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OUR VIEW

A fair time at the fair

It's that time again — the Umatilla County Fair is underway. Pigs and lambs and cows, along with rhubarb pies, zucchini and quilts, are all polished up for their moment in the sun or at the center of the ring, beneath the critical eyes of a judge. Everyone is competing for the bright blue ribbons and a bit of county-wide bragging rights.

But it's not all competition. The week is full of fun and games, classic foods and celebrating another year with friends and neighbors. We drop some dollars to hear some classic rock, or take a trip on the Ferris wheel like we have for years. It's Umatilla County at its Umatill-iest, and thousands upon thousands of us take in the show.

This year, however, the nostalgia of the county fair has changed dramatically. If you drive to the old fairgrounds, you'll be surprised to find an open parking spot at the entrance. You'll be even more surprised when you get out and realize there is no fair there — that the entire enterprise has been moved south of town to the gleaming though still under construction EOTEC grounds.

You'll see plenty of growing pains at the new site, not least because this year's event has been put together without a fair manager. On a quiet Tuesday at the fair, there were lots of tables set out in the eating area but no chairs. There were no bleachers set up to watch the

events at the children's stage. And scorching temperatures combined with a lack of shade portend a jam-packed, air-conditioned event center later in the week. Parking and logistical concerns are likely to be troublesome, especially because this is the first time everyone has tried to navigate this event and best practices have yet to be identified.

Still, fairgoers should put aside whatever critical, long-term issues there are with the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

The fair and rodeo are volunteer-led efforts that deserve support and patience. Those volunteers need to hear your feedback on what works and what needs to be improved, but they also need your investment in making that improvement. Hermiston city councilors and Umatilla County commissioners, who are our voices in co-ownership of this enterprise, need that feedback too.

By all means, attend this year's fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. Rock out to a show, support our county youth livestock programs, eat an elephant ear that could actually be larger than a real elephant's ear.

Yes, there are bound to be problems with such a large event at a new facility. Growing pains are real. But support and constructive feedback are critical to longterm success. And for the 2017 Umatilla County Fair, patience and forgiveness are key.

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

Safety concerns at county fair, Farm-City Pro Rodeo

By **KERRY TASSIE**
To the East Oregonian

As I am scrolling through Facebook this past week, I see a lot of questions, concern and negativity regarding this year's Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. My biggest and most important concern is for the safety of everyone at the fair, rodeo and carnival.

I foresee a lot of dangerous situations in just getting to the fairgrounds. There is only one way in and out of the grounds for public transportation. I read that there is now a mandated lower speed limit on Airport Road and a fine for anyone parking alongside the road. What about foot traffic? There were not sidewalks placed along Airport Road for foot traffic. Is there any reason why a temporary walking path along the road was not established? The cost for that: inexpensive. The benefit for pedestrians: colossal.

What about the traffic on Highway 395? Although the cost of parking on the grounds is minimal, pedestrians may avoid parking there due to the hassle of leaving. There is not a safe area along the highway for foot traffic. Once again, why was a temporary walking path not established?

Next, I wish to address the safety concerns once one is inside the grounds. The temperature in Hermiston this week is predicted to be higher than 100 degrees. It's understandable that EOTEC was unable to produce the large shade trees that the previous location had, but is there a viable reason why temporary shading could not be erected? The last article I read stated that if you wish to cool down, go into the trade center.

Even with its size, it is not able to accommodate all those who need a break from the sun. Something as simple as a temporary outdoor awning could be set up. I would have much rather seen a ground covered in dirt and straw instead of expensive sod this year so temporary external cooling areas could be added.

For the grounds itself, not many promises that were given in the beginning have been awarded.

We were told that if you have reserved box seating for the rodeo that would not change — you're still getting the best seat in the arena. Well, that's not true. The box seating now is not the best view. You want the best seat in the arena? That would be general admission seating. Why continue to spend the extra money on reserved premium seating when you could pay the bare minimum for the best seats?

When we purchased reserved tickets last week from a local business, the lady asked for our name and phone number. She indicated that they had not numbered the seats in the arena yet and if there was a problem with the seats, she would contact us. Two weeks prior to fair, tickets being distributed throughout town for sale and they haven't even numbered the seating?

RV parking? Currently, the RV parking on site is dry camp only. Which means that as soon as this year is over, you will be tearing up the RV park to install full hookups. To me that sounds like poor planning and an unnecessary expense that could have been avoided.

