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OUR VIEW

Small town policing still an unsolved issue

In February 2014, small town police departments in Umatilla and Morrow counties were having a difficult time filling positions and finding qualified employees, and the relatively expensive agencies were swallowing up city budgets.

At the time, we advised those cities to consider combining resources with a nearby city of similar size, or contracting with a larger organization such as the county sheriff’s office.

Some took our advice. Weston, for instance, now uses the Umatilla County Sheriff’s office for regular patrols and investigations within city limits, and the local response has largely been positive. Though some in Weston would rather have their own force, we’d argue the city is getting better police service at a cost savings of more than \$60,000 annually.

Others did not take our advice. The city of Stanfield’s police force two years ago was just one overworked officer and the city was trying and failing to fill positions. Fast forward two years, and Stanfield’s police force is again just one overworked officer and, again, the office is in disarray. The only thing different now is that two Stanfield cops are suspended and under investigation. Oh, and there is also the significant possibility of the city being sued in relation to the matter — which would almost certainly cost the city financially, in one way or another.

In the last two years, Pilot Rock has become the poster child for a small town trying to figure out how best to handle public safety.

Finding good employees has been a struggle for the city of 1,500, caused both by tragic luck and incapable employees. Currently, the city has no officers. In that absence, the Pendleton Police Department has loaned out an officer for the day-to-day law enforcement work.

Pilot Rock may have the opportunity to contract longterm with Pendleton police or even the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, and city council and staff is now nervously exploring that opportunity.

We’d again argue it can bring consistency and professionalism, and would allow Pilot Rock policing — two years from now — to look more like Weston than Stanfield.

A community is far safer with trained and qualified personnel on duty year-round than a revolving door of officers with little oversight or support. Each small city must decide what is best for them, but we continue to advise that having quality law enforcement professionals working in your city matters most — the insignia on their uniform matters much less.

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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.



Be heard!

Comment online at eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

Germany, refugee nation

There’s a new can-do nation. It’s called Germany. The United States, fear-ridden, has passed the torch.

Throughout the extraordinary process that has seen roughly 1 million refugees arrive in Germany this year, Chancellor Angela Merkel has had a consistent refrain: “Wir schaffen das” — “We can do this.” The gesture in question is the most extraordinary redemptive act by any European nation in many years.

Germans on the whole have understood. They have understood that to flee Syria through Islamic State checkpoints, place your family in flimsy boats on stormy waters and trudge across Europe in search of a home is not a desperate decision. It is a reasonable decision if the alternative is to see your children blown up by a barrel bomb or your daughter raped by a jihadist. Postwar Germans are reasonable people.

The United States would have had to admit about 4 million refugees this year to take in a similar proportion of its population. It has fallen more than 3.9 million short of that mark.

Most of the refugees in Germany are from Syria. The United States has admitted about 1,900 refugees from Syria over the past four years. Yes, you read that right. President Barack Obama has now pledged to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees — a decision that had met defiance from more than two dozen Republican governors eager to conflate the words “Muslim” or “Middle Eastern” with terrorist.

Whatever happened to “the home of the brave”?

Set aside the fact that the Syrian crisis cannot be disentangled from the spillover of the Iraq war, and so America’s direct responsibility is engaged. Set aside the fact that Obama said in 2011 that President Bashar Assad must step aside, and so America’s responsibility is engaged. Set aside the presidential “red line” not upheld in 2013. Even then, by any reasonable measure, the U.S. response to the Syrian refugee crisis has been pitiful.

For a land of immigrants peopled over centuries by families fleeing war, famine or hardship, it has been especially pitiful.

Germany has stepped in. Wir schaffen das — we can do this. The can-do spirit has made a trans-Atlantic crossing.

Merkel’s place in the history books was already assured. She was the woman who over a decade steered a united Germany to a self-assurance striking for a country that, even at the turn of the century, was still uncertain if it could allow itself a modicum of pride.

But with her decision this year to admit Syrian and other refugees, she has become a towering European figure, certainly the equal of such postwar German giants as Konrad Adenauer, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl — perhaps even surpassing them because her Germany is its own master whereas theirs was still under degrees of American tutelage.

“She does not want to be — she refuses to be — the person who witnessed a serious fracture of the European Union,” Julian Reichelt, the editor in chief of Bild Online, told me. “She will throw money at a problem, as with Greece. She will admit an unlimited number of refugees. And she will go down in history as a great European who defended the Union no matter what.”

When Merkel decided last summer to admit the refugees, she averted violence that might have spilled out of control. Critics within her own Christian Democrat party portray her as emotional. But for a leader committed to preserving the European idea, her decision was rational.

Raised in East Germany, she owes her freedom to European unity. It is a personal matter. The last time Europe was awash in millions of refugees was in 1945 as the Third Reich collapsed. It is a historical matter. Germany could not turn its back. Still the decision required statesmanship — that quaint, almost forgotten word — and the conviction that any risk of terrorism could be managed.

