

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Council should share how it was advised

Light is the best disinfectant, and transparency is vital to establishing trust.

That is why it's concerning that the Joseph City Council, last week, declined to comment on how it was advised by City Attorney Wyatt Baum regarding whether it should indeed investigate the alleged harassment by now former city Administrator/Recorder Larry Braden, who submitted his resignation April 16.

Yes, Oregon law allows for items discussed in executive session by a city council to remain behind closed doors.

But in this instance, we at the *Chieftain* believe doing so is not the correct move.

A citizen who spoke up at the emergency council meeting last week stated the reason why it's concerning: It allows a "fog" to linger over the council.

That fog is doubt — doubt of whether or not the council will do what is right.

If the council has been advised to have an investigation — even if it hasn't decided yet if it will — the residents of Joseph deserve to know as much. On the flip side, if the opposite is the case, and an investigation has not been advised, the residents deserve to know that.

The "no comment" given by Mayor Belinda Buswell to the question of if there will be an investigation — even if it is the answer she gives after any executive session — is not sufficient here.

That nobody else on the council shared what was advised is equally concerning.

Does it mean a decision is still being made? Has new information been made known that steered the adviser — Attorney Baum — one way or the other in his guidance? Does the council intend to go with or against whatever Baum has said? And if so, why?

The *Chieftain* maintains that the right move for the council is to have an investigation. It seems like an easy decision, especially given what has been alleged.

Granted, the *Chieftain* is not privy to the information Baum or the council may have that could ultimately influence how they move forward. Nobody currently is.

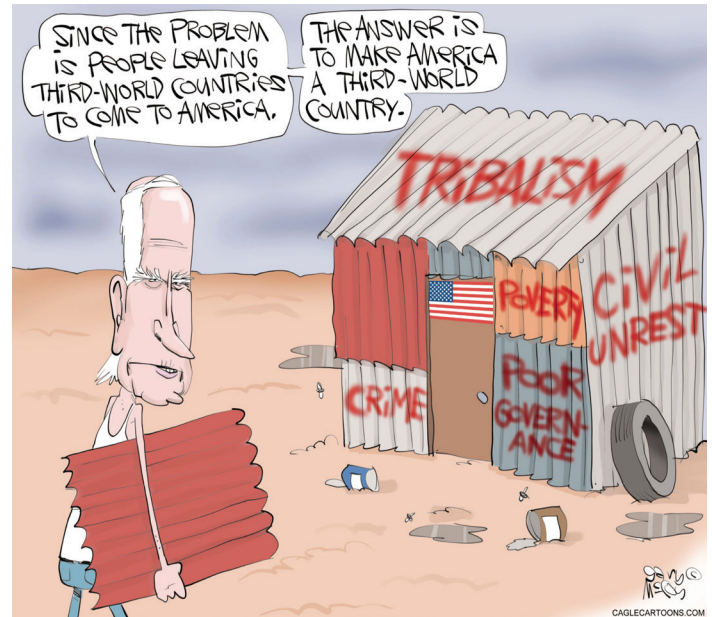
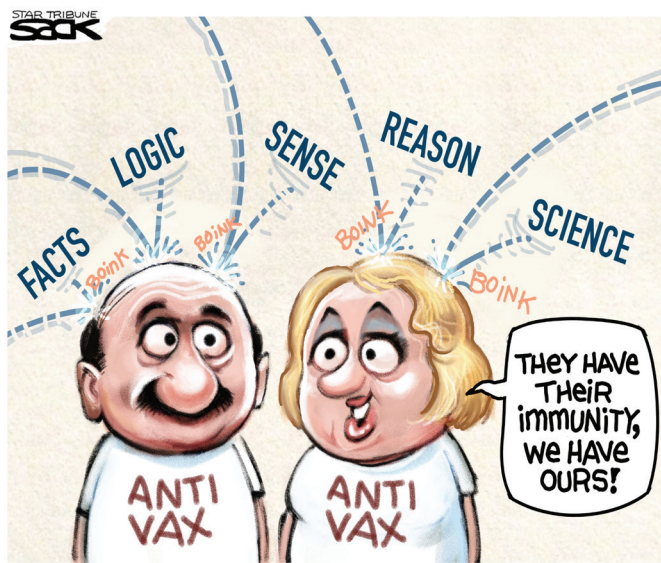
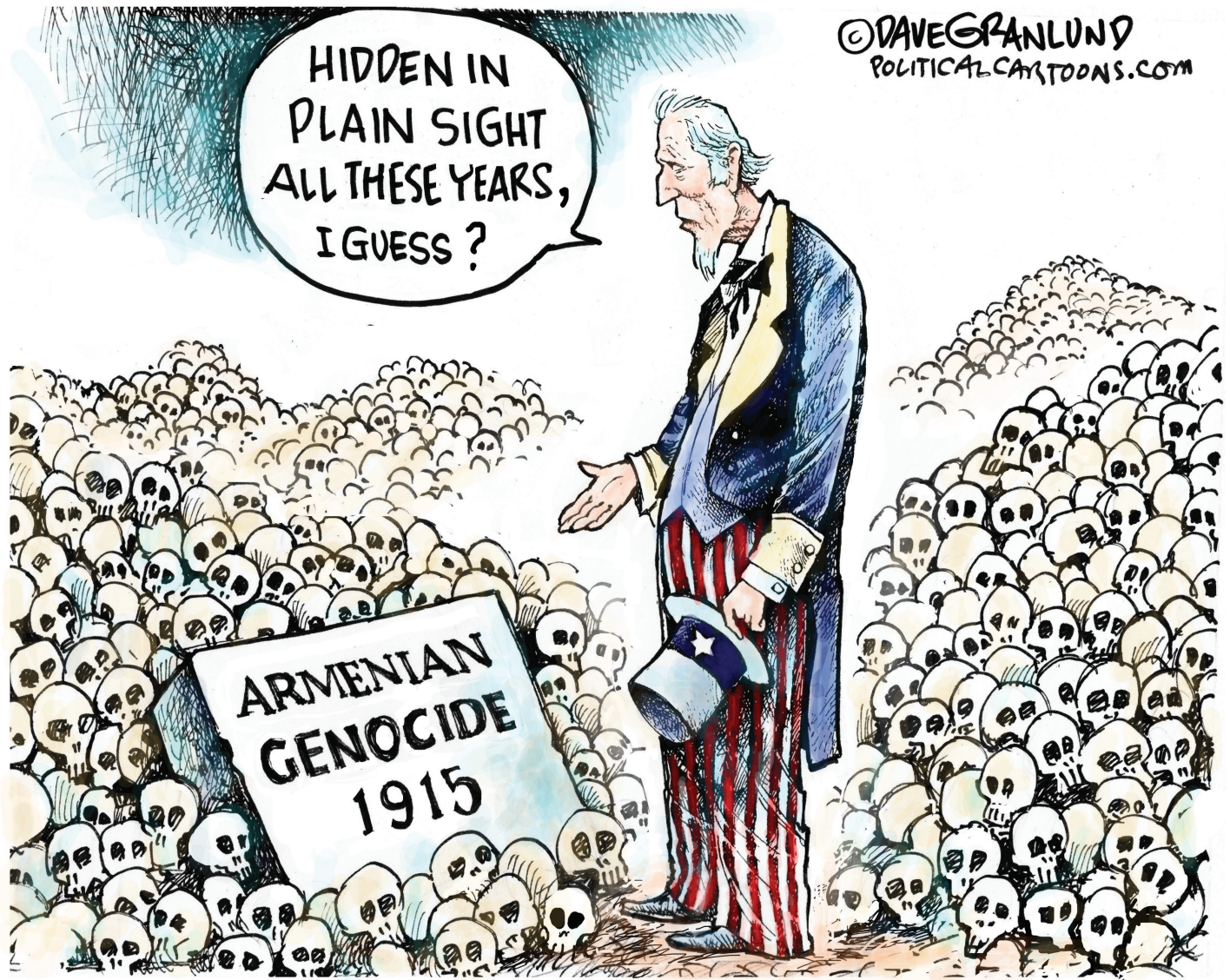
And therein lies the problem, the cloud, the fog.

