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OUR VIEW

EOTEC on edge

A few months from hosting a rodeo and county fair, the decades-long plan for an event center in Hermiston still has plenty of unanswered questions.

Hermiston city council asked some of those questions at a meeting earlier this week. Disappointed with a lack of forward momentum and nervous about oncoming deadlines, councilor John Kirwan raised the possibility of replacing the entire Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board.

From our perspective, that's a massive shift in responsibility too close to opening day. However, we share the concern of Kirwan and other Hermiston councilors.

As many readers know, we have long urged the EOTEC board, the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County to take a more engaged approach to planning for the center. We believe that some important decisions — still on the drawing board — should have been made years ago. We have been troubled about a lack of operations and financial plans. We are puzzled by the EOTEC board's continuous brushing off of concerns that these big issues remain unresolved.

Now, knowing how close the construction schedule is to not getting finished in time for the Umatilla County Fair, each snowstorm causes more heartburn. Everyone is up against it, and it's no wonder it is causing stress and some finger-pointing.

The short-term goal must be finishing construction on time, so the fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo can be hosted without a hitch. It will likely

not be perfect the first year, but it must be done.

The long-term goal is where big shifts may be worth exploring. EOTEC is a complex project with two owners/directors (Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston) who rightfully want different things out of the center. Having equal say and equal buy-in at EOTEC is both key to its success and the cause of consternation.

Lately, the consternation seems to be winning. Hermiston city manager

Byron Smith has been forced to spend more than a quarter of his work week on EOTEC, surely to the detriment of other city business. At the same time, county commissioners have taken the EOTEC board approach that nothing is amiss and

no pressing, extra work is needed — even as the clock ticks toward spring.

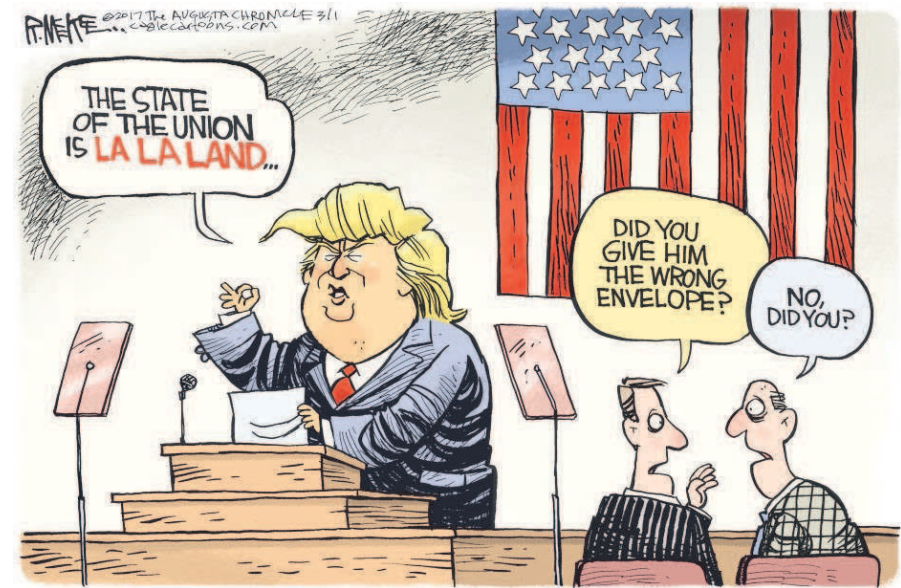
"The other half of the team needs to show up," said Hermiston councilor Jackie Myers, and she is sure right about that.

The board will have a neighborhood meeting March 7 at 5:30 p.m. where fair and rodeo representatives will discuss logistics for the big summer events. Discussion will include parking, traffic and noise issues.

But residents and taxpayers of Hermiston and Umatilla County should make the board expand that discussion. The center's future ownership and management remains a looming question even as the barns and arena go vertical, and the only way to get an answer may be to keep asking.

Having equal say and equal buy-in is both key to its success and the cause of consternation.

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

Hermiston School District committed to all students

I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to providing all of our students and families with a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment that is free from all forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination and we will take swift action to address concerns.

School board policy specifically addresses nondiscrimination and reaffirms our commitment to serve all students and families, regardless of national origin or citizenship status.

Further, you should be aware that the federal courts have upheld the expectation for public schools to serve all children, regardless of citizenship status while enrolled in the public school system.

In Hermiston, we embrace diversity. We recognize and value the worth of each and every student, regardless of race, creed, citizenship status or other protected class. We are committed



FRED MAIOCCO
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to ensuring all students have every opportunity to reach their potential.

Our staff works hard to support our diverse students and families. Hermiston staff daily teach our students to appreciate our differences, how to listen, disagree and resolve conflicts respectfully. Building caring relationships is fundamental to relieving the fear and apprehension many are experiencing in our community.

Please talk with your children about our expectations. If your child experiences or sees harassment, bullying, or discrimination, please encourage them to tell an adult at school.

Additionally, Hermiston is part of the Safe Oregon program where students can report such matters anonymously at www.safeoregon.com. We take all such reports seriously and appropriate action will follow.

Fred Maiocco Jr. is superintendent of Hermiston schools.



OTHER VIEWS

Optimism in Trump's America

President Trump's job approval rating, 44 percent with a 48 percent disapproval rating in a new *Wall Street Journal*-NBC News poll, makes him "the first president of the post-World War II era with a net negative approval rating in his first gauge of public opinion," according to the *Journal*.

