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OTHER VIEWS

A big boost for Anthony Lakes

Baker City Herald

Lest anyone believe it is always quixotic to even try to influence the federal government, we cite the case of several Forest Service campgrounds near Baker City.

Although the lobbying effort in this case included some high-profile aid — a letter from U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore. — it started as a purely local effort.

And more importantly, it yielded results.

The story that led to the Forest Service awarding a five-year contract to a local company to manage two campground complexes dates back to December

2016. In that month the Forest Service awarded the contract to Aud & Di Campground Services, the Utah firm that had the previous five-year contract for that work.

But one of the other applicants — the Baker County Development Corporation, the nonprofit that owns the Anthony Lakes Ski Area — appealed the contract award. That's when Wyden wrote his letter to the agency's chief forester for the Pacific Northwest.

That official rescinded the decision and reopened the application process.

Given a second chance, Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort LLC

prevailed, and earlier this month it won the five-year contract, starting in 2018.

This was a gratifying result — but not only, or even mainly, because it shows that federal officials can be persuaded.

Rather, we're pleased because it's sensible to award the contract to Anthony Lakes. Moreover, it's a decision that gives a boost to the local economy that's modest in the short term but could be more substantial farther in the future.

John Wilson, president of the Baker County Development Corporation, said the five-year contract

not only will allow the company to hire at least six full-time employees, but it will help bolster plans to expand its business model to a truly year-round operation. That's exciting because it could yield tangible benefits for other businesses that also rely on visitors.

The logic of the decision is almost too obvious — the ski area is literally within sight of two of the three campgrounds that make up one of the two complexes in the Forest Service contract.

Although Anthony Lakes has not managed campgrounds, we're confident that, having operated a chairlift, it's up to the task of dealing with picnic tables and outhouses.

This was a gratifying result — it shows that federal officials can be persuaded.

YOUR VIEWS

City streets and urban renewal flops in Pendleton

Have you taken a drive down Southeast Byers lately? This would be the perfect opportunity to showcase some real urban renewal if the city were to complete the street project with new curbs, sidewalks, and perhaps move utility lines underground — at least make an attempt at some real visible urban renewal to a neighborhood badly in need.

Think that will happen anytime soon? Nope, the “movers and shakers” have a bridge to move, a movie theater to restore, and now the old city hall to rebuild. In a display of good will, City Hall, perhaps in the spirit of Christmas and despite having levied a substantial fine on the owners of the old city hall for a violation of the city nuisance ordinance — a fine never collected — has now approved a \$33,000 grant for new windows. Didn't they just defer replacing the windows in the new city hall because of a lack of funding?

Anyway, next year City Hall will again hire a consultant to tell us our city streets are still in bad shape. Something

we already know. City Hall's answer is again more taxes, or “maybe there's a great idea, but I haven't heard it” was another councilor's comment.

One suggestion was to eliminate the 70/30 formula and only fix top-rated streets, let a computer tell us which ones just like we did before. The 70/30 formula is supposed to guarantee that the utility tax instituted by the council is used to get residential streets the needed repairs. Are we hiring managers that rely so much on computers and consultants that they can't see the forest for the trees? Rather than let a computer run the street repair program or waste money on consultants telling us something we already know, how about giving common sense a try. Isn't that the manager's job?

From the picture of Northwest Bailey on the *East Oregonian's* front page, a newspaper reporter had no problem finding a street the city continues to ignore. A matter of priorities, fixing streets or moving a bridge, you can guess which is more important to City Hall.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

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

The year not to defer dreams

From my window in Brooklyn Heights, I've watched the Staten Island ferry come and go for more than two years now, a big orange boat crisscrossing the water. That's when I'm home, which is not much.

At night, I hear the foghorn, a reassuring sound, fading slowly like memories. On the road, in yet another hotel room where my hand can't locate by instinct the light switch, I imagine that sound sometimes. It makes me smile. Home is little things, the clunk of the door closing on your world.

There's a lot going on out my window: joggers on the boardwalk, barges plowing the East River, choppers landing on the prow of Manhattan, planes nosing down into Newark Airport, cars on the first traffic-free stretch of FDR Drive where hope surges only to collide with reality at a bottleneck. The view always reminds me of a children's picture book. Yes, my love, that's a helicopter.

I don't look out on all that enough. Water is life, a mirror one day, a maelstrom the next. Do I live in New York or camp in it? Sometimes I wonder. I resent the inevitable question: How long are you in town for? Forever, I feel like saying. That's right, the farthest I'm going for the next six months is the convenience store on Montague.

Home's important. Belonging is important, right there behind love in terms of human needs. Watching an old movie on your couch is important.

That's what holidays are for. I watched “Shampoo,” a minor Hal Ashby masterpiece. “You never stop moving,” Jill (Goldie Hawn) tells her feckless hairdresser boyfriend, George (Warren Beatty). “You never go anywhere.”

The movie's set on the eve of Nixon's 1968 election. A TV blares in the background. There's Nixon. He says the American flag won't be “a doormat.” He says “the great objective” of his administration will be to “bring the American people together.”

