

Everyone has a role to play in housing efforts

It has become abundantly clear over the past couple of months that housing in Wallowa County is a topic that impacts the lives of many residents on a daily basis.

Whether you are on assistance and looking for Section 8 housing or a middle-class business manager seeking an affordable home to rent, prospects are equally bleak.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain

Although recent discussions have brought the issue back onto the table, lack of adequate housing across the board has been a long-term issue. There's been a lot of talking, not that much doing.

Now we are on the cusp of the "doing" phase this time around. Several groups and organizations have stepped up and made commitments. Yeoman work has been done by Rich Wandschneider and his group, part of the Brown Bag luncheon series at Josephy Center. Wallowa County Rotary Club has stepped into action, as have other groups and organizations.

Someone once said paying lip service is the cheapest way to address an issue. But to move the issue forward requires planting a seed, then watering it and then harvesting. It's a concept people in an agricultural part of the world understand. No seed, no harvest.

The scope of the housing issue indicates that there is a role to play for every sector of our societal fabric. The faith community has a role to play. The county and cities have roles to play.

Perhaps most importantly, average citizens have roles to play. Everyone brings background and a set of skills to the issue. The amount of life experience represented in Wallowa County's residents is massive.

What is your role in helping solve the housing crisis in Wallowa County?

To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, it's time for all of us to ask what we can do for the impacted citizens of our county and those who would gladly live and work here if housing opportunities were available.

Further, JFK talked about doing things that were "hard," because we don't shrink back from daunting tasks.

One day, we will all look back at this day in our history and note with due pride as that time in space when doing something about the housing crunch replaced talking about it.

And when the curtain finally opens, the production that results from all of the players succeeding in their roles will represent hard work and solution-based outcomes.

Let's do this.



Back-to-school week always nostalgic

I always wax nostalgic when the first week of school rolls around. I was one of those weird children who loved school and couldn't wait for the summer to end so I could get back to stuffing knowledge into my head.

I grew up in a community much smaller than Enterprise and with far fewer (as in none) of the summer "fun" things to do than are available here. School and church were the lifeblood of our community. Remove one of those, and the situation turned bleak.

My parents were never as tickled to see school start in the fall as we children were because it meant losing their built-in workforce. By virtue of the fact that no one else wanted to do it, I became the de facto operator of the lawn mower. We had acres of lawn. By the time you finished in one corner, it was time to start all over again at the far corner.

To this day, I have an aversion to lawn-mowing. And weeding the garden. We also had acres of that. Could there be anything more boring than hoeing corn?

Last week, I pulled up some of the supply lists the Wallowa County school districts had posted to see if anything had changed. It hadn't, really.

There were the ubiquitous crayons, glue, pencils and spiral notebooks. I noticed the elementary list for Enterprise also had "crackers large boxes (any vari-



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

ety)" and "Kleenex large box."

When I was in elementary school, these were things teachers provided. It was kind of an unwritten law, I guess. Maybe it was in their contract.

My fifth-grade teacher always had the best snacks in her desk and was always willing to share generously, although eating in the classroom was mostly forbidden because it meant additional work for the janitor.

And the complete ban on gum-chewing was also firmly in place during my formative years. I never did develop a taste for gum. Maybe that's why.

Most of today's supply lists didn't include a protractor. Remember those? I dutifully had one in my backpack every year but can't remember once actually using it.

I noticed the supply list for Wallowa School District had gone high-tech. You could locate the list on a website and with one click, order each of the items online, pay with a credit card and have them sent to your home.

If your patience for back-to-school



shopping is short, this was an excellent solution.

Having had many older brothers and sisters, I do not recall any of my elementary years in which I actually had "new" back-to-school supplies. Everything was something a brother or sister had used the previous year, and it seemed to me I was being short-changed.

One year, I threw a fit demanding a new 96-crayon box with the built-in sharpener. Although my parents were not in the least impressed with my temper tantrum, I did get the crayons. I was so proud of the fact I had Burnt Umber. I used that crayon up first.

I still like Burnt Umber. Paste is no longer a requirement either. That's probably for the better. As I recall, we generally ate more of it than we used to hold things together.

