

# EAST OREGONIAN

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### OUR VIEW: MAY ELECTION

# Keeping up with runaway enrollment in Hermiston

At first blush, it doesn't make sense for a school district dealing with exceptional growth to tear down two schools.

That was our first thought about the \$104 million bond the Hermiston School District is floating on May 16. The district needs every classroom and campus it can get, even the imperfect ones.

But after listening at public meetings and long private discussions with the school district — as well as proponents and opponents of the bond — we changed our mind.

The bond before voters next month is another step toward a massive restructuring of a school district that is going through a massive change. It solves some pressing short-term problems, and it sets the district up to solve the bigger long-term problems of overcrowding and facilities designed to serve a drastically different student body than the one that walks through its doors each school day.

Briefly, here's what the bond would do: Build a new elementary school off Theater Lane, replace Rocky Heights Elementary, replace Highland Hills Elementary, renovate Sandstone Middle School and expand Hermiston High School.

That's a lot of work and the price tag reflects it. \$104 million is some serious dough. Hermiston property owners will pay an additional 90 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value in local property taxes, which are currently \$4.09 per \$1,000 for education. The bond therefore would increase education taxes to right about \$5 per \$1,000, although the burden is likely to spread over more taxpayers (including businesses) as the city continues to grow.

The problems with district facilities are clear. Growth has

kept up with the most aggressive expectations, which has required the district to use 34 modular classrooms to educate students. Superintendent Fred Maiocco told us that number could be as high as 50 in two years. If the bond doesn't pass, students may have to go to school in shifts, or in summer, or other equally desperate options.

The district ran a \$69.9 million bond in 2008 to replace and expand three much older schools. Now almost 10 years later, the bond is \$104 million for even more renovations. Expect another bond in a decade or so, possibly to build another high school. Expansion into the former Umatilla County fairgrounds is already underway.

These are steps toward a complete rebuild, a complete renovation, a complete re-imagining of a district that educates nearly half of the county's students. That's not easy or cheap to do. But it's necessary.

The fact is that the Hermiston schools that are tabbed for destruction and reconstruction had been built at a different time and just don't cut it anymore. Highest among the problems are the outdoor hallways, creating safety concerns. The schools that would be built with this bond are what is required now.

Growing pains are natural. Every person and every city and every school district must go through them. Taxes are always a pain, and we understand there's never a good time for more of them.

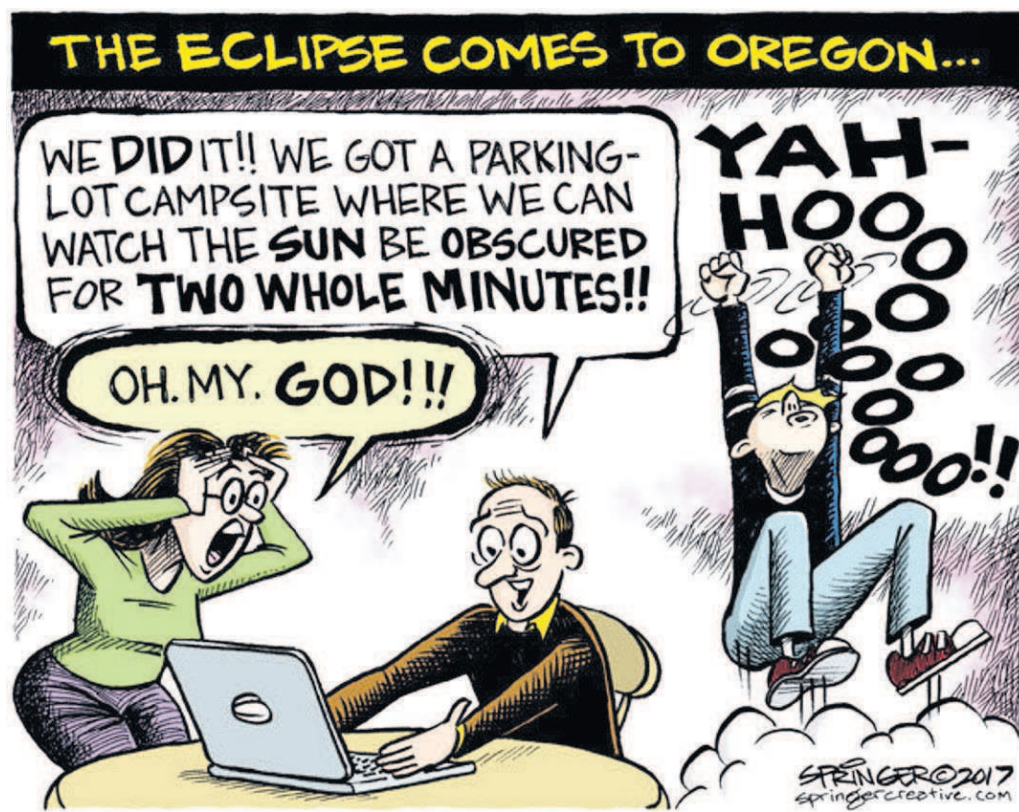
But what you can demand when paying those taxes is that the Hermiston School District build what will be useful to students the day construction is finished, as well as 50 years from now.

