

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

■ A tip of the hat to John Brenne, who dedicated more than half his life to the position of Pendleton city councilor.

Brenne, 73, died unexpectedly on Monday.

From the beginning, Brenne was an advocate for the elderly and low-income constituents. During his first campaign in 1978, he rallied for access for disabled citizens to public facilities and low-cost public transportation for seniors.

As councils and mayors came and went, Brenne kept winning the seat and serving in the volunteer position. Along the way he gained the respect and admiration of many of his colleagues, many of whom remembered not only his integrity and principle but his deep understanding of the issues facing Pendleton.

■ A tip of the hat to the new Umatilla County website, a cleaner and more direct portal into the inner workings of the local government.

For starters, it puts agendas and minutes of the Board of Commissioners front and center. The bi-monthly Wednesday meeting typically doesn't

draw much of a crowd, but the decisions and actions are worth review by any citizen paying taxes in this county.

There's also a link to video from recent meetings, in case you want to hear the testimony for yourself.

A drop-down menu at the top of the page will direct you to all the important information the county maintains — from the jail roster to election results to daily burn restrictions — and scroll all the way to the bottom to peruse the current and past budgets.

All this makes it easier for a curious citizen to get an answer on matters of government.

Our one criticism is the mobile display. While the main page looks just fine on a smartphone, getting to specific pages like election results, most wanted lists and more, have no direct link.

It appears the site is a work in progress, and we applaud the effort.

■ A kick in the pants to the already contentious politics of a gubernatorial campaign taking a toll on the upcoming legislative session.

Knute Buehler, a state representative from Bend and the likely Republican



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

We also tip our hat to those honored at last week's Pendleton First Citizens Banquet. In this photo, Tim and Jennifer Guenther, owners of Prodigal Son Brewery, speak after their brewpub was named 2017 Business of the Year by the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce.

candidate for the governor's race, has asked Kate Brown, the current Democratic governor, to put off campaign fundraising during the six-week session beginning Feb. 5.

After all, Buehler must follow an Oregon House rule that prohibits fundraising while the body is in session, and he's just hoping to keep the playing field level.

Brown's campaign manager Thomas Wheatley snapped back, according to *The Oregonian*, saying their camp wasn't interested in taking advice from Buehler, who himself was accused

of an ethics violation in 2013 for not disclosing \$12,500 received for work done on a Bend hospital board. The manager also mentioned that Buehler has plenty of money already — \$500,000 from Phil Knight.

According to *The Oregonian*, the last short session was a profitable time for Brown; she raised \$222,000 toward what ended up being a winning campaign.

We wish there was a way to better separate money and politics, campaigning and governing. But in the current climate, we'd settle for a little more civility and fair play.



YOUR VIEWS

Brenne helped senior citizens throughout Eastern Oregon

I was stunned to read of the sudden passing of John Brenne in the Jan. 23 *East Oregonian*.

My wife is disabled at 61 years of age from early-onset Alzheimer's disease and is homebound. She remains home alone while I must work from 8-5 and is in real need of companionship during those hours. John's incredible non-profit agency, Senior Companions/Foster Grandparents, came to my rescue and provided a few caring individuals to visit my wife for a few hours a couple of times a week and it has really helped us. My wife receives nice visits from a caring volunteer, free of charge, and it has been a lifesaver for us. Not to mention John's excellent and thankless service on our city council.

Our community should be thankful for men like him with such compassion for the left-behind and forgotten. God bless you, John Brenne. You will be missed.

Matt Henry
Pendleton

Umatilla County commissioners saved the fair

The Umatilla County Commissioners should be lauded for being a partner in building EOTEC. They, the city of Hermiston, Farm City Pro Rodeo, and Fair Board saved the Umatilla County Fair.

Around eight years ago the County got an estimate of \$8 million to \$10 million to simply bring the decrepit downtown Hermiston fair site up to code. The county did not have the money and if the money was spent the site was still inadequate with absolutely no parking. The commissioners asked other county communities if they wanted the fair and if they could provide facilities. There was no interest.

Because of this, the staggering cost to bring the old fairground up to code, and a 30 year interest in Hermiston of moving the fair out of the middle of town, EOTEC was conceived as a home for the fair and much more. This was agreed upon by the unanimous approval of the Umatilla County, city of Hermiston, Farm City Pro Rodeo, Umatilla County Fair and Hermiston School District. An intergovernmental agreement was signed by the county and Hermiston with EOTEC to be built and jointly owned.

After years of daunting work, a new \$17 million facility was built, giving the Umatilla County Fair a wonderful home and providing 95 acres of grounds for a trade center and the rodeo — \$12 million of that money coming from the state of Oregon — money which would have gone elsewhere except for EOTEC being built.

In building EOTEC, the commissioners, city, rodeo and fair went "where no one has gone before," to use a phrase from an old space series. But they got it built — with no real bonded debt.

