

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Umatilla needs to use its gift of growth wisely

At the start of 2017, then-city councilor Mark Ribich told the *East Oregonian* that Umatilla was declaring itself “open for business.”

The results of the city’s campaign for economic growth have been mixed. On the one hand, Ribich himself told us recently that he was disappointed by the trickle of new businesses that have since set up shop downtown. Only two new businesses have joined the city’s chamber of commerce this year, he said, and one was not located in Umatilla.

While Umatilla’s commercial growth has been halting, however, its industrial and housing growth have not. Amazon continues to boost the city’s tax base as its valuable data centers filter onto the tax rolls, and the city is experiencing booming housing growth that city manager David Stockdale predicts will result in 100 new housing units a year for the next five to seven years.

This presents an opportunity and a challenge for Umatilla.

New homes in city limits need water, sewer, electricity, police service, fire service, roads and class-



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File
A pair of nearly completed homes undergo construction work in an expanding development in Umatilla.

room space for any children who might move into them. But they also increase the city’s tax base. The important thing is that the new revenue is used wisely.

Umatilla seems to be on the right track. They put out a request for proposals in February for a consultant to do an in-depth analysis of the best structure for system development

charges and utility rates, so that the city can raise the revenue it needs to put in the infrastructure to support new growth. They are also moving up the timeline of some projects, such as upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant.

Too often we have seen cities in our coverage area kick the can down the road on infrastructure projects for

decades, creating a crisis for a future city council to deal with and a future set of residents to pay for with a sudden, steep increase in their utility bills or other costs. Umatilla has an opportunity now to use its increasing revenue to set the city on a more sustainable path for maintaining its infrastructure.

Repairing wastewater treatment plants and replacing old pipes in the ground aren’t as exciting as cutting the ribbon on new parks and statues, but it is sometimes the most important work city leaders can do. The more superficial livability projects do help draw people to a community, but nobody is going to want to move to a town that is trucking in bottled water for residents.

There will always be grants available for the “fun” projects, as seen by the recent generous donations from the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation and Hermiston Kiwanis toward new features for Umatilla’s Kiwanis Park.

As Umatilla continues to grow, we hope they are thoughtful in their spending, keeping their eye on the projects that will secure the best future for the community.

OTHER VIEWS

Special session needed to fix death penalty

Bend Bulletin

The Oregon Legislature bumbled a change to Oregon’s death penalty. Gov. Brown needs to stop delaying and call a special session of the Legislature to fix it.

Oregonians were misled about what the law would do. That must be corrected. The issue is the language in Senate Bill 1013 and the related SB 1005. SB 1013 fundamentally diluted Oregon’s death penalty by narrowing the definition of aggravated murder.

Aggravated murder is the only crime in Oregon that qualifies for the death penalty. The law restricted the definition to acts of organized terrorism that kill two or more; premeditated murders of children younger than 14; and premeditated murders of correctional, probation and law enforcement officers. It would also apply to convicted murderers who kill

