

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

A healthy fear of commitment

Main Street makes downtown Pendleton, and Pendleton's downtown district is what makes this city a draw for tourists year-round and a pleasurable place to live and work.

So it makes sense that city government should support efforts to preserve and expand Pendleton's historic center and its economic hub. That's one of the jobs of the Pendleton Downtown Association, which has received financial backing of taxpayer dollars, doled out by city council.

But we — like Pendleton city councilors now seem to be — are wary about entering into a long-term arrangement to fund the relatively new group.

The nonprofit downtown merchant association asked the city at its last council meeting for \$55,000 in each of the next two years, an amount decreasing by 10 percent each year until settling permanently at \$25,000 in year six and beyond. City manager Robb Corbett backed the plan, calling it "partnering

longterm with downtown businesses."

And certainly, a stable longterm budget is in the downtown association's best interest. But we don't think it in the city's best interest, however.

A longterm deal with a small nonprofit can be dangerous. The startup could have staffing changes, or political issues could rear their ugly head to impede progress. There is also the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, Travel Pendleton, the city's economic development department, the Pendleton Development Commission, etc., etc., which receive tax money as well as additional fundraised dollars.

It's clear to us that the Pendleton Downtown Association has been a benefit to downtown by helping secure big-dollar grants, arranging and promoting new events, and getting many local businesses pointed in the same direction. Many downtown businesses owners have said the association, which has been through many iterations, is currently working better than ever. New events are popping up, and storefronts by



EO file photo
Pat Beard leads a tour group of design students from Portland down Main Street Pendleton in October 2016.

and large are full (save the big emptiness of the former JCPenney). That's fantastic, and we hope the good work continues.

That association deserves credit for that success and perhaps some financial assistance — though most of the bill should be paid by the Main Street businesses who are benefiting the most from their work.

In our opinion, folding the association into the chamber of commerce makes plenty of sense, and it offers the association some financial stability and

the ability to expand its services.

And if neither side wants to lose the flexibility of the new, fledgling, active association of go-getters, then that association will have to do better raising money from its members. And it will have to go hat in hand to city council every year, with the requisite information at its fingertips to convince councilors that their investment will pay dividends downtown.

Currently, that's the case. But not knowing what the future holds, means it might not always be that way.

OTHER VIEWS

Lots of Mueller action, but what about collusion?

Remember collusion? The allegation that Donald Trump and his aides coordinated or conspired with Russia to fix the 2016 presidential election is the heart of the Trump-Russia investigation.

Yet Monday saw two developments in the Trump investigation — one discussed widely in the press, the other not as much — and neither pointed toward collusion.

In the development that set off a press firestorm, FBI agents raided the office and hotel room of longtime Trump lawyer/fixer Michael Cohen, apparently looking for evidence concerning Cohen's role in paying off the porn star Stormy Daniels, who once denied but now says she had a one-night-stand with Trump more than a decade ago.

Cohen's lawyer, Stephen Ryan, said he was told the raid was "in part, a referral by the Office of Special Counsel, Robert Mueller."

The less-noted development was the release of a heavily redacted search warrant from the tax evasion, bank fraud and money laundering case against one-time Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort. As expected, the warrant dealt overwhelmingly with allegations of financial crimes against Manafort, but one sentence — out of 27 paragraphs and sub-paragraphs — concerned the infamous 2016 Trump Tower meeting between Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, Manafort and some Russians who said they had dirt on Hillary Clinton.

The Manafort warrant — executed in a pre-dawn, no-knock, guns-drawn FBI raid on Manafort's apartment while Manafort and his wife were asleep inside — allowed the FBI to seize "communications, records, documents, and other files involving any of the attendees of the June 9, 2016 meeting at Trump Tower," as well as Aras and Emin Agalarov. (The last two are Russians who dealt with Trump in the 2013 Miss Universe pageant held in Moscow.)

So two big stories, both generated by the Mueller investigation. And about the issue at the heart of the Mueller investigation — not much.

In the Cohen case, it's believed that Mueller's team came across evidence that implicated Cohen in wrongdoing but did not fall under Mueller's original assignment to probe "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump" or any other matters that might "arise directly" from that investigation. So Mueller handed off the Cohen information to the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, whose

office oversaw the raids on Cohen's office and hotel room.