We're convinced that it does.

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. 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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



### OTHER VIEWS

## The crisis of Western civ

Between 1935 and 1975, Will and Ariel Durant published a series of volumes that together were known as "The Story of Civilization." They basically told human history (mostly Western history) as an accumulation of great ideas and innovations, from the Egyptians, through Athens, Magna Carta, the Age of Faith, the Renaissance and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The series was phenomenally successful, selling more than 2 million copies.

That series encapsulated the Western civilization narrative that people, at least in Europe and North America, used for most of the past few centuries to explain their place in the world and in time. This narrative was confidently progressive. There were certain great figures, like Socrates, Erasmus, Montesquieu and Rousseau, who helped fitfully propel the nations to higher reaches of the humanistic ideal.

This Western civ narrative came with certain values — about the importance of reasoned discourse, the importance of property rights, the need for a public square that was religiously informed but not theocratically dominated. It set a standard for what great statesmanship looked like. It gave diverse people a sense of shared mission and a common vocabulary, set a framework within which political argument could happen and most important provided a set of common goals.

Starting decades ago, many people, especially in the universities, lost faith in the Western civilization narrative. They stopped teaching it, and the great cultural transmission belt broke. Now many students, if they encounter it, are taught that Western civilization is a history of oppression.

It's amazing what far-reaching effects this has had. It is as if a prevailing wind, which powered all the ships at sea, had suddenly ceased to blow. Now various scattered enemies of those Western values have emerged, and there is apparently nobody to defend them.

The first consequence has been the rise of the illiberals, authoritarians who not only don't believe in the democratic values of the Western civilization narrative, but don't even pretend to believe in them, as former dictators did.

Over the past few years especially, we have entered the age of strong men. We are leaving the age of Obama, Cameron and Merkel and entering the age of Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, Xi Jinping, Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump.

The events last week in Turkey were just another part of the trend. Erdogan dismantles democratic institutions and replaces them with majoritarian dictatorship. Turkey seems to have lost its desire to join the European idea, which no longer has magnetism and allure. Turkey seems to have lost its aspiration to join the community of democracies because that's no longer the inevitable future.



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

More and more governments, including the Trump administration, begin to look like premodern mafia states, run by family-based commercial clans. Meanwhile, institutionalized, party-based authoritarian regimes, like in China or Russia, are turning into premodern cults of personality/Maximum Leader regimes, which are far more unstable and dangerous.

Then there has been the collapse of the center. For decades, center-left and center-right parties clustered around similar versions of democratic capitalism that Western civilization seemed to point to. But many of those centrist parties, like the British and Dutch Labour Parties, are in near collapse. Fringe parties rise.

In France, the hard-right Marine Le Pen and the hard-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon could be the final two candidates in the presidential runoff. Le Pen has anti-liberal views about national purity. Mélenchon is a supposedly democratic politician who models himself on Hugo Chávez.

If those two end up in the finals, then the European Union and NATO, the two great liberal institutions of modern Europe, will go into immediate crisis.

Finally, there has been the collapse of liberal values at home. On American campuses, fragile thugs who call themselves students shout down and abuse speakers on a weekly basis. To read Heather MacDonald's account of being pilloried at Claremont McKenna College is to enter a world of chilling intolerance.

In America, the basic fabric of civic self-government seems to be eroding following the loss of faith in democratic ideals. According to a study published in The Journal of Democracy, the share of young Americans who say it is absolutely important to live in a democratic country has dropped from 91 percent in the 1930s to 57 percent today.

While running for office, Donald Trump violated every norm of statesmanship built up over these many centuries, and it turned out many people didn't notice or didn't care.

