

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

Elfering, Bailor have little in common

It would be hard to find more opposite candidates than the two running for Umatilla County commissioner.

Challenger Tom Bailor uses the word “future” in just about every sentence, while Bill Elfering might be the most backward-looking elected official in the county.

Elfering told the editorial board he supports the prohibition of alcohol, an idea nearly a century behind the times.

Bailor, on the other hand, describes the county as running on “AOL” and that it needs to “upgrade to at least Google to get to 2050.”

Yet despite their significant difference in outlook, they do have one thing in common: Neither will get our endorsement in the Umatilla County commissioner’s race.

Perhaps Bailor is not even a serious candidate. He had a dismal showing in the last county commissioner race in 2013, finishing fifth of six and garnering just 6 percent of the vote.

He also has no name recognition outside of Pendleton and Mission and he doesn’t have the personality to win over voters who don’t know him. And he has no plans to run the kind of active campaign needed to overcome this initial disadvantage.

Elfering, the current county commissioner, is therefore the heavy favorite to retain his seat. But we’ve been unimpressed by Elfering’s first term on the commission. And our biggest gripe is his lack of concerns.

According to Elfering, everything is hunky-dory in county government.

The sheriff’s office? Better than ever. EOTEC? A shining beacon of success. County emergency dispatch? All clear. Management and morale? Two thumbs up.

Nothing to see here, and nothing to be done either. So perhaps, with so little to be concerned with, the county should look into changing the structure of its government, like Morrow County has done, to three part-time commissioners and one full-time, unelected county manager?

No, said Elfering. It ain’t broke.

This laissez-faire, hands-off approach toward the operation of government is perhaps not what you’d expect from the former head of the county’s Republican Party.

Yet that’s Elfering re-election pitch. He told the editorial board that “people have already invested in me four years of training” and that he wants to “continue to do the good things I’ve been able to do for the county.”

He touts one of his major achievements as recording county commissioner meetings, an idea he freely admits to stealing from longtime losing county commissioner candidate Michael Cannon.

There’s no doubt the county is running better than it was four years ago, trimmed down with commissioners taking on added responsibilities. But comparing Elfering’s self-prepared re-election resume with his vision for the next four years, it’s clear he has been along for the ride and not driving the bus.

We hope next term, voters get more return on their investment.

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.

Culture corner

The newspaper is supposed to be a place to learn things. And we’d be foolish to think we’re the only provider making content of interest and value.

So today we’re unveiling a new weekly feature for the opinion page that we’re calling the “Culture Corner.”

This will be a place where newsroom and editorial board members will tip you off to something important they read or watched or listened to in the last week. Or something not important at all. From distinguished journalism to silly time wasters, the tips and recommendations will vary widely. But we hope you’ll learn something and have a tidbit to talk about at the water cooler.

Let’s start out with a fun one from editorial page editor Tim Trainor: www.radiooooo.com

Yes, that’s radio — with four more Os tacked onto the end.

Type that website into your search

bar. Although still in its beta testing stage, radiooooo.com is a fascinating place to spend some time. The site allows users to discover worldwide pop music of the last century.

You can click any country on the map, choose a decade, and listen to some illustrative music of the time and place. You can listen to East German rock from the 1960s. Or a Peruvian waltz from the 1930s. How about modern-sounding calypso music from Sierra Leone that was recorded in the 1950s? Or do you ever wonder what they’re listening to in Australia right now?

Or Uzbekistan?

It’s all there, along with ways to individualize your experience by requesting slow, fast or weird tunes. You’ll be blown away at the amazing variety of sound makers. And without even realizing it, you’re getting a history, geography and culture lesson while you’re doing your audio exploration.



Gas tax failure hurting city streets

Friday, half the street was paved behind a new multi-million dollar school rehab on Southeast Alexander. Half the width of the street, and just in front of the school. If the 5 cent per gallon gas tax had passed this wouldn’t be happening because there would have been money to pave the whole street from Southeast 11th to Southeast 15th.