But when you "go where no one has gone before," sometimes you have to adapt to conditions when you arrive at your destination. That is what the county commissioners are doing. They realize that the ownership, operation, management and liability of EOTEC would be better placed with just one entity — the city of Hermiston.

While much county money has been spent on EOTEC to date, with more to be spent in the next few years, those sums pale when you look at the \$8 million to \$10 million cost of renovation the county was faced with — or the loss of our county fair.

We should applaud the commissioners for their realism and for saving the fair.

George Anderson
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS

Davos Man meets America First

Donald Trump will attend the World Economic Forum's annual conference in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday and Friday. *The New York Times* has obtained a copy of the president's remarks. Check against delivery.

Fellow plutocrats! I know you're as glad to see me as I am to see you. No, really. Like, I know you voted for Trump. Or maybe you didn't vote for me, because your wives, if you had voted for me, they'd withhold sex. But, when I won, in your hearts, you were very happy. And now you're all so much richer, and your wives, girlfriends, boyfriends, whatever — I'm a very tolerant person — they aren't withholding, probably.

Am I right? I'm right. It's been an amazing, amazing year. *The New York Times*, such losers! Right after I won, they predicted the stock market would never recover. Every week, it's Trump is destroying this, Trump is blowing up that, and has the world ended yet? Yet here we are, folks. No. 1 in fake news, the failing *Times*.

As I said, you're all doing very, very well. The markets are up, up, up, like never before. Seven, eight trillion dollars in market cap since Trump was elected. Biggest tax cut in history, believe me. Apple, Google, Microsoft, all these companies bringing home trillions in overseas cash. How's your share price doing? If you have a problem with it, let's have a show of hands. No hands. Thought so.

I couldn't help but notice on my way in how much snow you've got here in Davos, five, six feet. Global warming, uh-huh. When it's hot, it's global warming, and when it's cold, it's climate change. It's like, heads I win, tails you lose. But people aren't stupid.

That's why I took the United States out of that terrible Paris deal. Rex Tillerson, who's doing a terrific job as secretary of state, he said, "Mr. President, you just can't pull out like that! What about our allies?" OK, maybe Rex isn't doing such a terrific job, we'll see about Rex.

Anyway, I know you all have your climate plans and corporate social responsibility BS, but none of you believes a word of it. The difference between us is that you keep quiet so that you'll look good at Davos, but I don't. I say all the stuff you're too afraid to say. I say the truth, and people love me.

I also say that Haiti is a, well, not such a nice place. Let's have another show of hands if you plan to move your wife and kids to Haiti anytime soon. I didn't think so. Wonderful, hardworking people, by the way, the Haitians. Many of them work at my properties in Florida as groundskeepers, maids, that kind of stuff. Ask them, they love me, too.

So what am I doing here? I read the papers — believe me, I read, I'm, like, the



BRET STEPHENS
Comment

best reader, you know I went to Wharton? — and I know this is all supposed to be about how you're all Davos Men and I'm Mr. America First, and it's, you know, never the twain shall meet.

Whatever. We're businessmen. We think the same way. You want to turn a profit and beat the competition. You don't want to get crushed. And you'll do what you need to do and say what you need to say to win.

That's the way the world is, folks. You think China doesn't know this? You think Russia — and you know this Russia story, collusion, there was no collusion, none — doesn't know? Why do you think they keep winning? China is getting bigger, stronger, while Europe just gets smaller and weaker. Angela Merkel, sorry, but she's a total joke. Lets in a million Muslims, illegals, terrorists probably, in one year, and the German people don't like it at all. Remember, a year ago, how it was like, "Merkel is the real leader of the free world?" Now she barely leads her own government.

She should have built a wall. Not smart! Anyway, China. Last year, Xi — we have a terrific relationship, by the way, Xi and I, but he could be a lot better on North Korea, believe me — Xi was here in Davos, saying he was, like, Mr. Globalization. And everyone was like, ooh, ahh, China's taking over, and adios America.

You have got to be kidding me. Have any of you here had your trade secrets stolen by China? Any of you think the Chinese play fair? You like human rights in China, pollution in China? Do some of you want to live in a world run by Xi? Because, be my guest.

But if you don't, then things have to change. It can't be, we'll play by all the rules, like a bunch of little girls, and China gets to cheat, and pretend that that's OK. Because, believe me, cheaters always win. Nobody knows this better than me.

So that has got to stop. That's my message to you people. Do you want America first or China first? I'm saying, it's your choice. But if it's America first you want, then you're going to stop playing us for suckers.

We aren't going to pay your bills while you take our jobs. We aren't going to fight your battles if you aren't going to buy our products. We aren't going to let you get rich off of us, if we can't get richer off of you. We're stronger than you and we're going to stay that way. We can leave the surrender stuff to our European friends. Got it?

You want America to be nice, we can be very nice, I'm very nice, isn't that right, Klaus? But, we're not stupid, believe me. Enjoy your snow day, people.

■ Bret Stephens won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2013. He began working as a columnist at *The New York Times* in April.