

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Joseph, it is time to start healing

It's time to begin the healing process in Joseph.

Last week, the City Council voted to censure Councilwoman Kathy Bingham for complaints filed against her that alleged she acted inappropriately for a city councilor.

Among other punishments, she was removed from her role as mayor pro-tem and removed from committees. The full spectrum of her punishments are in the Page 1 story in today's Chieftain.

We have been consistent in this space, saying that if the harassment alleged over the last few months was, indeed, harassment, then those involved should step down.

However, the council, in its vote to censure Bingham, noted the allegations were unsubstantiated and did not, in fact, reach a level of harassment. Had they, we would be calling for Bingham to step down.

As it stands, however, there isn't evidence enough to make this case. Exactly what Bingham was charged with by those complainants — aside from claiming a businessman flipped her off when it appears that wasn't the case — cannot be listed here, as those details were shared in executive session. And given what we know, we believe she has been given a fair punishment. Many who spoke up after the open session last week also believe that to be the case.

It would be easy to bash Bingham publicly. But, that would detract from the point of this editorial — as well as the title of it — that healing needs to start in Joseph.

The past couple of months have been difficult for the city of Joseph, and that is putting it mildly. Consider the following:

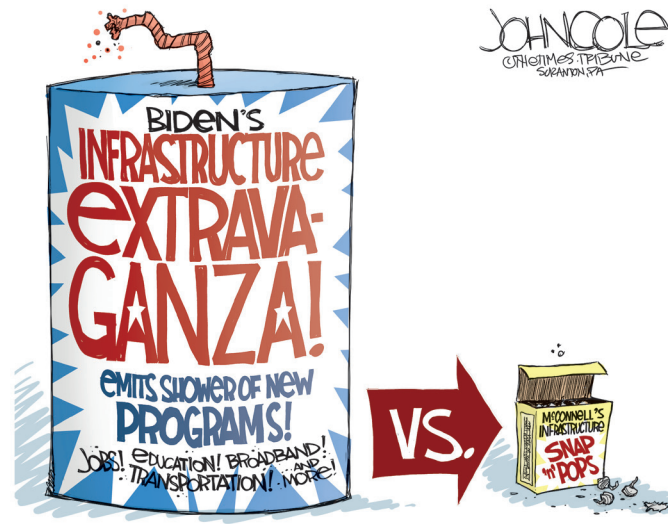
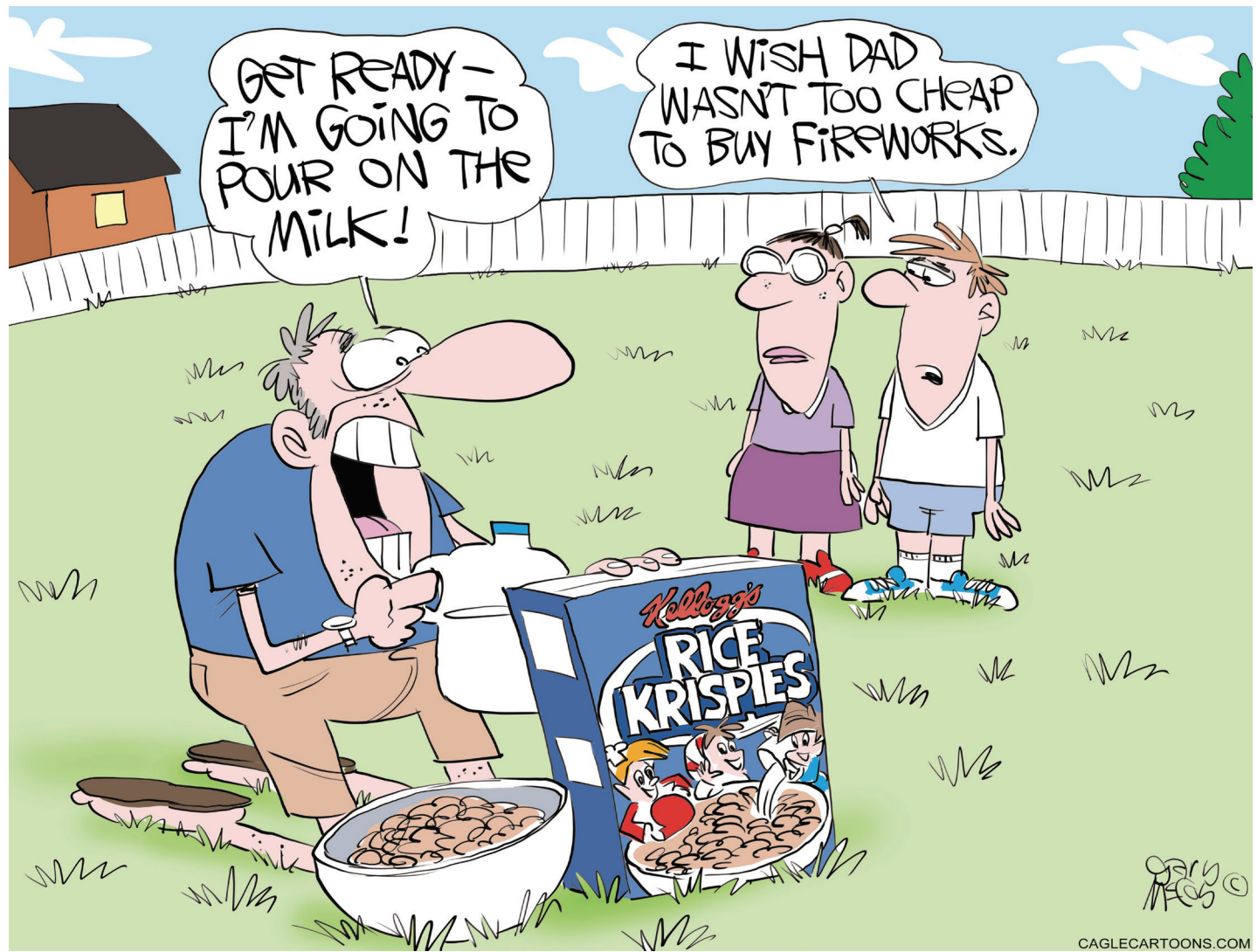
- The original harassment allegations in early April.
- Former city Administrator Larry Braden resigning.
- More allegations from different individuals.
- Learning, as we did just recently, that claims stretched back to at least February.