That which is new under the sun is meager. Funny, Nixon's not looking so bad these days, compared with the orange apparition in the White House.

Speaking of orange, I figured, what the heck, I'm paying, like every New Yorker, for the free Staten Island ferry service. I gaze at the boat, imagine it, and it goes to a mysterious place where the Great Leader triumphed in the presidential election. A cleansing end-of-year wind was gusting. I boarded the ferry, not to go anywhere, just to be transported.

Some cities waste the water on which they are set. London used to. Rome still does. Paris is the aqueous gold standard. I've watched



ROGER COHEN
Comment

New York embrace its waterfront over the years. Right beneath my window a lawn has been taking shape this year on Pier 3, Brooklyn Bridge Park's last pier to be converted, and set to open in 2018. It will include a labyrinth.

The ferry's a commuter service, of course. But at this time of year, it's full of tourists gasping at the sunlight falling on the serried towers of lower Manhattan, on the Statue of Liberty, on the derricks, like gangling metal dinosaurs, of New Jersey. New towers go up, yet to acquire, or having half-acquired, their gleaming outer coats of armor. How handsome the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is!

The boat crosses to Trump country, but its brief passage evokes the centuries of American hope invested in this city, seen by so many immigrants for the first time from this expanse of water. Here, suffering, famine and the endless gyre of Old-World conflict were set aside, or at least cushioned by New-World possibility.

At this low point for the United States, when truth itself is mocked from on high, that liberating message is worth recalling. Certainly, no naturalized American, as I am, who has witnessed the rites of passage of people drawn by hope from every corner of the earth to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, can be indifferent to it.

I made the journey to Staten Island — beyond Montague, I know. We can't always live up to our word. But we must keep trying. Avoid a high moral tone. Pay attention to detail. Wander aimlessly. Know, with Cavafy, what “these Ithacas mean.” Believe in, and provide for, the children who will inherit this earth. Yes, darling, that's a boat. And that's a labyrinth.

The night I took the Staten Island ferry, I went to a party. Each of us, after eating well, was asked to read or recount something close to the heart. One guest read Langston Hughes' “Harlem”:

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore — And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over — like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

In 2018, take the time, dear reader, to gaze at the familiar, board the ferry to nowhere — and do not, at risk of an explosion, defer your dreams.

Roger Cohen, an Op-Ed columnist for the International New York Times, writes about international affairs and diplomacy.

LETTERS POLICY

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OTHER VIEWS

Learning to identify and combat ‘fake news’

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

A student-developed online plug-in idea, Open Mind, offers some hope in the war against “fake news.”

Because one person's definition of fake news can differ wildly with another's, of course, don't expect this to be a quick fix that will appease folks on both sides of the political spectrum. And because any such tool inevitably will be built with human bias of some sort, it's bound to come with flaws.

Still, it's an intriguing counter to the increasingly annoying — and dangerous — trend of made-up news being passed off as the real thing.

Developed recently in a 36-hour “hackathon” at Yale University, the Open Mind plug-in — a software component that adds a specific feature to an existing program — is designed to be something of a smoke alarm to alert a user if he or she enters a web site known to disseminate fake news. What's more, it can alert readers if a story shared on social media is fake or biased.

But it doesn't stop there. It's designed to not only warn readers of fake-news danger, but to point them toward alternative viewpoints.

Designed as an extension for Google's Chrome browser, it uses existing “sentiment analysis technology” — a process to discern the emotional tone behind a series of words. It can gain an understanding of the attitudes, opinions and emotions expressed — to identify subjects and political slants. If Open Mind discerns a decidedly anti-Trump piece, the software could suggest to the reader stories on the president with an alternative viewpoint.

Finally, over time, the software can build a data base that shows whether the user has

been reading stories from only one side of the political spectrum.

“The solution is to develop a kind of auto-immune system,” said Alex Cui, an undergraduate at the California Institute of Technology and one of the four students on the Open Mind team.

The idea is to get people out of their habit of associating on social media only with people who share their viewpoints, and of reading biased news skewed to their beliefs.

As it is, there's little overlap in the news sources that liberals and conservatives use regularly, and trust. Forty-seven percent of “consistent conservatives” get the bulk of their news from Fox News, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center study; half of “consistent liberals” get their news from a combination of NPR, CNN, MSNBC and *The New York Times*.

Among the ideas of Open Mind is to get

people out of their habit of associating on social media only with people who share their viewpoints and of reading biased news skewed toward their beliefs. “Social media sites grow bubbles,” said Michael Lopez-Brau, a doctoral student at Yale and member of the Open Mind team. “They've allowed us to silo people off at a distance.”

Ironically, one of the biggest challenges developers will confront as they create this plug-in is not allowing their own biases to skew the program. And once it's built, the challenge will be to get the people who need it most to use it. As with Apple's app aimed at getting people to not text and drive, it works only for those who agree to use it. Often, pride coerces those who need broader vision to not look beyond their familiar world views.

That said, bravo to the students for their imaginative thinking — and with the 36-hour-clock ticking no less. What's as impressive as their ability to think on their feet is their tackling two problems as serious as anything America has faced in a long time: narrow-mindedness and truth.