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OUR VIEW

Red flags waving on Pendleton airport project

The champagne was uncorked after a \$45 million project was announced for Pendleton's long-empty airport industrial ground, along the long-derided Airport Road extension.

Pendleton city councilors gave the developers from Washington-based Makad Corporation a round of applause after the company said the huge data center would employ 45 people. Pendleton economic development and airport director Steve Chrisman said in a report that the project would raise \$295,970 in tax revenue per year, as well as rental fees of roughly \$29,500 paid to the city annually.

Champagne is surely apropos if that's the case. Pendleton has seen revenues stagnate for decades, so

the shot in the arm is desperately needed. And development begets development, so a huge initial project can spur more growth at the airport industrial park. Offering two years of free rent and a reduction in development fees are things a city can and should do to attract large investments.

But there are real questions about the feasibility of this project. Mostly because the developers are still doing their own feasibility studies. As we learned at Tuesday night's city council meeting, Makad is not yet sure how — and whether it is possible — to get all the power they need to the site. That's kind of important; the success of the project depends on it.

But that kind of potential hurdle didn't stop the city from spending money like the project is a sure thing. It will cost roughly \$300,000 to connect sewer and water to the site, and that construction is already underway even though Makad says the data center would not operate for

close to four years. So why the rush to spend money and dig up dirt?

There are real questions about the feasibility of a data center at the airport. But those questions are magnified because Makad is leading the effort.

This newspaper is doing its due diligence on Makad, a process that takes a lot of time and work. We will publish our findings when we

have the full story. Currently, we're digging through files at the Secretary of State's office, talking to public and private groups that have dealt with Makad in the past. Thus far, some have good things to say and some don't.

The company's development history is clearly checkered in Eastern Oregon — one project was built and flourished, another was built

but never operated, and a third project — the most ambitious — never amounted to anything. And Makad has never developed a data center, anywhere.

We understand there is some confidentiality that needs to be involved in economic development. You can't give away your secrets to potential competitors. And we also understand that economic development is not for the meek. Eventually you have to throw the dice and take a risk. But we hope that Pendleton city councilors had more time to do their own due diligence on this company — and the contract — they signed Tuesday night.

We'd be ecstatic if this project goes forward. The city desperately needs the revenue and the development. But consider us skeptical. Right now, Makad has no skin in the game — they just got the city of Pendleton to lay out \$300,000 on the off chance the stars align and the project goes forward.

Real questions remain about the feasibility of the project — and the city shouldn't spend more money until those questions are answered.

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.

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.

We can preserve gun rights and innocent life

It is not political to see a tragedy and work to prevent another one. It is not pro-life to see a tragedy and refuse to help prevent another one. It is also not pro-death nor shortsighted to worry about a loss of freedom.

Surely the Second Amendment can be interpreted in such a light as to allow weapons for hunting and self-defense while simultaneously making mass shootings more difficult. There must be a way to have a reasoned discussion on this topic, not just at a national level, but also here, among friends and neighbors. Surely media coverage can refuse to give the gunmen the infamy they seek. Perhaps the main stories can be about the people who died, the people who were injured and, particularly, the people who risked life and limb to try and stop further carnage. Those stories are fascinating and can make it easy for youth to study and want to be like the heroes.

For many decades there was nearly unfettered access to guns,

yet mass shootings were rare.

What has changed? What steps can we take to strengthen family and social ties, which can help both prevent and treat isolation and loneliness? Access to mental health care is easier than ever before; how can we make it easier to admit to a problem without risking your own future?

It is a favorite pastime to complain about how partisan Congress is and how they do not work together to solve our problems. Yet, as I listen to people discuss these shootings, it sounds like perhaps we may have the leaders we deserve.

Just because someone disagrees strongly with you does not mean they are automatically stupid, evil, ignorant, or even misinformed. We all stand on common ground in wanting these killings to end. We have no room to complain about our legislators when we ourselves are throwing around insults and casting blame instead of listening to the other side and answering politely. We must build up trust and civility locally if we want to see it nationally.

YOUR VIEWS

So please, the next time a conservative tells you we must put no restrictions of any kind on any weapons, or the next time a liberal tells you we must ban all weapons including the common jackknife, listen. Converse. They might learn something. You might learn something. And perhaps Eastern Oregon can help show how to combine a positive gun culture with a decrease in gun, and other, violence.

Patricia Case
Helix

Obama using grief to promote gun control

According to the *East Oregonian* and President Obama the "country has become numb to gun violence." To declare that the American people do not care or feel the grief of those suffering from these senseless murders is callous and manipulative.

Barack Obama freely admits "This is something we should politicize." Obama will go to Roseburg to press his gun control agenda and newspapers like

the *East Oregonian* will help sensationalize the grief of a community in order to redefine the "broadest possible reading of the second amendment."

Fortunately, the civic leaders of Roseburg still honor the Constitution and adamantly oppose politicizing the grief of the suffering for political gain. "Our Douglas County commissioners, along with Douglas County elected sheriff who is very popular, and our chief of police all came to a consensus language about him (Obama) not being welcome here to grandstand for political purposes." Roseburg newsletter editor David Jacques expressed the sentiments of those that abhor politicizing grief. "So now he wants to come to our community and stand on the corpses of our loved ones to make some kind of political point."