For the sake of the city, we certainly hope this is the end of the mess in Joseph. We also hope the punishments levied serve as a deterrent.

Hopefully, there are lessons that can be taken away from this. One, the process did play out, and did work. Two, punishments were doled out.

But third and most importantly, that it's time to move on from this, and not let the past three months fester. There needs to be forgiveness. There needs to be grace extended. And there needs to be change — read this as people need to see their actions won't go unpunished — so that this is not duplicated in the future.

If this is done, the city of Joseph can start to heal.



LETTER to the EDITOR

Trapping has no place in Divide Camp therapy

It's laudable that the Divide Camp uses nature to heal the wounds of our veterans, but trapping has no place in this therapy.

Veterans, suffering from the effects of military deployment and all the pain, suffering and disorientation that can cause will surely benefit from immersion in nature.

But veterans who have experienced physical and mental pain, anxiety, anguish, desperation and the fear of death are now being offered as therapy the infliction of these same experiences on others. How can this heal? Looking into the eyes of a victim they have trapped and seeing there the same awful feelings they themselves have felt, feelings that have caused the trauma for which they are now seeking healing, is that right? Is it effective? Ethical? Moral? I say no.

I expect trappers will say that it's a traditional pastime, and that's true. But so many traditional pastimes are loathsome and have been rightly banned. Dogfighting, cockfighting, bear and bull baiting, bullfighting — all these traditional "sports" have been outlawed or simply abandoned in most of the USA and many other nations.

The skills trappers use — tracking, knowledge of wildlife behavior and habitat — can be taught without killing or abusing wildlife. Tracking and observing wildlife is incredibly satisfying. Camera traps will capture animals in the act of living their free lives.

For most, cruelty is no longer a spectator or participatory sport, and that the

Divide Camp offers it as a therapy is a mistake.

Wally Sykes
Joseph

Be mindful of rules at Wallowa Lake

This seems to have become quite an issue at Wallowa Lake, and needs to be addressed. I am sick of trying to put in or take out our boat at the boat launch on the north end of the lake. People are sunbathing, diving or fishing off the dock (all of which is illegal). Boaters are trying to dock, while tripping over people apparently not bright enough to get out of the way.

The other ongoing issue are the brain-dead people that park, lock and leave their cars in the only boat prep area. The other day I had to park out of the way, while taking out my boat trailer fender on a cement border, trying to get around those parked in the wrong place. These issues need addressed and enforced.

The "No loitering" sign for the boat dock needs removed and placed on the first post at eye level. As it stands now, people would actually have to make the effort to look up to see the sign. Enforcement, however seems to be lacking at the lake. Been there a number of times and have yet to see the sheriff on the lake, or at the lake. I have also noticed the county boat docks are still in the south-end parking lot. All private docks had to be on the lake by May 15, yet there they sit. It appears the sheriff's office has yet to figure out its actual duties. Previously we never had this problem?

Doug Dutton
Joseph

A clarification; and celebrating received funds

To my amazed Republican and Democratic friends, I did not switch parties. I just mistakenly switched computer files. And to my father who once gave me a dictionary as a Christmas present, I now know the definition of "hubris."

And to the editor of the Chieftain, thank you for your patience.

Now, here is the correct computer file letter:

\$500,000 For the upgrading of our Fairgrounds! I welcomed that news. During my tenure on the fair board, we began the much-needed upgrading of those facilities, scraping funds together from the state, the county and donations, and welcoming volunteers to do the work when possible. \$500,000 will go a long ways toward ensuring our community asset will be ready for events for many more years.

But there is irony in this news. Our Republican Rep. Bentz voted against the source of this money — The American Rescue Plan. In fact, all of the Republicans in both the House and the Senate voted against this act.

I guess giving huge tax breaks to the wealthy politicians' friends in 2017 was an acceptable way to for Republicans to add a trillion to the deficit, but money for our communities (and us common folk) is just not worthy of their votes.

June Colony
Lostine

Editor's note: A letter received from June Colony that ran June 30 was inadvertently sent, and was a letter previously submitted in 2020. The intended letter is above.

EDITORIALS: Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Wallowa County Chieftain editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Wallowa County Chieftain.

LETTERS: The Wallowa County Chieftain welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns

about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

SEND LETTERS TO: editor@wallowa.com, or via mail to Wallowa County Chieftain, 209 NW 1st St. Enterprise, OR 97828