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**OUR VIEW**

# Good signs in Umatilla, but follow through is needed

Things are happening in the city of Umatilla. Signs of community life are bubbling up.

As we reported this week, a Wednesday market is bringing residents to an attractive green space downtown. And eight people applied to be nominated to two open council positions — a reminder that competition is crucial to selecting high-quality candidates, eliciting ideas and spurring voter involvement. We deeply hope that future elections are competitive races, too. And dozens of people showed up just to watch the meeting.

Meanwhile, a group of Portland State students helped create a long-needed downtown revitalization plan, which calls for more gathering spaces and green spaces — places where the community can congregate. Moving forward with that plan, supporting local business so there is money to spend on it, and then prioritizing it in the budget will be key to turning all the talk into action and turning architectural plans into real life.

There is no reason why Umatilla cannot be a riverside haven and a destination. As Hermiston continues to bust at its seams, Umatilla businesses must be salivating at all the new customers living nearby. Realtors and landowners must be penciling out major investments in a city with serious growth opportunities. And big box stores must be looking across the river at all those Washington residents who would be excited to drive a few minutes and not pay sales tax.

The city of Umatilla has a lot going for it. No longer does it have to be just a place to just fill up the gas tank before heading on down the road, or just a place for truckers to turn in for the night or

get up to no good. With some work, Umatilla can be a place that melds cultures, connects rivers. It can be an economic engine with lots of recreational activities. It has a lot of history as a tribal gathering place, and an old town site that had to be abandoned when the dams changed the Columbia.

Access to that could be a tourist treat, and another place for locals to celebrate.

This city is having a moment, the stars are aligning for Umatilla.

But, as we've said before in this space, capitalizing on it will require better engagement from city government.

It's up to the council to understand the difference between disagreeing and infighting. Resignations cannot be routine. Transparency, on the other hand, must be.

Change and opportunity can highlight personal and political differences, and that's as clear as ever in Umatilla. When there are multiple roads to go down it's only natural that different people will favor different paths. But when navigating the journey toward improvement, councilors must respect the differences of opinion. There is no need for disagreements to rise to the level where the council can no longer operate as an effective legislative body.

In Tuesday's showdown for the final seat, we were heartened to see Lyle Smith bow out to allow Selene Torres-Medrano to claim it. Smith is a former councilor, and it was clear he understood the value of bringing a recent college graduate with a fresh view to the chambers.

Umatilla can, should, and must be better. Residents are standing up to demand it, so its government better listen and adapt or prepare to be replaced.

**There is no reason why Umatilla cannot be a riverside haven and a destination.**

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.

**YOUR VIEWS**

## When you love an invasive plant in farm country

Here I am in the middle of farm country, chairman of the Athena Caledonian Games and everything, and I love scotch thistle.

I collect the stuff ... well, dishes, papers, fabrics, priceless glassware — you know. The thistle patterns are historically rich, graceful, delicate and beautiful. The thistle's place in history is secured because it saved a nation: The story goes that there was a Scottish army sleeping in the middle of the night and didn't know of an impending surprise attack until an attacker backed into a thistle and set up such a ruckus that it awoke the Scottish army, who thwarted the attack and saved the nation.

Mary, Queen of Scots was a seamstress and she stitched beautiful thistles into her needlework. The thistle is one of Scotland's national emblems because it saved Scotland.

Ahhhh, I could go on. But the economy that supports Athena Caledonian Games doesn't like thistle — hates it. What can I do?

With a sigh, I do cut thistles out of my yard. Yet we toast Scotland with my beautiful thistle teapots and linens. The Athena Caledonian Games will continue to showcase thistle, wear plaids, dance and pipe.

I have learned to love the traditions of Scotland and beg forgiveness from my farmer friends and neighbors for holding the thistle dear.

Sue Friese  
Athena

## Country must move on without Trump

Watching Thursday's Senate hearing with former FBI director James Comey, I can't help but remember back to this same time of the year during the peak of the Watergate hearings and watching them in the early morning hours on the television in Senate President Jason Boe's office immediately behind the Senate chambers, with Jason's secretary Nancy Burke and Senate lounge attendant Lloyd Turney, among others.

As I felt then (and even wrote a letter to the editor about, which ended up being published soon after), there was rapidly becoming no question the country had encountered a dishonest and dangerous president.

It was truly a profoundly important and emotionally moving situation back then — just as today's situation is now. President Trump should resign, or Congress should initiate impeachment proceedings.

The country desperately needs to move on without Donald Trump's dangerously naive, self-centered, and just plain dishonest tactics. Probably isn't going to happen, at least immediately.

Still, it absolutely needs to.

Les Ruark  
Arlington



**OTHER VIEWS**

## It's not the crime, it's the culture

The first important part of James Comey's testimony was that he cast some doubt on reports that there was widespread communication between the Russians and the Trump campaign. That was the suspicion that set off this whole chain of events and the possibility that could have quickly brought about impeachment proceedings.

The second important implication of the hearings is that as far as we know, Donald Trump has not performed any criminal act that would merit removing him from office.

Sure, he cleared the room so he could lean on Comey to go easy on Michael Flynn. But he didn't order Comey to shut down the investigation as a whole or do any of the things (like following up on the request) that would constitute real obstruction.

And sure, Trump did later fire Comey. But it's likely that the Comey firing had little or nothing to do with the Flynn investigation.

Trump was, as always, thinking about himself. Comey had told Trump three times that he was not under investigation. Trump wanted Comey to repeat that fact publicly. When Comey didn't, Trump took it as a sign that Comey was disloyal, an unforgivable sin. So he fired him, believing, insanely, that the move would be popular.