Trump's most strident supporters will no doubt call the polls fake, but the fact is, Trump's numbers are low, and they're more evidence — as if any more were needed — that there is no honeymoon for the 45th president.

But at the same time, there are signs of optimism — not for Trump's political fortunes but for the country. If the *Journal* numbers are correct, more Americans say they are hopeful and optimistic about the future than have said so in several years. And, at least specifically where the economy is concerned, many attribute their optimism to the presence of Trump in the Oval Office.

The *Journal*-NBC pollsters asked 1,000 adults, "When you think about the future of the country, would you say that you are mainly hopeful and optimistic or mainly worried and pessimistic?" Sixty percent said they feel hopeful and optimistic, while 40 percent said they feel worried and pessimistic. That hopeful number is higher than when the *Journal* last asked the question in December 2016 (when it was 56 percent), and in August 2016 (54 percent), and September 2005 (53 percent).

"This is a strong number being driven by very high numbers among Trump voters who express optimism across a number of measures on the poll, including higher economic confidence," pollster Bill McInturff told me via email.

As McInturff said, Trump voters are the most optimistic. On the other hand, if 60 percent of Americans think something, the number includes a significant number of people who didn't vote for Trump.

Looking inside the poll, men (66 percent) and more hopeful than women (54 percent). People earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 (63 percent) and between \$50,000 and \$75,000 (64 percent) are more hopeful than those who make more than \$75,000 (59 percent) and under \$30,000 (55 percent). On the other hand, all age and income groups are over 50 percent on the hopeful scale.

Looking at other groups, 52 percent of Hispanics are hopeful, versus 47 percent worried — that's got to be a more positive number than many would have guessed. Among African-Americans, though, just 36 percent are hopeful, versus 63 percent worried. Among whites, 65 percent are hopeful, versus 35 percent worried.

Looking at political identification, there's



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no doubt Democrats are bummed — 37 percent optimistic versus 63 percent pessimistic. Republicans are happy — 87 percent optimistic to 12 percent pessimistic. And independents are leaning toward the positive side — 56 percent optimistic to 41 percent pessimistic.

Getting to those Trump voters, 89 percent say they are hopeful, versus just 30 percent of Hillary Clinton voters. However, among the relatively small group of Americans who voted for some other candidate for president, 55 percent are hopeful. And among the much larger group of Americans who didn't vote at all, 68 percent are hopeful. That's a pretty big number.

There are other indicators in the *Journal*-NBC poll that suggest good feelings among Americans in the wake of Trump's victory. The pollsters asked, "During the next twelve months, do you think that the nation's economy will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?" Forty-one percent said they expect the economy to get better, versus just 21 percent who expect it to get worse and

36 percent who expect the economy to stay the same. That 41 percent, plus 42 percent who expected better times in the *Journal's* poll last month, are the highest expectation numbers in the *Journal's* polling since October 2012, right before Barack Obama was re-elected.

The *Journal* then asked those who believe the economy will get better whether they believe that will be the case mostly because of new Trump economic policies, or mostly because of what Obama set in motion, or mostly because the normal business cycle is simply improving. Seventy-three percent credited Trump policies, while just five percent credited Obama and 20 percent cited the business cycle.

Finally, the *Journal* pollsters asked the classic right track-wrong track question, "All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel things are off on the wrong track?" Forty percent said they think the country is going in the right direction, versus 51 percent who said it's on the wrong track. That is by no means great — but that 40 percent right-track number is higher than any in *Journal* polling since December 2012, again immediately after Obama was re-elected.

None of that adds up to Trump popularity. But Americans' sense of hope, especially about the economy, is a hugely important factor in presidential support. And where that is concerned, there is, for Trump, a little light for the future.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

There are signs of optimism — not for Trump's political fortunes but for the country.

YOUR VIEWS

Nothing recreational about using marijuana

I am opposed to the legalization of marijuana for recreational use. I support marijuana for medical use as I believe the evidence is conclusive as to its benefits in that arena.

Our neighbor to the north (Washington), after legalizing marijuana has experienced an increase in the presences of marijuana in fatal traffic crashes. As other states legalize (and it's only at the state level) recreational marijuana and publish studies of the impact of the drug on traffic safety, I predict the outcome will support the dangers of its use. Nationally we lose 38,300 people a year (2015) to auto accidents.

I believe the acceptance of this drug into our society will absolutely increase the scaling up of drug use, particularly among our youth.

My belief is a growing segment of our people have lost their moral compass. The concept of right and wrong, of what works and what doesn't work, has been replaced by the selfish concept of "me." Our village is suffering from that moral loss.

I am disappointed that so many of our elected, and appointed, government people

are willing to trade the good of the village for the revenue collected from the taxed sales.

It takes a village to raise our children. And there are time-honored guidelines in the management of our village: stray from that proven heading and it is a long way back. It is easier to avoid a mistake than to correct one.

Ron Linn Stanfield

Press is waging war against an American dictator

Donald Trump is a dictator. He wants the press to write and report only positive stories about him. In other words, he doesn't want the truth to be told.

Trump is the most corrupt president in history, and it has only been a month.

Americans, wake up. He doesn't care about us. I wonder how much money he and his family have pocketed?

I consider Trump not only a traitor, but a homegrown terrorist. Look who he surrounds himself with: Reince Preibus, Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller and Kellyanne Conway.

Thank God for freedom of the press.

Mary Casteel Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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