To all of the children, parents, teachers, administrators and support staff at all of our schools, we wish you a terrific school year with many accomplishments.

Elk foundation is missing the boat

I recently received a piece of mail that has really started me thinking. It was from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation asking us to fill out a short survey and, of course, contribute some money (\$35).

The letter stated, "your opinions will help us know what's important to you, and your donation will help us protect what's important to you."

Really? Where was the foundation this past winter when large herds of elk and deer were starving? Where were they this winter when herds of elk were destroying ranchers' haystacks?

Instead of purchasing private property in Wallowa County, couldn't a portion of those funds have been used to set up feeding stations here and provide hay to the hungry elk herds?

As many of you know, my husband and I dealt with this extreme problem on a very personal level. We are still dealing with the elk herds as they are currently coming into our hayfields nightly and feeding here.

Yes, we have hunters here with ODFW damage tags, but only three animals have been taken. Some adjoining landowners are hunting, too, but I really don't know how successful that has been.

We have spent thousands of dollars preparing out haysheds for the coming winter and return of the elk herds. I'm told they will be back now that they know where the hay is.

I would say, we already

LETTERS to the EDITOR

have contributed to the elk foundation and will most likely continue to for many years until there are changes in legislative policy and people from all sides decide to work together to resolve this problem for private landowners.

Pamela Harshfield
Wallowa

Wolves and cattle: Is there a compromise?

As a farmer, I sympathize with the Oregon farmers who are losing livestock to wolves.

As a wolf advocate, I am bothered by the lethal removal of wolves, two at a time, that is probably neither effective in stopping predation nor conserving wolves.

What to do? Perhaps there is a piece of data that might be helpful. In any given location, what is happening to the deer when cattle are dumped on the place where the wolves raise their pups?

If deer are forced out by cattle, then the wolves have no choice but to feed on cattle to survive.

What if the deer would hang around if there are 100 cattle, but not 200? What if we are putting cattle right on top of den or rendezvous sites (as Washington State University wolf scientist Robert Wielgus managed to inform us is happening, despite the appalling interference of legislators in university research).

What if certain areas can

only sustain so much grazing and it is all taken up by cattle? What if there were corridors where there was no grazing allowed?

Some packs don't kill cattle. Why is that? The assumption is that "wolves develop a taste for cattle," but maybe there is more to it.

Given a choice, wolves prefer their native prey.

Perhaps the land can support both cattle and wolves if there is a more careful, nuanced approach to how and where and how many cattle are put on the public land when wolves are raising their young.

Chris Albert
Lebanon Junction, Kent.

Collaboratives are not all that collaborative

Forest Service "collaboratives" do not want to grant Eastern Oregon residents a vote at the table.

They want people to "participate" but not to ask for a vote in the process. That's why now, finally, when residents of Grant County ask for voting status, the Blue Mountains Forest Partners come out with defamatory statements of residents being "untrustworthy," hoping to marginalize those trying to participate in a meaningful manner.

My mom had to sit through a shaming by the Blue Mountains Forest Partners because she was "untrustworthy," because I question the col-

laboratives and how they use economic hardship to justify restricting motorized access to the mountains of Eastern Oregon. Using "vegetative treatments" to "restore" the forest, while restricting motorized access when they help the Forest Service "develop projects."

The collaboratives are supposed to be civil and open to diverse public input, but if that input does not align with the collaboratives stated goals, they become personal, nasty and petty.

The question is, can we get logs to the mills without "rewilding" Eastern Oregon? We did it for decades and grew some of the healthiest wildlife populations around. Unfortunately, the environmental community turned that on its head with their litigation strategy, and they now get to drive their message through these collaboratives, while excluding public input of voting membership.

To paraphrase a collaborative board member "my grandmother always told me, you are the company you keep." The other lesson most of us learned from our grandparents was "the only thing you have is your word."

Unfortunately, collaborative members never learned that lesson, because every time they give you "their word," they back track.

Eastern Oregonians should not be shamed upon requesting voting member status to "diverse and inclusive" groups, but unfortunately that's how Eastern Oregon collaboratives operate.

John D. George
Bates

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In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It's acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party's ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we'll consider waiving

only in unusual situations. You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com.