One million refugees change the landscape. They are in supermarkets. They are in hospitals. They are in schools. Germans have been accepting, despite the huge cost. A far-right party may benefit, but the consensus is this had to be done.

As a result, over the next generation, Germany will become a stronger, more vital, more dynamic, more open country. Abdulfattah Jandali, a Syrian immigrant known as John, was the biological father of Steve Jobs. Perhaps a future Syrian-German Jobs has just entered school.

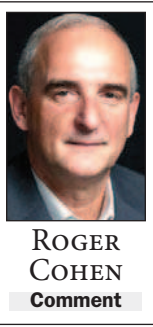
Germany has shamed its European partners, including Britain. A Europe-wide program for refugees is needed. Germany can’t take in another million in 2016.

“There is no real plan beyond buying time to get the rest of Europe on board,” Reichelt said.

In a grim year, Merkel has redeemed the Europe that once closed its frontiers to Jews fleeing Germany. When, at unification, Kohl spoke of a “blooming landscape” in the former East Germany, he was derided. But it came to pass. Germany can do this. As for can’t-do America, that’s another story. Fear and electoral politics constitute an explosive brew.

■

Roger Cohen joined *The New York Times* in 1990. He was a foreign correspondent for more than a decade before becoming acting foreign editor on Sept. 11, 2001, and foreign editor six months later.



ROGER COHEN
Comment

Whatever happened to the U.S. being the home of the brave?

Statues aren’t art, don’t attract shoppers

Some people have gotten the impression that since I have spoken in opposition to the statue program that I oppose art. Actually, if you have ever been to my house, you will find my walls covered with what I consider art, 99 percent of which deals with Pendleton and the Pendleton Round-Up.

The statues on Main Street are not what I consider art, not honoring the figure depicted, but trophies honoring a bunch of public bureaucrats that probably contributed little if any to actual cost of the “trophies.”

The public had very little input on who was being honored, or where they would be displayed. The placement of any object in the middle of a crosswalk shows little concern for public safety. A better venue for display in a single area may have well been along the Court Street sidewalk bordering Roy Raley Park.

City officials just can’t seem to get it that all the statues in the world won’t bring the shoppers back to Main Street until the parking issue is addressed. When have you ever had to look for a

parking place at Safeway, Walmart, or Melanie Square?

By the way, a complete accounting by the City Finance Department of the expenditures for the purchase and installation of those statues previously erected by the city clearly shows that just over half the cost was covered by private grants/donations.

Commentary: I have to apologize for the “pain” I caused council members Brown, Young, and Plute for agreeing with the suggestion that the “parklet” project be handed over to the downtown merchants association for all further action. That’ll save city resources and one more committee that we don’t really need.

Evidently Becky Marks has been the victim or is worried about some broken glass. Although a check with the Pendleton Police Department found no report filed, a public safety consultant recommended she either open her windows or cover them with plywood, as rocks may continue to fly. My suggestion: Open the window and listen. Perhaps the rocks will stop on their own.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

YOUR VIEWS

EOTEC needs money, but will be a success

East Oregonian managing editor Daniel Wattenburger finally came to a public meeting, the Wednesday Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center public information session in Hermiston. Unfortunately, his Saturday editorial shows he is no wiser for his attendance and just as off base and ill-informed as always. The Dec. 19 *EO* editorial calls EOTEC a “charity case” and whines about its cost and how it might operate in the future.

He misses the point that \$14 million have been raised for this incredible project and its backers are working to raise funds for an additional \$2 million to finish the project in good style. Private money — not public money.

Since its inception, the *EO* group has crusaded against EOTEC in every way possible and has tried to kill and harm the project. It thinks its judgment is better than all who have supported and helped this incredible project move forward.

Supporters include Representative Greg Smith, Senator Bill Hansell, two

Hermiston mayors and two different Hermiston city managers, Hermiston City Council, Hermiston School District and the Umatilla County Commissioners.

It also misses the point that \$8.6 million of state (not local) money has been contributed to this project and that the facility will replace the decrepit, dangerous and illegal county fairgrounds in the middle of Hermiston.

In addition to their trying to harm the project, the *East Oregonian* and its captive *Hermiston Herald* completely ignore the giant rising on the plain south of the Hermiston airport. They apparently cannot see the 30,000-square-foot events center, which is 75 percent completed and impressive in size and usability.

It strikes me if a \$14-16 million

facility of this magnitude is being built on the edge of town, with the events center 75 percent completed, the *East Oregonian* or *Hermiston Herald* would at least write an article or two about it and run a few photos.

While I understand that arresting a man for mistreating 14 cats is front page news for the *EO* Group, don’t they have some space for a photo of the events center on their front pages?

Hermiston is used to this from Mr. Wattenburger and the *EO* group. As always, in spite of them, we will soldier on and ignore them. Their commentary is so ill-informed and so off base it has become irrelevant on the important issues in our communities.

George Anderson
Hermiston

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.