

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Structures are viable link to the past

The best news about the World War II-era guardhouses at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton is their fate isn't sealed and a dedicated group of people are working to preserve them.

Earlier this month the 11-member airport commission reviewed the idea to preserve the guardhouses and several ideas were broached about how to sustain the guardhouses.

That the guardhouses are historically important is obvious, but how to capitalize on that significance is the challenge the committee faces now.

The key, though, is the guardhouses should be preserved and the committee should find the best, most affordable, method to do that.

Airport Manager John Honemann's idea to form a group from a broad swath of different stakeholders to find a way forward is likely the best plan for now.

Honemann wants to search for funding grants to help preserve the guard shacks. Airport committee member retired U.S. Army Col. Tim Kelly prefers to keep the project as local as possible by using volunteers and grassroots fundraising efforts, including donations of equipment and labor from area construction companies.

Both ideas have merit and the way forward is to develop a plan that combines both concepts.

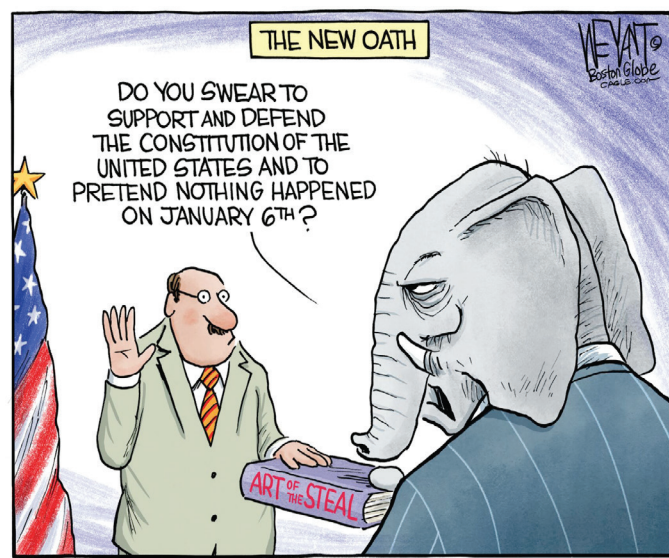
Grant funding remains one of those untapped sources of revenue that often small cities across the nation shun because of the time element involved. Finding and then applying for a grant takes time and there is always a delay between the time a grant application is submitted and when it is approved. Plus, there is never any guarantee the city or group applying will get the grant.

Kelly said he believe going the grassroots route could wrap up the project in about six months.

Yet there is no reason the airport committee can't move down both avenues — seeking grants and creating a grassroots movement — to help preserve the guardhouses.

The guardhouses need to be preserved. They are a viable link to the past when our great community stepped up and helped out during World War II. We must, as a community, move ahead on plans to expand the airport in every way possible but, at the same time, we must also work to safeguard the rich history of our local airfield.

We hope the airport committee finds a way to develop a plan that includes local fundraising efforts and a process to seek grant funding.



YOUR VIEWS

Bower has Umatilla County's best interest at heart

Susan Bower is a strong candidate for county commissioner Position 1. She is a highly competent individual with a vast business and economic background, which will help her understand the complexities of county government. Her expertise in workforce development and firsthand experience in reducing redundancy in government and business operations add to her qualifications.

Susan has the desire and tenacity to research and familiarize herself with the full aspect of the commissioner position be it infrastructure, required services, homelessness, drugs, vaccines or mental health issues. She is a team player, but no one who is willing to take charge and work in a transparent method when the situation merits.

In the best interest of

Umatilla County, I invite you to join me in voting for Susan Bower.

Bonnie Douglas
Pendleton

Bus barn, another city boondoggle?

Did you attend the Pendleton Public Transit Program's open house? Public participation was underwhelming to say the least. City officials, promoting construction of a bus barn at the airport, vastly outnumbered local residents, probably because of the free coffee and cookies provided to the city on our behalf.

As interest by city officials in a sanctioned public transportation grew in the early 80s, a stable taxi system was deemed necessary, and Elite Taxi was given an exclusive contract to provide that service. Evidently, those folks at Elite felt secure with the contract and must have felt that upgrading their fleet to provide handicapped acces-

sible service was unnecessary.

Consequently, the city was forced to purchase handicapped accessible vans and established the dial-a-ride program to fulfill the requirements.

It's true that outside consultants did evaluate the city's Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Plan, making some recommendations. Replacing the dial-a-ride program, considered overly expensive and inefficient, with a fixed-route system should be considered, with the addition of a transit hub near the city's retail center, the Melanie Square, Safeway and Walmart area, not the airport. City officials balked at this idea, citing the need to promote the downtown area and the proposed River Quarter retail expansion plan along Southwest Court Avenue.

Now if you happen to pass by the Pendleton Convention Center as the city is conducting one of its required safety

training sessions, you'll get a pretty good idea of the number of city-owned vehicles used in normal operations, enough to fill the front parking lot.

Our transportation manager would like to provide a bus barn facility to secure the transit vehicles and allow for operators to do their pre and post inspections, cleaning and other duties in a protected environment, drivers, I might add, that are not even city employees. She doesn't seem too concerned about those other city vehicles or actual city employees.

The plan to locate the facility at the airport? It might as well be in Reith. Incidentally, those same consultants that suggested a transit hub also seemed very concerned about the lack of sidewalks in many areas of town, a concern city management continues to ignore.

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