The faith in the West collapsed from within. It's amazing how slow people have been to rise to defend it.

There have been a few lonely voices. Andrew Michta laments the loss of Western confidence in an essay in The American Interest. Edward Luce offers a response in his forthcoming book "The Retreat of Western Liberalism." But liberalism has been docile in defense of itself.

These days, the whole idea of Western civ is assumed to be reactionary and oppressive. All I can say is, if you think that was reactionary and oppressive, wait until you get a load of the world that comes after it.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in 2003.

### YOUR VIEWS

#### Vert has problems, but still great for a show

Seeing that the arts nonprofit I represent maintains its office within and produces most of its concerts at the Vert, I felt it prudent provide a response to Mr. Rohde's letter regarding the state of the auditorium.

Although there are many things left to be desired about the Vert building — and what wouldn't be for a building constructed in 1936? — the Oregon East Symphony and I understand that city funds are limited and that the building is not the city of Pendleton's top priority.

However, I commend the recent maintenance and improvement efforts undertaken by city manager Robb Corbett, facilities manager Glenn Graham and his crew. Two years ago the building was re-roofed in order to stave off potential water damage and the lobby ceiling, which was nearly falling down, was re-plastered. I even noticed this afternoon that a vent had been installed in the projection booth in order to prevent the balcony from overheating during a performance. We are also grateful to the city of Pendleton for

the nonprofit rate that it charges us and other local organizations for use of the facility in order to allow us produce events that fit within our budget.

To my recollection we have not seen Mr. Rohde attend any of our events but I certainly hope that he and the public attend our concert at the Vert this Saturday in order to appreciate this fine municipal resource, in spite of any real or perceived shortcomings it may have.

J.D. Kindle  
Executive Director  
Oregon East Symphony

#### Fire bond provides multiple benefits to city

There are three points that strike me as I contemplate my vote on the bond measure that would bring a new fire station and lifesaving equipment to the city of Pendleton. First is the current fire station does not fill the needs of our city. In letters to the editors where disagreement seems to be the norm, there seems to be virtually no disagreement on this point.

Point two is the location. Several have opined that the location is

inappropriate. Yet those who do the work every day (firefighters) state the opposite, as does a study that looked into all of the commonly proposed locations. In this regard, I choose to believe those who do the work for a living and those who studied the location and are without a motive to choose one over the other in terms of siting.

Last is the benefit it brings to the city and its residents. It's a near certainty that at some point either you or a close loved one will need the aid of firefighters/paramedics. In these occasions I want well trained professionals, with proper equipment, that have the best chance of reaching me or my family as quickly as possible.

When I consider these points contrasted against the financial cost, the choice is clear. Please join us as we vote yes on the fire station bond.

Mark and Marla Royal  
Pendleton

#### Student sees problems with Hermiston schools

I am writing in support of the Hermiston school bond that is to be voted on May 16. As a student

that has been through every level of my education in the Hermiston School District, I have seen and experienced many problems within the facilities. The majority of these problems will be addressed with the passing of the bond.

I began my schooling at Highland Hills Elementary School in kindergarten. I remember my parents telling me about their experiences at the same elementary school and, though it did not occur to me then, Highland Hills was obviously aging. Providing enough space for all the students was a problem.

There was more than one space used as a classroom that wasn't intended to be. These spaces had to transform since the regular classrooms and modulars were already at full capacity.

When I finished the fifth grade I moved to Sandstone Middle School. There, for three years, I formed friendships, created bonds with the teachers in Team Jefferson, and struggled to close the stall doors in the girls' bathrooms because most of the locks were broken.

Alongside my peers, I dealt with the inconsistent heating and

air conditioning systems, which seemed to be under maintenance more often than not.

Finally, I made my way to Hermiston High School and am still seeing many of the same problems that the school faced when I was a freshman. The most prominent of these issues is the overcrowding that is threatening to get worse. Hermiston High School was originally built to accommodate fewer students than we currently house. With our school district projecting to gain another 1,100 students in the next seven years, it is near impossible to add more students to the classrooms, hallways and public spaces.

The three modulars recently added are not built to last the wear and tear of thousands of students for very long and they were placed over parking spaces that were already dwindling in numbers.

Lastly, we have countless issues with our electrical, plumbing and technology systems. An extra thousand students in our schools that are getting enough wear as they are will be a risk to our education and safety.

Reed Middleton  
Hermiston High School junior