

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Funding, process is a win-win for the county

The Wallowa County Fairgrounds are going to get some needed repairs.

And, local government handled the funding reception the proper way.

To us, that is a win-win.

As was reported in the Page A3 story this week, the county commissioners approved the receiving of a \$500,000 federal grant through the American Rescue Plan Act — money that state Rep. Bobby Levy allocated from her allotted portion for the county to use in repairing some of the worn down structures at the fairgrounds.

It almost seems like a no-brainer to take the money and run, and one might wonder why there was a delay in getting to this point. After all, the announcement of the funds to Wallowa County was first reported on last June.

But a couple things are at play here. One, the wheels of government grind ever so slowly. The commissioners had to approve a grant application process, which they did in early November. It originally was supposed to be simply passed along to local entities, but was then turned into a grant process, we reported in November.

Commissioner Susan Roberts smartly asked then: “What’s the state asking of us?” Oftentimes, monies from the government don’t come without any strings attached in the form of a certain way they must be spent or certain things those receiving it must adhere to.

Even as recently as a couple of weeks ago, acceptance of the funds was tabled because of concerns over the state’s involvement in how the county received the funds.

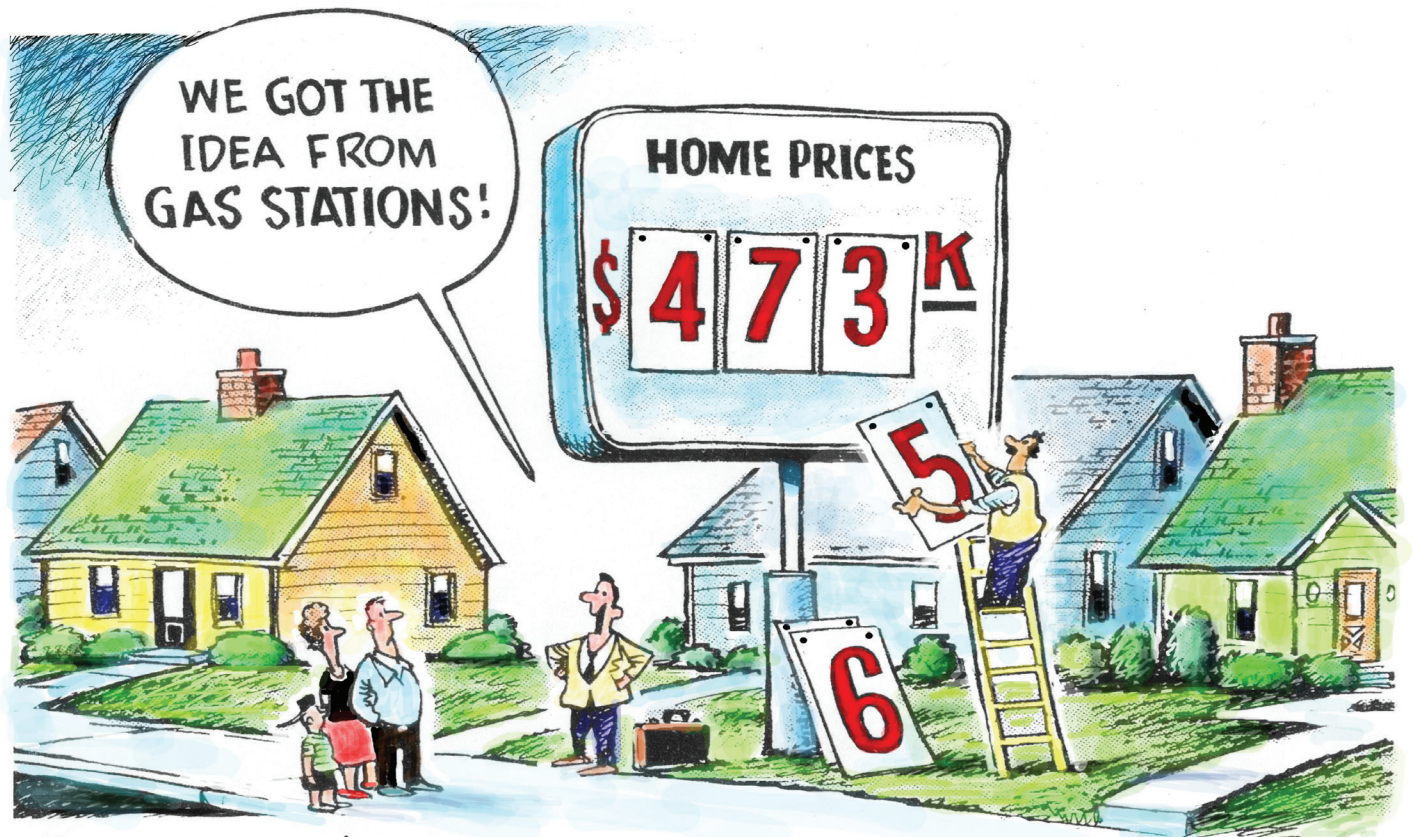
The pause allowed for those questions to be answered, and once the commissioners and county counsel were satisfied, the money was accepted.

This is very wise on the part of the commissioners and those advising them, including counsel Paige Sully. Be certain of what you are getting and what is required of you, if anything is.