All of this would constitute a significant scandal in a normal administration, but it would not be grounds for impeachment. The third important lesson of the hearing is that Trump is characterologically at war with the norms and practices of good government. Comey emerged as a superb institutionalist, a man who believes we are a nation of laws. Trump emerged as a tribalist and a clannist, who simply cannot understand the way modern government works.

Trump is also plagued with a self-destructive form of selfishness. He is consumed by a hunger for affirmation, but, demented by his own obsessions, he can't think more than one step ahead.

In search of praise he is continually doing things that will end up bringing him condemnation. He lies to people who have the power to publicly devastate him. He betrays people who have the power to damage him. Trump is most dangerous to the people who are closest to him and are in the best position to take their revenge.

The upshot is the Trump administration will probably not be brought down by outside forces. It will be incapacitated from within, by the bile, rage and back-stabbing that are at record levels in the White House staff, by the dueling betrayals of the intimates Trump abuses so wretchedly.

Although there may be no serious collusion with the Russians, there is now certain to be a wide-ranging independent investigation into all things Trump.

These investigations will take a White House that is already acidic and turn it



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

sulfuric. James Hohmann and Joanie Greve had a superb piece in the Daily 202 section of *The Washington Post*. They compiled the lessons people in the Clinton administration learned from the Whitewater scandal and applied them to the Trump White House.

If past is prologue, this investigation will drag on for a while. The Clinton people thought the Whitewater investigation might last six months, but the inquiries lasted more than seven years. The Trump investigation will lead in directions nobody can now anticipate. When the Whitewater investigation started, Monica Lewinsky was an unknown college student, and nobody had any clue that an investigation into an Arkansas land deal would turn into an investigation about sex.

This investigation will ruin careers far and wide. Investigators go after anybody they think can yield information on the president. Before the Whitewater investigators got to Clinton they took down Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker, Webb

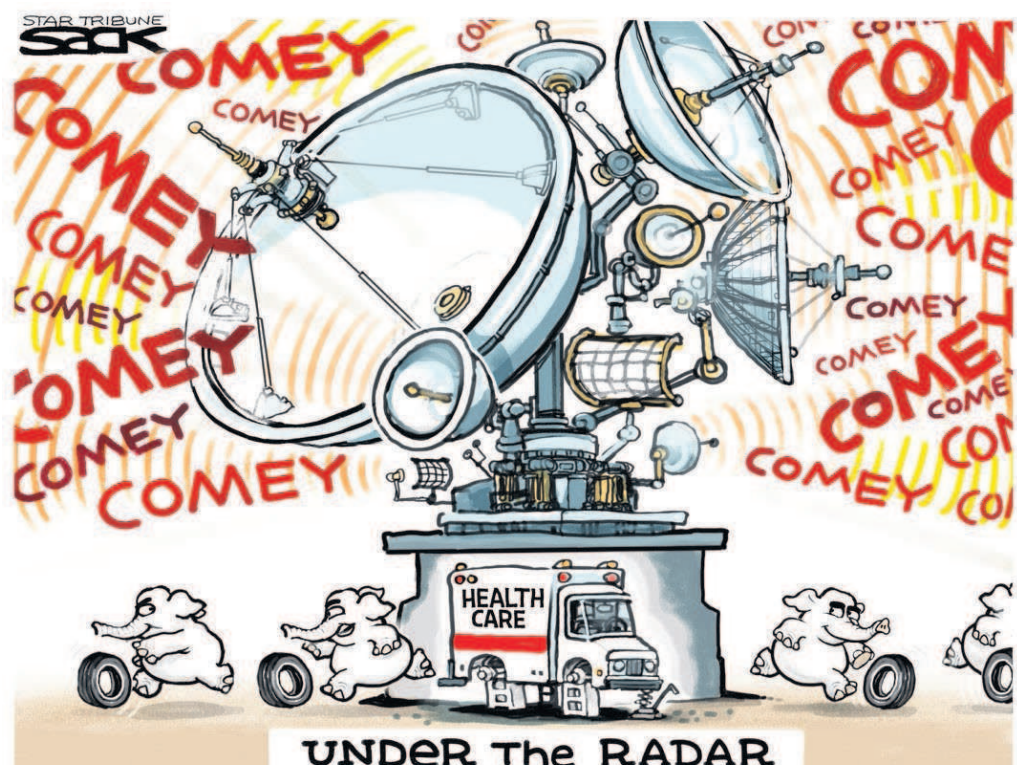
Hubbell, Susan and Jim McDougal, and many others. This investigation will swallow up day-to-day life. As Clinton alum Jennifer Palmieri wrote in an op-ed in the USA Today network of newspapers: "No one in a position of authority at the White House tells you what is happening. No one knows. Your closest colleague could be under investigation and you would not know. You could be under investigation and not know. It can be impossible to stay focused on your job."

Everybody will be affected. Betty Currie, Bill Clinton's personal secretary, finally refused to mention the names of young White House employees to the investigators because every time she mentioned a name, the kid would get a subpoena, which meant thousands of dollars of ruinous legal fees.

If anything, the Trump investigation will probably be more devastating than the Whitewater scandals. The Clinton team was a few shady characters surrounded by a large group of super-competent straight arrows. The Trump administration is shady characters through and through. Clinton himself was a savvy operator. Trump is a rage-prone obsessive who will be consumed by this.

The good news is the civic institutions are weathering the storm. The Senate Intelligence Committee put on a very good hearing. The FBI is maintaining its integrity. This has, by and large, been a golden age for the U.S. press corps. The bad news is that these institutions had better be. The Trump death march will be slow, grinding and ugly.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, and is currently a commentator on PBS.



UNDER THE RADAR