The initial vision of the new Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo was 20 years in the making and was to be a larger, unmatched venue for the residents of Umatilla County. Are you showing us that the vision we were promised and the money we have contributed thus far has only given us a venue that has a high potential of endangerment, destruction and wealth restrictions? That was not the promise we were given.

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Kerry Tassie is a longtime resident of Umatilla County.

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 phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

State Department divided on mission

As part of what he calls a "redesign" of the State Department, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has surveyed more than 35,000 State employees on the most fundamental questions facing the organization. And Tillerson — or, more accurately, a consulting firm hired by the secretary — has found that large blocs of State workers do not agree on what the department's mission should be.

"For an organization with a very significant role in the world, too many in the Department of State were not clear on the exact mission of the agency," consultants Insigniam wrote in a "Listening Report" completed in June.

Some said the mission is, or should be, "installing democracy" around the world. Others said it is "spreading American values." The one mission that the largest number of employees could agree on was "protecting Americans and the interests of America throughout the world."

Beyond that, no single phrase united the Department's employees. So now, Tillerson and his top aides are trying to craft the material gathered from those 35,000-plus questionnaires into a new mission statement. (Changing the department's mission statement is pretty much standard procedure when a new president and party take over.) Working with Insigniam, a group of leaders from State and the U.S. Agency for International Development came up with three draft sentences, one to describe the department's purpose, the next to describe its mission, and the next to describe its ambition.

The purpose statement: "We promote the security, prosperity, and interests of the American people globally."

The mission statement: "Lead America's foreign policy through global advocacy, action, and assistance to shape a safer, more prosperous world." The ambition statement: "The American people thrive in a peaceful and interconnected world that is free, resilient, and prosperous."

The consultants asked State employees for reaction to each keyword. Does "advocacy" accurately describe what the Department does? What about a "free" world? And "resilient"? The consultants also asked employees to offer any other words they felt better described State's mission.

In a cloud made from responses to the question of which words best describe State's current mission, the standouts were "diplomacy," "security," "peace," "prosperity," "democracy," and "development."

One thing that is likely to come out in the final product is that the Donald Trump State Department mission statement will be more assertively American than the statement under Barack Obama. The consultants noted that a State document from May of this year wrote that "ABOVE ALL, the mission of the U.S. Department of State is to advance the national



BYRON YORK
Comment

interests of the United States and its people."

From 2013 to 2016, the consultants added by contrast, the State mission statement was "to shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere."

It's a we-are-USA vibe versus a we're-citizens-of-the-world vibe.

When I asked Tillerson spokesman R.C. Hammond whether he would agree that the proposed new statement is in fact more assertively American than the old, he answered, "I would. We will not apologize for being American."

On the campaign trail, candidate Trump expressed contempt for America's disastrous effort to install democracy in Iraq. In his inaugural address, the president said, "We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone," Trump said, "but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow."

"For an organization with a very significant role in the world, too many in the Department of State were not clear on the exact mission of the agency."

— Insigniam consultants, after surveying more than 35,000 State Department workers

Now, some Trump critics, Republican and Democrat, are unhappy that the proposed mission statement does not include the word "democracy."

Tom Malinowski, an Obama State Department official, told the *Washington Post* that the proposed mission statement — "Lead America's foreign policy through global advocacy, action, and assistance to

shape a safer, more prosperous world" — reflects "a worldview similar to that of Putin."

It is hard to take such commentary seriously — after all, the three-part purpose/mission/ambition statement includes the goal of a world that is not only "peaceful" but "free" — but that is what Malinowski said. It just shows there's plenty of Trump Resistance in the State Department world as well as the rest of Washington.

Tillerson's consultants found that in the absence of a single idea of mission, many in the State Department tend to define their job by the area of the Department in which they work. The foreign service sees the mission as one thing. Washington-based administrators see another. Economics-oriented specialists see yet another, and so on.

"Without a unified mission, people in the State Department speak from their place in the organization, not as one organization," the contractors noted.

Tillerson's job is to find some sort of unity. With a big part of the permanent bureaucracy opposed to him, and especially opposed to the president who appointed him, that might be impossible. So Tillerson might want to choose the proposed mission statement that brought the closest thing to a consensus: "Protecting Americans and the interests of America throughout the world." Let others argue about democracy and various causes, while the secretary sticks to the main thing.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

