

Housing effort needs coordination

The high-energy discussion of housing needs in Wallowa County has begun losing ground in recent weeks. It's time to take steps to keep the topic at the forefront and continue the effort to fruition.

This is the ideal time to strike while the iron is hot since the state has recognized the housing crisis and has established programs to help the situation.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain

And while many of the programs contain spending mandates for rural Oregon, thus far, very little help has come to Wallowa County.

In a series of stakeholder meetings to make sure that state money is properly managed, representatives from Wallowa, Grant and Baker Counties and La Grande, regional and county mental health agencies, land lord groups, church outreach groups, community service providers, housing and homelessness program directors, energy and low-income assistance providers met Oct. 12.

Those attending learned \$150 million in state funds for 50 different programs is available.

Wallowa County needs an organization that will help champion the state programs and assist those who qualify in applying.

The county has a long history of accomplishments from the nonprofit sector. Several already existing organizations appear to be good candidates to form a county-wide housing task force. Wallowa County Board of Commissioners sanction would give such a group the ring of authority.

A number of organizations in the county are specifically committed to the interests of business. Without question, lack of workforce housing is inhibiting economic growth and development, making housing a pressing business issue.

Essentially, the move would formalize the work already begun by an ad hoc group that has been regularly gathering as part of the Brown Bag Lunch program at Josephy Center. While that group has been effective in keeping the discussion going, it's time to move to a more coordinated effort to take action.

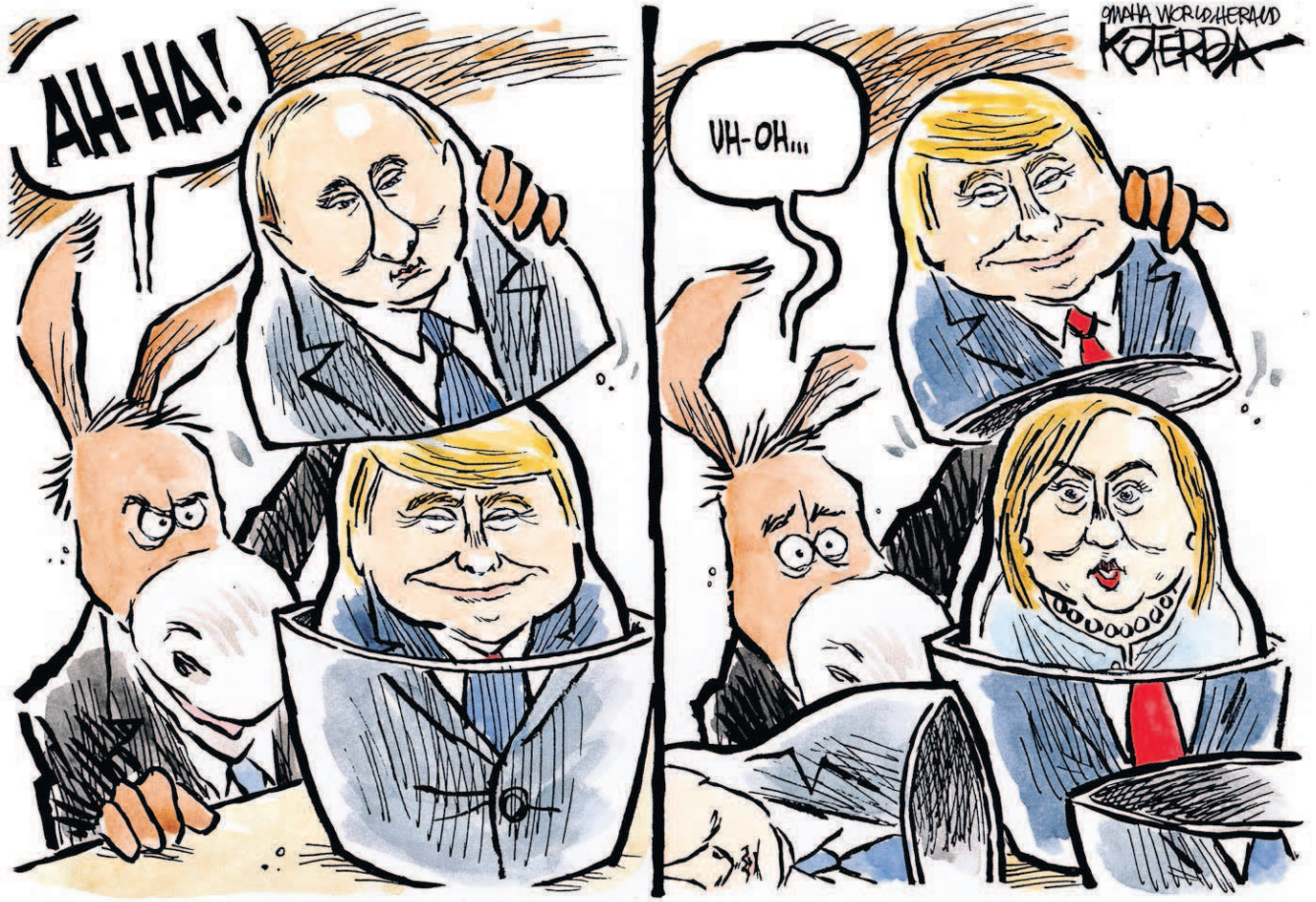
A large number of organizations across the county have said "sign me up" when it comes to working on solutions to the housing crunch. Now is the time to take advantage of the momentum. A public-private partnership appears to make a great deal of sense.