America has become numb, not to senseless mass murders, but rather to the sanctity of human life. We routinely murder over a million babies every year. Abortion on demand for any reason at any time is the leading cause of death in

America. We allow harvested baby parts to be sold for profit yet you will never hear a word of outrage from our local newspaper or our President rushing to Roseburg to capitalize on grief to promote gun control.

A nation that will not protect the sanctity of life in the womb will create an environment where no life is respected.

A nation that will remove all values, morals and Godly standards from schools and government will reap a whirlwind of sick individuals that have no respect for human life.

Our forefathers recognized the danger of such a government. George Mason, a key author of our constitution, warned "To disarm the people ... is the most effective way to enslave them." Patrick Henry said it best. "Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect anyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force you are ruined."

Stuart Dick
Irrigon



OTHER VIEWS

Stuff happens

With both China and India having just announced major plans to curb their carbon emissions, the sound you hear is a tipping point tipping. Heading into the United Nations climate summit meeting in Paris in December, all the world's largest industrial economies are now taking climate change more seriously. This includes the United States — except for some of the knuckleheads running to be our next president, which is not a small problem.

When, at CNN's GOP presidential debate, the moderator Jake Tapper read statements from Ronald Reagan's secretary of state George Shultz (who drives an electric car powered by solar panels on his home's roof) about how Reagan urged industry to proactively address ozone depletion, and why Shultz believes we should be just as proactive today in dealing with climate change, he got the usual know-nothing responses.

Sen. Marco Rubio said, "We're not going to destroy our economy the way the left-wing government that we are under now wants to do," while Gov. Chris Christie opined of Shultz, "Listen, everybody makes a mistake every once in a while."

They sure do, and it's not Shultz, who has been wisely and courageously telling Republicans that the conservative thing to do now is to take out some insurance against climate change, because if it really gets rocking the results could be "catastrophic." Hurricane Sandy — likely amplified by warmer ocean waters — caused over \$36 billion in damage to Christie's own state, New Jersey, in 2012.

But hey, "stuff happens."

There was time when we could tolerate this kind of dumb-as-we-wanna-be thinking. But it's over. The next eight years will be critical for the world's climate and ecosystems, and if you vote for a climate skeptic for president, you'd better talk to your kids first, because you will have to answer to them later.

If you have time to read one book on this subject, I highly recommend the new "Big World, Small Planet," by Johan Rockstrom, director of the Stockholm Resilience Center, and Mattias Klum, whose stunning photographs of ecosystem disruptions reinforce the urgency of the moment.

Rockstrom begins his argument with a reminder that for most of the Earth's 4.5-billion-year history its climate was not very hospitable to human beings, as it oscillated between "punishing ice ages and lush warm periods" that locked humanity into seminomadic lifestyles.

It's only been in the last 10,000 years that we have enjoyed the stable climate conditions allowing civilizations to develop based on agriculture that could support towns and cities. This period, known as the Holocene, was an "almost miraculously stable and warm interglacial equilibrium, which is the only



THOMAS
FRIEDMAN
Comment

state of the planet we know for sure can support the modern world as we know it." It finally gave us "a stable equilibrium of forests, savannahs, coral reefs, grasslands, fish, mammals, bacteria, air quality, ice cover, temperature, fresh water availability and productive soils."

"It is our Eden," Rockstrom added, and now "we are threatening to push Earth out of this sweet spot," starting in the mid-1950s, when the Industrial Revolution reached most

of the rest of the globe and populations and middle classes exploded. That triggered "the great acceleration" of industrial and farming growth, which has put all of Earth's ecosystems under stress. The impacts now are obvious: "climate change, chemical pollution, air pollution, land and water degradation ... and the massive loss of species and habitats."

The good news is that in this period many more of the world's have-nots have escaped from poverty. They've joined the party. The bad news, says Rockstrom, is that "the old party" cannot go on as it did. The Earth is very good at finding ways to adapt to stress: oceans and forest absorb the extra CO₂; ecosystems like the Amazon adapt to deforestation and still provide rain and fresh water; the Arctic ice shrinks but does not disappear. But eventually we can exhaust the planet's adaptive capacities.

We're sitting on these planetary boundaries right now, argues Rockstrom, and if these systems flip from one stable state to another — if the Amazon tips into a savannah, if the Arctic loses its ice cover and instead of reflecting the sun's rays starts absorbing them in water, if the glaciers all melt and cannot feed the rivers — nature will be fine, but we will not be.

"The planet has demonstrated an impressive capacity to maintain its balance, using every trick in its bag to stay in the current state," explains Rockstrom. But there are more and more signs that we may have reached a saturation point.

Forests show the first signs of absorbing less carbon. The oceans are rapidly acidifying as they absorb more CO₂, harming fish and coral. Global average temperatures keep rising.

This is what will greet the next president — a resilient planet that could once absorb our excesses at seemingly no cost to us, suddenly tipping into a saturated planet, sending us "daily invoices" that will get bigger each year. When nature goes against you, watch out.

"For the first time, we need to be clever," says Rockstrom, "and rise to a crisis before it happens," before we cross nature's tipping points. Later will be too late. We elect a president who ignores this science at our peril.

Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for *The New York Times*. He became the paper's foreign-affairs Op-Ed columnist in 1995.