Rex Morehouse and others say that the citizens of Pendleton were the only ones paying for the new streets; however, Mr. Morehouse, you and I were at the same community meeting where the stats on the previous 5 cent gas tax was presented and we both know that 54 percent of the revenue raised was from out-of-town drivers. With the economy growing and the price of gas down I suspect that the percent of out-of-town drivers paying the 5 cent tax would have higher this time.

The city says they will be paving the streets with the worst problems first. How much worse can the problem be that half the width of the street behind Washington School is all that is paved on a street that is about four blocks long? Why is it

that streets that are already paved, be they in need of fixing, get attention before those that are nothing but dirt and gravel get considered? Isn’t no pavement worse than pavement with potholes that can be filled with cold patch? I think so.

Why should all the residents of a neighborhood be made to suffer due to one or two who don’t want progress for fear that their property taxes will raise? Granted we do not live in Montee Addition or on the North Hill, but we still pay taxes just like everyone else and we deserve the same city services as everyone else, rich or poor.

I suggest they pave Southeast Alexander from 11th to 15th. The street doesn’t need sidewalks the full length but it does need paving. I also suggest that the city look at all the other streets that are not currently paved and come up with a plan to get them paved without forcing the residents into footing the bill for an LID that most can’t afford. If the residents of the street take ownership of the problem they will find a solution that is both acceptable to the city and to the state and the city will be better for it.

Barbara A. Wright
Pendleton

Emergency clause abused by legislature

Most small businesses have a significant, somewhat predictable, expense to operate and not one penny of guaranteed income.

The Oregon Legislature just significantly raised the costs of every employer in the state with not one penny of funding or proper vetting of the costs. The expense to the state alone will be massive. The bill was passed with emergency declaration by the Democratic majority preventing it from being eligible for referral to the ballot.

If this is about social justice, why were the voters not allowed to decide in November? Motor voter, minimum wage, dump coal — all passed when the gavel dropped with a rubber stamp at the governor’s desk. It’s about votes and building the power of the already dominant Democratic Party.

To Mr. Henry sitting on gold plated retirement, don’t lecture me on “got mine, up yours.”

Sign the petition; search No Fake Emergencies.

Bruce Staley
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS



Hillary is not sorry

It’s hard not to feel sorry for Hillary Clinton. She is hearing ghostly footsteps.

She’s having her inevitability challenged a second time by a moralizing senator with few accomplishments who chides her on her bad judgment on Iraq and special-interest money, breezily rakes in millions in small donations online, draws tens of thousands to rock-star rallies and gets more votes from young women.

But at least last time, it was a dazzling newcomer who also offered the chance to break a barrier. This time, Hillary is trying to fend off a choleric 74-year-old democratic socialist.

Some close to the campaign say that those ghostly footsteps have made Hillary restive. The déjà vu has exasperated Bill Clinton, who griped to an audience in New York on Friday that young supporters of Bernie Sanders get excited because it sounds good to say, “Just shoot every third person on Wall Street and everything will be fine.”

At the Brooklyn debate, there was acrimony, cacophony, sanctimony and, naturally, baloney.

Hillary gazed at Bernie as though she could hypnotize him into skeddaddling. And Bernie waved his index finger and flapped his hands, miming that he won’t budge, no matter how aggravating it is for Clinton Inc.

Sanders flew to the Vatican that night to underscore his vision of himself as the moral candidate. And Hillary headed to California, underscoring Bernie’s portrayal of her as the mercenary candidate. She attended fundraisers headlined by George and Amal Clooney in San Francisco and at the Clooneys’ LA mansion that cost \$33,400 per person and \$353,400 for two seats at the head table in San Francisco — an “Ocean’s Eleven” safecracking that Sanders labeled “obscene.”

Clinton sowed suspicion again, refusing to cough up her Wall Street speech transcripts. And Sanders faltered on guns, fracking and releasing his tax returns. But he was gutsy, in a New York primary, to say he’d be more evenhanded with Israel and the Palestinians. As my colleague Tom Friedman has warned, we can hurt Israel by loving Israel to death.