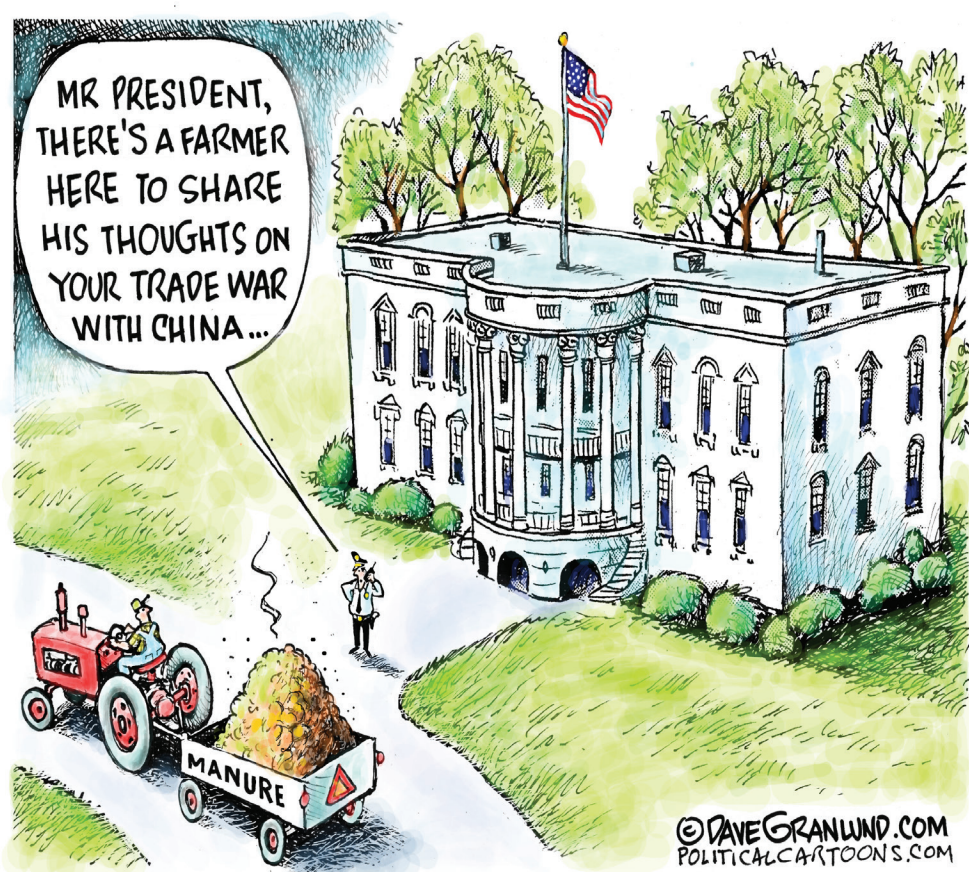
another prisoner in jail or prison.

Legislators said the law would not be retroactive. Gov. Brown said she did not believe the law was retroactive. Benjamin Gutman, Oregon’s solicitor general, has written recently he believes it would be for cases that are being retried or pending.

Brown opposes the death penalty and had already put in place a moratorium on executions in Oregon. She is having her staff do more research before making a decision about what to do about the law.

Let’s help them. Legislators told the public they did not intend for the law to be retroactive. Brown did not believe the law was retroactive when she signed the bill into law.

If she doesn’t call a special session to clarify what the law does, it will critically undermine the integrity of the Legislature and Brown. Call the special session, governor.



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YOUR VIEWS

Bring back syndicated columnists

I first subscribed to the *East Oregonian* in 1980, mostly for the sports page. Over the course of time, I became interested in other features: letters to the editor, editorials, and syndicated columnists. Each of these features has helped me to broaden my perspective, but none more so than the syndicated columnists.

My mother mentioned how she enjoyed the insights provided by reading Maureen Dowd’s column — so I started reading her columns, too. I found her style to be engaging and entertaining, while providing deep insights into her topics. As a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, she elevated the pages of the *EO*.

I also enjoyed the columns written by Dave Barry, another Pulitzer Prize-winning author whose humorous columns entertained and educated, often leaving me wanting more.

Most recently, I have looked forward to columns by David Brooks, Nicholas Kristof, and Thomas Friedman. Each of these columnists is renowned for their

work, known for the depth and breadth of their writings. Their columns challenge values, enlighten thought, raise ideals, and expand understanding of the issues we face today.

I’m saddened that the *EO* has discontinued these fine columnists and I do hope that they will reconsider.

Wesley Duchek
Pendleton

Warm Springs needs our help now

Oh, for Pete’s sake! The salmon just got \$15 million and we can’t come up with help for the Oregon community of around 4,000 who have been without water and sewer since the end of winter? School is starting soon and those kids are relying on sponge baths! One of the school rooms is used for distributing bottled water? Maybe we should just hand out washboards and deliver a ton of new buckets and let it be at that — not!

Janet Boyd
Hermiston