Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., who calls the global scientific consensus on climate change "the greatest hoax." And sadly, it matters what he says, because Inhofe chairs the Senate committee in charge of doing something about climate change. As such, he's determined to prevent the world's second biggest producer of carbon dioxide — the United States — from doing anything.

Inhofe is famous for bringing a snowball to the floor of the Senate to prove his point. What he proved is that there are Labradors with more common sense than a senator with a peanut for a brain.

At the other end of the spectrum is Pope Francis. In his recent encyclical on climate change, he made a plea to our better angels, a plea to take "care of our common home." It's a nice sentiment, but with people like Inhofe guiding U.S. policy, altruism alone will never work.

We need to act out of self-interest, as well. I love my little patch of the planet. Love the glaciers in August, the rivers at full flush, carpets of evergreen trees and a predominant breeze from Puget Sound that provides natural air-conditioning for more than 3 million people in the Seattle area.

We may lose this. The current heat is a precursor, an early peek at a scary tomorrow. Inhofe's ignorance could have a direct effect on the place we leave our grandchildren.

Before giving in to a future in which the Pacific Northwest bakes, burns and shrivels, we have to defend the natural world — place by place.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for The New York Times, first as the Pacific Northwest correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Christians should have right to be politically incorrect

Is it right for Christians to pray and do or say nothing else? I think not. So I am saying this: I'm very troubled regarding the Christian couple in Oregon who have been run out of business by a judge who issued them an exorbitant fine then piled on a gag order on these two individuals simply for not baking a cake.

He does not exhibit any respect whatsoever for the First Amendment. What happened to that universal sign that used to be displayed in nearly every business: "I reserve the right to refuse service to anyone." This couple has a right to believe what they want to believe.

By the same token, the gay couple have a right to their beliefs but their beliefs should not bring punishment to other people who believe differently. I have never believed in gay bashing. I remember a few years back some gays were beaten to death because they were gay. My heart was sick when I read about that. I am a landlord and I have rented to gay couples. They are some of the best tenants I ever had. When I was in the working world one of my best friends was a lesbian. She respected my beliefs, and I hers. I do not judge gays any more than I judge Christians. Judging is God's job.

What troubles me about this story is the political correct-ism. I believe that PCism is a pernicious societal disease designed for the express purpose of shutting people up with whom one does not agree. And I believe this aberrant judge is the embodiment of PCism run amok.

Sharolyn K. Gemmill  
Pendleton

### Forest Service not responding to information requests

For several years it was a shell game. Throw out enough varying plans, subparts and meetings, with different catchphrases for what equated to closing roads and restricting overall motorized access, and the Forest Service hoped to either disenfranchise enough of the public, or aggravate enough, to make them quit. Unfortunately, I and the people of Eastern Oregon have not wavered under that approach and have actually become more proficient in following the pea and keeping tabs on what the USFS is doing.

Now we return to the tactics of Monica Schwalbach, the initiator of the first Record of Decision to restrict motorized access on our forest. No more prime an example exists of that than my dealings over the last month with the current forest supervisor Tom Montoya.

For the last month I have requested information as to who makes up his interdisciplinary team for the development of the Subpart A report of travel management on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. My initial request was June 6. As of July 6, Mr. Montoya has not answered my email. I believe we should know who is planning our future access to the Blues.

I again request from Supervisor Montoya a list of who makes up the ID team for the development of the Subpart A report, and what tools, models and best available science they are using to plan the minimum roads needed for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Maybe in a more public form Mr. Montoya will answer the question, but thus far, no such information has been given.

John George  
Bates