

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Voters make investment in public safety

Back in May, residents of Milton-Freewater made a big sacrifice and followed through on a good decision to pass a \$7.7 million bond for a new police department building.

Soon, the city police department will move out of the cramped, obsolete space into an upgraded, 7,200-square-foot new station.

A new police station was way overdue. The current one, used for nearly a century for the police department, stuffed 20 employees into a small work area where doing such basic police procedures as interviewing witnesses was problematic.

The new station will deliver a host of new benefits for the police, including more space to interview witnesses. The station also will be furnished with new technology and an automated fingerprinting system.

Most of all, though, the station will be new and the city's police force will jump from an office structure better fit for the 1950s to a modern facility.

The decision by city voters was not an easy one. But once a city decides it needs a police force then it also has an obligation to ensure its police department is resourced in an adequate manner. Forging over more dollars for public infrastructure can be a hard sell, but it shouldn't be when the subject involves police or fire and rescue departments.

Investing in police and fire resources is never, ever a bad idea. In fact, a solid argument could be made that funding police and fire through tax dollars is the best way to use income derived from residents.

No one likes to pay taxes but when the expenditure is for police or fire, the cost is really an investment. An investment that pays for itself with safe streets and a fire department that is manned in an adequate fashion with the newest and best equipment and ready to respond to an emergency.

The simple fact is we need police and fire personnel. That means, though, that we must always ensure they have the best equipment and best facilities from which to do their jobs. We may bemoan the cost, but when there is an emergency no one usually starts to ask questions about costs. Instead, they want someone — a cop or a fireman — to be on the scene helping them.

We believe the votes in Milton-Freewater made the best decision possible and we also believe they will see that their investment will pay off many times into the future.



Finding ways to give back



DANIEL WATTENBURGER
HOMEGROWN

Like many families in our area, we just wrapped up the annual ritual of the fall youth soccer season. It's a mix of growth opportunity, spectator entertainment, and community building.

For the ultra-committed, the youth soccer experience lasts a decade or more. It starts with a mob of cleats and shin guards swarming the ball and culminates with year-round travel teams and high school league play and tournaments. For the rest, it's a handful of falls spent toting pop-up chairs and fruit snacks each Saturday, crossing our fingers for a late start to winter as we watch our kids learn teamwork and sportsmanship.

This fall was pristine. Almost every Saturday was sunny and calm, and Butte Park in Hermiston made an outstanding venue for sharing comfortable space with other families of fans.

As a one-and-done youth soccer player myself after a single campaign that involved me waiting for the ball to arrive at my feet so I could kick it (it rarely did), I wasn't sure whether our similarly passive kids would have the drive necessary to get into the game.

I also wondered what kind of coaches

they would have. I won't go making a retroactive assessment of my own coach's abilities, but I will say I remember the tone of her direction far clearer than the directions themselves.

Both of our kids landed on teams with coaches who very clearly understood the principles of developmental league soccer and offered equal parts grace and opportunity to every player, understanding their differing levels of ability and intensity. And both our kids truly enjoyed the experience.

Soccer's simplicity is the reason it's the most widely played sport in the world. But for it to work well you need dedicated volunteer coaches and refs. Youth sports can bring out both the best and worst in people, and these volunteers often take the brunt of the darker side.

It's no wonder youth sports leagues struggle to find enough referees and umpires to fill out a full schedule. Coaching a team with your own kid on the roster is a time commitment; showing up to try to impose structure on a children's game while being reviewed by an audience of very partial observers is something else.

For everything our kids learn on the field, we can learn something from the sidelines.

Among those lessons is gratitude, a key part of sportsmanship. It's fitting that we're entering November, a month where we're reminded of thankfulness as a virtue.

Gratitude is not something that comes easy for me. Those who have read this column in the past might be quick to point out that in March I spent the entire space grousing about the month's worthlessness. I spend too much time thinking about the way I wish things were, rather than appreciating the way they are.

But I do believe that genuine gratitude has the power to not only change my internal perspective, but to spread good vibes to others as well. Nobody signs up to ref youth sports for the applause, but a quick thank you after the game goes a long way.

This translates to everywhere else in life. Our individual acts of gratitude can start to offset the selfishness and vitriol that seeps into our lives. Rising above simple good manners and sharing your appreciation for the people around you has a cascading effect. We can all pay it forward while improving our own outlooks.

Being grateful also helps me think about the tremendous amount of time and effort it takes to make a community run. Rather than just enjoying the benefits of others' generosity, I'm inspired to find ways to give back.

Daniel Wattenburger is the former managing editor of the East Oregonian. He lives in Hermiston with his wife and children and is an account manager for Pac/West Lobby Group. Contact him at danielwattenburger@gmail.com.

YOUR VIEWS

We cannot ignore the cost of obesity

The cost of obesity is an emergency we cannot ignore. Despite the conclusive evidence that obesity is a treatable disease, Medicare rules impede millions of Americans from receiving clinically effective and cost-effective obesity solutions.

Medicare currently does not cover safe, Food and Drug Administration-approved anti-obesity medications, and only covers obesity services and treatments called Intensive Behavioral Therapy if it is provided by a primary care physician or other primary care practitioner in a primary care setting. This prevents registered dietitians like me and other specialists from providing effective treatment to older Americans living with obesity.

These laws are rooted in erroneous views of obesity as the result of individual choices. In reality, obesity is a treatable disease, stemming from genetic, biological and environmental factors. For the nearly 100 million Americans living with obesity, a lack of access to affordable care means they are at high risk for some of the leading causes of death like heart disease and stroke.

Congress has a fix at its fingertips, the Treat and Reduce Obesity

Act. TROA is a bipartisan bill that will allow registered dietitians and other health experts to independently provide IBT counseling services and will provide access to Food and Drug Administration-approved anti-obesity medications.

The rate of obesity among Medicare beneficiaries doubled from 1987 to 2002 and nearly doubled again by 2016. Congress should work to pass TROA as part of reconciliation to ensure Medicare recipients have access to the treatments and the health practitioners that can help them effectively treat obesity.

Christine Guenther
Pendleton

The carbon price, highs and lows

The Senate Finance Committee chaired by Ron Wyden of Oregon is working on several climate change initiatives in the Reconciliation Bill, even though Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia doesn't like it. He doesn't like it despite the devastating floods and droughts suffered by his constituents that are causing emergency declarations. He also doesn't like it because he has a blind trust for a coal trading company that produces dividends. In addition, he receives donations from the coal and gas

industry — the most of any Democrat.

Since Sen. Manchin seems to be against any climate change initiatives, the negotiators are trying to figure out which he dislikes least. He seems to be seriously upset with the program to encourage electrical utilities to reduce their use of fossil fuels called the Clean Electricity Payment Program. Perhaps less so with a carbon price, and he doesn't seem to have mentioned tax credits tied to investment in renewable energy. Significantly, a company called AEP is running three coal fired electricity plants in West Virginia, and that company has highlighted the importance of receiving those tax credits to decarbonize.

Despite all of the politics, a carbon price is in the running because it is cheap, effective, transformative and can help pay for other programs. Getting rid of carbon is a big transition, but because a carbon price affects all uses of fossil fuel, it helps inputs, products and markets to transition simultaneously. You can help too by asking President Joe Biden to support a carbon price at whitehouse.gov/contact or citizensclimatelobby.org/white-house.

Brenda Pace
Bend

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