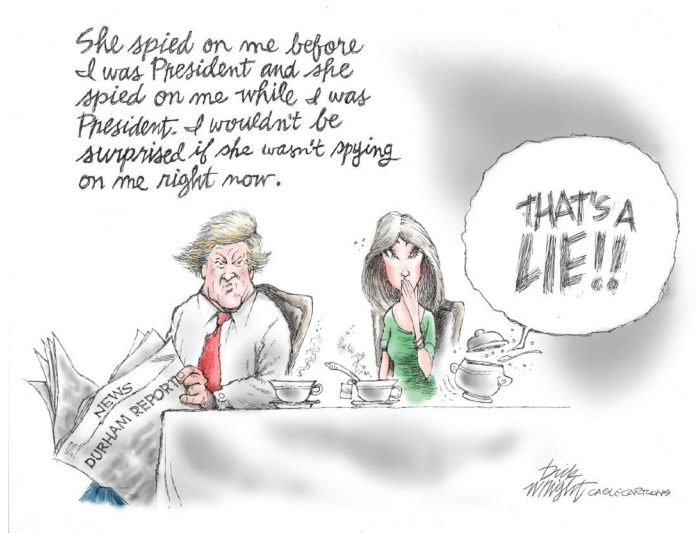
In this time of everyone grabbing everything handed to them by the government and not worrying about if there are requirements or even consequences (even if it is needed, as it is here), it is a breath of fresh air to see our local government take the time to make sure every I is dotted and T is crossed before accepting a chunk of money that will cover roughly two-thirds of the repairs.

It will benefit the county in the long run with improved grounds, and shows we have local leaders who are wise about money.

It is, truly, a win-win.



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LETTERS to the EDITOR

In support of the River Democracy Act

Like many of our Northeast Oregon friends and neighbors, we support the River Democracy Act proposed by Sens. Wyden and Merkley. We offer here a few of our reasons:

Meaningful action addressing life-threatening climate change is overdue. Our waterways pay a heavy price for our drive to squeeze every last penny from natural resources. Centuries of destructive practices have damaged every ecosystem on earth and threaten planetary life itself.

Our full speed ahead enterprise destroys plant and animal species at mass extinction rates, canceling them from our intricate web of life. In light of climate change and biodiversity collapse, destructive “business as usual” practices are worse than senseless. We know better. Passing the River Democracy Act is a modest, yet important, step toward protecting and restoring our natural world.

The River Democracy Act does not “lock up” our public lands. They remain as accessible as ever. Wild and Scenic designation allows restoration of these waterways and protects them from future degradation. Sen. Wyden and his staff have carefully listened to stakeholders and specifically addressed their concerns in the bill.

Maps abound. A statewide map depicting all of the proposed stream reaches is found at tinyurl.com/rdamap. The River Democracy Act itself forms an atlas, its stream names and geographic details easily found on any map or GPS device. Acquiring ourselves a detailed map of Killamacue Creek, we find its reach length is indeed 4 miles, contrary to a public official’s complaint it was but 2 miles, as printed in the Feb. 2, 2022 Baker City Herald.

We need long-range thinking to protect the natural systems on which all life depends. Two years ago local citizens, businesses, and organizations answered

the call for nominations, did their homework, and made their recommendations, since reduced to protecting just 4% of Oregon’s waterways. The River Democracy Act represents local knowledge and expertise in managing local resources for a sustainable future.

Thank you, senator. Now is the time to pass the bill. Our kids, grandkids and future generations will thank you, too.

**Mike Higgins
Mike Beatty
Halfway**

Vote to save democracy, but investigate, too

Please vote in the 2022 election! Whether Democrat, Republican, Independent or nonaffiliated the American government is under attack and you must be heard. American elections have been challenged with unjustified claims to question their validity. Voter suppression is common in many states through purging registrations and making it physically difficult to cast a ballot. The forces behind this effort to overthrow the American government seem willing to go to any lengths to accomplish their purpose. What is the purpose of armed poll watchers?

The “foot soldiers” of this group are the “Oath Keepers,” the “Proud Boys” and associated groups of “white supremacists.” Now comes the Republican National Committee who have defined the riot of Jan. 6 at our nation’s Capitol as “legitimate political discourse.” These groups have not shown a desire for peaceful discussion, just the opposite.

When completing the election ballot, it is important to know the background of our candidates and not just their rhetoric. Unfortunately for those of us with Republican leanings, endorsement from the RNC, which is sympathetic to a violent takeover of the government, should be “red flag” and further research would be justified. Don’t just vote the party line. Investigate.

The extremists on both sides count on

the majority in the middle failing to vote. Save American democracy. VOTE!

**David Ebbert
Enterprise**

Recent letters provide needed information

I believe two of the best Opinion views I have ever read are in the Feb. 9, 2022 Wallowa County Chieftain.

Connie Dunham did a very admirable job of promoting debating. That is, the classic style of debating where politicians and students in debating competition give their side of an issue and then judges or the public decide for themselves who’s side has the most merit. Ms. Dunham stresses truthfulness in writing or oral debating and teaching children to take propaganda and dissemble it to discover what is valuable information and what is questionable information and move on from there.

Mike Eng taught us about Oregon primaries. Many people are upset about our state government and this could be a solution. I was shocked to read that 1,600 registered voters in sparsely settled Wallowa County cannot vote in Oregon’s primaries. Primaries are so important to guide the political parties into choosing candidates for the general election. In the spirit of the old-fashioned “get out the vote” value, this is a key movement in Oregon. Mr. Eng’s contact information for signing this important petition is at the end of his political opinion in the Feb. 9 edition.

Lastly, as I am always a cheerleader for positiveness, and would thank Mr. Terry Jones for his positive interview on Chief Joseph Days. He admitted the financial trouble, but stated the CJD committee will continue, not despair and carry on. Likewise Mr. Tom Birkmaier reminded us of all the good work the Wallowa County Stockmen do for the cattle industry and asked us to move on and not dwell on the cattle issue on the Imnaha.

**Marilyn DeGroff Hulse
Wallowa**

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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