There was much speculation about what the agents wanted — evidence about the Daniels payoff being the leading candidate — but at the same time, the fact that Mueller farmed out the case to federal prosecutors outside his office suggests that the Cohen matter, whatever it is, does not fall under Mueller's core Trump-Russia assignment.

As far as the Manafort search warrant is concerned, the document shows clear Mueller interest in what Manafort knew about the Trump Tower meeting. But it appears whatever the FBI might have seized on that topic, if anything, did not lead to any charges against Manafort stemming from the meeting or collusion with Russia in general.

Manafort faces the most serious charges of any figure in the Trump-Russia affair. But none of those charges alleges collusion. Most have nothing to do with the Trump campaign, or concern alleged criminal activity that began before Manafort's association with the campaign and continued during his brief time as campaign chief.

It is always possible that Mueller has more charges in mind for Manafort. But it is important to note that the no-knock raid on Manafort's apartment took place on July 26, 2017. Manafort, along with business partner and fellow Trump campaign official Rick Gates, was indicted on Oct. 27, 2017. On Feb. 22, 2018, Mueller expanded the charges against Manafort in what's called a superseding indictment. In none of those many charges is the accusation that Manafort was involved in a scheme with Russia to influence the 2016 campaign.

Again, it is important to note how little we know about what Mueller is doing. For all the public knows, a big collusion indictment could be coming tomorrow. But it is also important to note what we do know. And we do know who Mueller has charged, and with what, after an FBI investigation that began in July 2016 and a special counsel probe that began in May 2017. And so far, there have been no charges — not against Manafort or Gates, not against Michael Flynn, not against George Papadopoulos, or others — involving alleged collusion.

The Mueller investigation is marching on, and in the case of Cohen, giving birth to new farm-team investigations — but, so far at least, the story has not been about collusion.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.



YOUR VIEWS

OSU Extension offers little to city residents

The committee to support the giant 33-cent OSU Extension taxing district has lots of money. You will see large signs, yard signs, ads in the newspaper and on the radio.

We cannot afford that kind of campaign.

Don't be fooled by their relying on the 4-H to pass this levy. The 4-H is volunteer; the only paid persons are administrators. The 4-H will still be here if the levy is voted down.

City and town residents get very little benefit from this new taxing district. But we will pay. If this passes, where will our city get money for maintenance and repair of our own infrastructure in Pendleton?

Most of these new taxes will be used for the two experimental stations in Umatilla County. Now we all love our farmers and ranchers, but enough is enough.

The average county tax for extension agencies is 9.9 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value. Are we that much richer than the rest of Oregon that we should pay more than three times as much? I am not that rich. I am voting no on Measure 30-126 on May 15.

Rex J. Morehouse
Pendleton

BMCC improves students, communities

April is National Community College Awareness Month, and as a proud member of the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education, I would like to take a moment to remind the community of the impact BMCC has on our region.

If you've ever been treated by a nurse at Good Shepherd Medical Center or St. Anthony Hospital, you were most

likely interacting with a BMCC graduate. BMCC's nursing students not only had a 100 percent pass rate this past year on their national board exams, but most earned jobs right away in our local communities. That's one of the great benefits of an education at BMCC — so many of the educational programs feed directly into jobs needs in our local communities.

BMCC also strives to make an education attainable by anyone in our region. Students from anywhere across our 18,000-square-mile district can earn an entire associate's degree online or in one of our convenient regional centers, such as the Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center in Hermiston. The new Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center on OSU's Hermiston Agriculture Research and Education Center is another great way BMCC is creating accessibility to important training for skills needed in our region. Access to education shouldn't be hard, and BMCC makes every effort to make sure a college education is affordable and convenient for anyone in Eastern Oregon.

BMCC and its students also contribute significantly to our local economy. For every \$1 a student invests on an education at BMCC, they receive a \$3.70 return on that investment in career earnings. Now that's a wise investment. Not only that, but our students add approximately \$3.7 million back into our local economy through rent, groceries, transportation and other living expenses. That's in addition to the approximately \$23 million net impact of college payroll and expenses which our employees contribute annually back into our service district economy.

I hope you'll stop by a BMCC location to see what Blue can do for you.

Don Rice, Zone 5 (Hermiston)
Board of Education
Blue Mountain Community College