Without action to consolidate the planning process and move the issue forward, the latest blaze of interest in housing will fizzle and become the latest set of wet ashes.

No one wants to see that happen. The issue clearly is a centralized authority or clearinghouse where all of the energy of the groups and organizations rallied to action of late can coalesce.

There seems to be a great deal of followership where the housing issues are concerned. What's lacking is leadership. One group or organization has to step up and take the helm and begin the push for boots-on-the-ground solutions.

If not now, when?



Special times set for veterans



WALLOWA GAL

Katherine Stickroth

In spite of my efforts to become a Wallowa Gal, my Southern roots make occasional appearances.

A fundraiser was held during summer to build a shed for Vietnam Marine Joe Lewellyn in Joseph. Money was raised, the shed is completed and shelters his new Action Trackchair. Joe is tickled happy.

We are putting together a Chili Feed for Veterans Saturday, Nov. 11. Chow will be served 11:30 a.m. at The Place, 303 S. Lake Street. With seating limited to 100 people, we are selling tickets for \$10 each for sponsors and friends of veterans to purchase and then give to their favorite veterans.

These funds will help pay for the event and future activities for local veterans.

Free tickets are available for veterans and their families, veteran widows and parents at Community Bank branches in Wallowa, Enterprise and Joseph. Tickets may be purchased at The Bookloft in Enterprise. Other locations may be posted on Facebook.

The Southern roots thing comes in because we're serving Texas chili, which means no beans. I didn't realize this could be an issue until after the Wallowa County Stockgrowers Association agreed to donate the ground beef. Oh, well. Still learning.

So if veterans are brave enough to try something different ... y'all come.

Arion Canniff (co-owner with wife Amy Wolf of the new Dog Spot going in at the former Silver Lake Bistro location) is cooking. "Homemade Jam" is playing. And friends are stepping up to serve.

We're looking forward to a community-wide expression of "welcome home" to our veterans.

The following poem is posted on my blog. Feel free to share it as a gift to your favorite veteran for Veterans Day:

She Had His Six

"She's yours, not mine"
He was gruff to say



Submitted photo

Vietnam Veteran Richard Stickroth and Brownie.

of the pup squirming in my arms.
But she won him over
With soft brown eyes.
Her honesty was her charm.