Hillary alternately tried to blame and hug the men in her life, divvying up credit in a self-serving way.

After showing some remorse for the 1994 crime bill, saying it had had “unintended” consequences, she stressed that her husband “was the president who actually signed it.” On Libya, she noted that “the decision was the president’s.” And on her desire to train and arm Syrian rebels, she recalled, “The president said no.”

But she wrapped herself in President Barack Obama’s record on climate change and, when criticized on her super PACs, said, well, Obama did it, too.

Sanders accused her of pandering to Israel after she said that “if Yasser Arafat had agreed

with my husband at Camp David,” there would have been a Palestinian state for 15 years.

Hillary may be right that Bernie is building socialist castles in the sky. But Bernie is right that Hillary’s judgment has often been faulty.

She has shown an unwillingness to be introspective and learn from her mistakes. From health care to Iraq to the email server, she only apologizes at the point of a gun. And even then, she leaves the impression that she is

merely sorry to be facing criticism, not that she miscalculated in the first place.

On the server, she told Andrea Mitchell of NBC News that she was sorry it had been “confusing to people and raised a lot of questions.” She has never acknowledged, maybe even to herself, that routing diplomatic emails with classified information through a homebrew server was an outrageous, reckless and foolish thing to do, and disloyal to Obama, whose administration put in place rules for record-keeping that she flouted.

Wouldn’t it be a relief to people if Hillary just acknowledged some mistakes? If she said that her intentions on Libya were good but that she got distracted by other global issues and took her eye off the ball? That the questions that should have been asked about Libya were not asked and knowing this now would make her a better chief executive?

Obama, introspective to a fault, told Chris Wallace of Fox News that not having a better plan after Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown was the worst mistake of his presidency. But as usual, Clinton, who talked Obama into it, is defiantly doubling down. As her national security advisers told Kim Ghattas for a piece in Foreign Policy, Clinton “does not see the Libya intervention as a failure, but as a work in progress.”

Clinton accused Sanders of not doing his homework on how he would break up the banks. And she is the queen of homework, always impressively well versed in meetings. But that is what makes her failure to read the National Intelligence Estimate that raised doubts about whether Iraq posed a threat to the U.S. so egregious.

Like other decisions, it was put through a political filter and a paranoid mindset. She did not want to be seen, in that blindingly patriotic time, as the bohemian woman standing to the left of the military.

When Barack Obama was warned by some supporters in 2002 not to make a speech against the Iraq invasion because it might hurt his political future, he said he was going to do it anyhow because the war was a really terrible idea.

What worries me is whether Hillary has the confidence to make decisions contrary to her political interests. Can she say, “But it’s a really terrible idea”?

Maureen Dowd, winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary and author of two New York Times best sellers, became an Op-Ed columnist in 1995.

YOUR VIEWS

Marks makes a mark

I would like to support Becky Marks as a city council member.

Becky has been an excellent resource for us at The South Hills Apartments as well as to me personally. As a council member Becky is not over our ward; however, she has always referred us to the appropriate council members and we have obtained great results.

To name a few:

1. The city planners wanted to change the name of our street from 28th Drive to Houtama Road. This change would split our complex in two, meaning all 80 apartments would have to change their addresses including everything to do with our business. Also, our complex would be referred to as Houtama Apts. (We are well known as The South Hills Apts., an upstanding, quiet and safe place to live.)
2. We here at The South Hills

have had extreme problems with a communications company here in town. Becky contacted the city attorney. The city attorney in turn contacted me wanting to know about our problem because it concerned a practicing business that is contracted with the city of Pendleton. We no longer have any problems with this company.

3. Becky has listened and taken information to the appropriate people concerning housing here in Pendleton.

Becky understands where “We the People” are coming from and what our needs are. She conscientiously supports the people of Pendleton in many diverse areas. Her input and intentions are much appreciated. For us Becky Marks has made a difference!

Teri Prock, site manager
Dot Veristain, assistant manager
The South Hills Apartments
Pendleton

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. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.