As long as there is doubt of whether or not an investigation takes place, there is doubt about the council's ability to govern properly. It is a serious allegation — the claim of harassment — that has the council in this position in the first place. The "no comment" adds to that doubt.

A simple "yes," "no," or even "we've been advised a certain way and are still deciding if that is correct," would give the people of Joseph what they need right now. It would help serve as a light-house to start cutting through the fog.

That transparency and light are needed to bring peace of mind in Joseph.

And right now, they are missing.



LETTER to the EDITOR

What happened to 'flatten the curve'?

What ever happened to "flatten the curve"?

Surely most of us can remember when, more than a year ago, lockdown measures hailed from on high and we all donned our masks, sheltered in place and submitted to the politicians' decisions to shut down our economy for the sake of not overwhelming the health care system. The message was clear: flattening the curve (decreasing the rate of spread of the virus) would help ensure that hospitals were not overwhelmed with patients;

it was never intended to eradicate the virus or minimize the total number of deaths.

"Two weeks to flatten the curve" has turned into 52. We still have huge portions of our economy shut down or hamstrung by burdensome regulations. Travel is restricted. There are limited sporting events. We also seem to have forgotten the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's own guidance that a COVID-19 "exposure" occurs after a patient has had "close contact" (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with someone who has coronavirus.

Instead of acknowledging that we're

all responsible citizens capable of assessing our own level of risk tolerance, we have sanctimonious ne'er-do-wells up at Fergi (and on our hiking trails) making snide comments and criticizing those who dare enjoy the great outdoors maskless. Bullies and politicians alike are happily taking advantage of this corona-crisis in order to gain power.

Perhaps instead of seeking to control others, we can focus our efforts toward taking care of ourselves and our own families, and trust that others will do the same.

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