A cellophane pop.
The grab of his cap.
It was time to have a smoke.
She stood at the door.
To the sacred porch.
Then she gave his leg a poke.

How often I gazed
through the curtained glass
at the two who were now a pair.
Not a word was said.
Not a move was made.
But I saw the thousand yard stare

Without a sound
he told her of
The Hueys that swarmed like bees.
The tracers of light.
The ear-numbing booms.
The blood, the cries and the screams.

"We didn't have friends.
Just 'Buddy' would do,"

He told his little girl.
She wiggled her tail
and nudged his hand.
His fingers would then unfurl.

By then I ran to the kitchen sink
pretending I didn't know
she was on his six
in the places where
his wife was forbidden to go.

And now he lies
on a hospice bed.
Agent Orange counts the rise of his chest.
She nuzzles his hand
on top of her head.
Too soon is his final breath.

She had his six
like no one did.
He was safe with her along.
His little girl dog.
Her mission complete.
She trailed him all the way home.

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Let's get rid of this DST insanity

Daylight Saving Time will impose itself upon us again Sunday, so don't forget to roll back your eyes at how dumb Daylight Saving Time is.

My loathing of time changes is deep and abiding.

I used to believe I was offended by the back-and-forth with clocks purely on rational grounds. It just seems silly and pointless.

Rather than saving me time, I've wasted considerable hours reading up on the convoluted background of the time change and efforts to get rid of it.

After years of dedicated complaining each time Daylight Saving Time rolled around, I now realize my dislike of the time change has less to do with the reasoning behind it and, instead, is rooted mainly in me not understanding how to change the digital clocks in my vehicle or on my kitchen stove.

There's just one button? Hold it down and wait, or push it twice, or ... huh?

I have managed over the years to figure out how to change the hours on these confusing devices. It just requires a little patience. You drive your vehicle for however many months it takes until a technologically savvy passenger notices the time is wrong and sets it for you. Easy.

Slightly different approach for the clock on my electric range. I push buttons at random until the clock starts blinking and then walk away. That's step one. The blinking will eventually draw the atten-



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

tion and annoy a visitor to my house enough that they will helpfully set it for me. Step two. Done.

I used to have a child-like and naive hope that one day a gallant lawmaker would ride into Salem or Washington, D.C., and, with the sweep of a pen, rid the land of the annoyance of changing the clocks. As time went on, then went back an hour, then forward an hour, then went on some more, I just got resigned to the whole deal.

My acceptance of something that used to really bother me came about, by coincidence, at precisely the moment a friend first corrected the clock in the dashboard of my truck. I do have a teeny-tiny glimmer of hope that perhaps a Presidential tweet might pop up abolishing Daylight Saving Time. Crazy things have happened. Like Presidential tweets, for instance.

In the interest of adhering to my newfound "Yeah, whatever," Zen-like acceptance of the stupid time change, I'm going to chuck the supporting arguments I've gathered that clearly reveal we should do away with Daylight Saving Time. Instead, I'd like to pass along

my all-time favorite conversation, ever, about time.

Years ago I was rowing a big yellow raft full of camping gear through Hells Canyon. Wallowa County Renaissance mountain man Jordan Manley was on the gearboat with me. Jordan and I had been taking our sweet time getting down the Snake River, and suddenly I became concerned we might be running late to get to camp with enough time to set things up and be ready for our group floating behind us.

I asked, "Do you know what time it is?"

Jordan looked at me, waited a few beats and answered, "I don't believe in time, man."

Oh, it was perfect. Manley followed up with a convincing Ted talk on the constructs and conventions required to maintain our concept of time, the flaws in the system and why he chose not to bother himself with such nonsense. I was a believer instantly.

Still, I decided to row a little faster and we got to camp, and everything worked out fine.

I asked Jordan this summer to tell me again what his arguments were about time not being real. He said that was such a long time ago he couldn't remember either.

Jon Rombach is a Wallowa County-based columnist for the Chieftain.