

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respect-
ing an establishment of religion or
prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or
abridging the freedom of speech, or of the
press, or the right of the people peaceably
to assemble, and to petition the Govern-
ment for a redress of grievances.

“I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend.” —Thomas Jefferson (1800)

(Editor’s Note: In the interest of providing a balance of viewpoints on the current proposal for a mural on the Central Lincoln PUD buiding wall, what follows are two Guest Viewpoint submissions offering counterpoints in this discussion. Submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and an exchange of perspectives.)

Proposed mural design does not represent Florence

My wife and I were first exposed to Florence back in 2003. We were visiting friends on our way back to California after attending the summer Antique Expo in Portland. We immediately fell in love with Florence. We loved the small-town atmosphere and ambiance. A year later we purchased a house and moved to Florence permanently in 2005.

Florence has a lot of retired veterans, so I felt at home here, a lot of kindred spirits. We also felt safe here without too much outside agitation. Perhaps the biggest ruckus came from the Stillwater development, where buildings were being planned along the Old Town waterfront blocking everyone’s view.

Further development was eventually stopped; the citizens sure had their say when riled.

Fast forward to present day. We have a Public Art Committee (PAC) working diligently on “beautifying Florence.” While I commend the members for volunteering, committees sometimes miss the mark. The current proposal for a mural to be painted on the CLPUD building is more akin to what I feel is inner-city graffiti and does not represent Florence.

There are 11 members on this committee, plus two ex-officio members from the city. With a population of 8,466, these 13 committee members only represent .15 percent of Florence residents.

That’s a very, very small group that simply can’t represent the majority Florence.

I suppose there is some symbolism within the mural, but when folks drive

into town for their vacations, they are headed to the dunes and camping sites. I don’t believe they will spend much time trying to sort out the abstract images. If anything, it could be more of

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Don Drozdenko Florence resident

a distraction. I would hope someone checked with ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation) or city engineer to determine if the mural could be a safety issue due to being a distraction at an already complicated stretch of Highway 126.

The traveloregon.com website lists Oregon cities that have significant murals painted on their buildings (Trail of Murals). These scenes depict some aspect of Oregon that is clear and concise. You can’t miss the message. And you would want to visit those cities to experience what those murals are trying to convey.

The major theme is “Oregon is Magic.” These scenes depict our coastline’s grandeur: fishing, biking, horses running in eastern Oregon and our famous coastal lighthouses. What “magic” is going to be conveyed by the proposed abstract graffiti mural?

Here are some alternative mural themes that would better reflect Florence’s magic: Sand dunes with the side-by-side off-road utility vehicles (one of the many reasons folks visit Florence); Honor Frank Herbert, author of the book “Dune” (Herbert was inspired by the sand dunes of Florence to write his

famous science fiction book); or how about representing our status as U.S. Coast Guard City and show one of the Coast Guard boats as it patrols the Siuslaw River with the dunes in the background?

There is still time. The proposed mural has not received final approval, which will be voted on at the April 1 City Council meeting (5:30 p.m. at the Florence Event Center).

Let the City Council members and City Manager Erin Reynolds know your opinion on the mural so they can make an informed vote. They can be reached via individual email or call City Recorder Kelli Weese at 541-997-3437 and let her know if you do not want the graffiti mural so she can present this information at Monday night’s City Council meeting. Or go directly to the Florence City Hall (250 Highway 101) and give your opinion in person. To contact any council member or city administrator, visit the City of Florence website at www.ci.florence.or.us/.

Be sure to let them know as quickly as possible before the 5:30 p.m. council meeting if you plan to voice your opinion. I have sent in my comments to them. Then start attending the PAC meetings in order to stay informed and provide feedback. Consider volunteering on a committee and be involved — because decisions by a small committee representing just .15 percent of Florence impacts all of us.

You can also sign up for the email distribution lists for the Public Art Committee meeting times and agendas by contacting the City Recorder at: kelli.weese@ci.florence.or.us.

Mural selection result of long, public process

The Public Art Committee (PAC) has successfully completed several projects in the past two years and we are excited about the upcoming large mural project on the side of the PUD building. Since some questions have been raised about this project, we wanted to clarify our role and the specific processes used with this project.

The PAC was formed in 2015 and after setting up processes and procedures for several months, its by-laws were formally approved by the Florence City Council in March 2016. PAC is a volunteer group representing a wide cross-section of the community. Members are artists, gallery owners, business owners and interested citizens.

Members applied and were selected after an interview process and officially appointed by Mayor Joe Henry. The group has recently expanded from 7 to 11 at-large members and two Ex-officio City staff members. The committee has identified and completed a number of projects, including installing three donated sculptures, selecting four “Outdoor Gallery” sculptures on Bay Street and identifying new locations for future artwork.

In addition, a Public Art Steering Committee worked with the port to install a sculpture at the entrance to the port, and PAC also assisted the FEC on the “Dancing with Sea Lions” project.

Since its formation, PAC has been committed to operating in an open and transparent manor.

All meetings (which are held monthly) are open to the public and time is set aside at each meeting for public comment. All PAC activities are also listed on the City of Florence website (www.ci.florence.or.us).

We also update the Florence Urban Renewal Agency (FURA) every 60 days on our progress. As we began work on the large mural on the PUD building, we followed this method of transparency. The process began as far

back as August 2017, when the PAC hosted a public forum at City Lights Cinemas to seek community input for planned artwork. A year ago this April, after discussions with Central Lincoln

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Harlen Springer Public Art Committee Chair

PUD, the City signed a preliminary agreement to begin the process of selecting a mural.

Following a “Call to Artists” last summer, we received 103 applicants that included local artists along with applicants from 25 states and 4 countries.

Last October, using a judging rubric, all entries were scored on five criteria and the applicants were narrowed to 25 artists by the PAC Subcommittee. That same month, all 25 applications were reviewed in depth by a sub-committee and the choices were narrowed down to the final five, which the subcommittee brought to the full committee.

From there, the PAC voted to choose three finalists during a public meeting. In November, PAC sought applications for citizens to be part of the selection process and two citizens-at-large were appointed to the selection committee. Finally, this past December, the selection committee made a unanimous recommendation that the work from Marino-Heidel Studios be selected.

The selection committee brought all the nine renderings to the full PAC, along with its recommendation, so the full committee could see their options. After further discussion, the full PAC voted unanimously to select the Marino-Heidel work as well.

Once again, this occurred during a public meeting and public input was taken before the final decision. Since then, the CLPUD Board unanimously

approved the design; notices were sent to owners of all properties within 500 feet of this building advising them of our plans and asking for comment; a front-page article appeared in the Siuslaw News which featured a picture of the concept; PAC began working with the artist on slight modifications to the design to make it historically accurate; the Cultural Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians provided input to ensure that the depictions of clothing, colors, etc. were accurate; and the final design was approved last February at the PAC’s regular monthly public meeting.

We have worked very hard to be transparent in this process and we believe we have done that. The PAC chose this design based on a number of factors, including creativity and visual impact, but also because it incorporates our local history in the design: The Siuslaw Bridge, mountains, rivers and wildlife, local flowers, Native American figures, and the bicycle culture to represent a “City in Motion.”

We recognize that art is subjective and not everyone will agree with the content of each piece of artwork that is selected, but we believe in offering a variety of artwork. That is shown by the pieces we have selected thus far, and we are committed to offering other pieces that feature nature, wildlife or other themes on locations in the future.

This is simply one piece in what we hope will be a growing, exciting collection of artwork in Florence. We encourage public input and we hope the public will be even more involved as we move forward. This can be done by attending meetings or joining a sub-committee to help us with our work.

For more information, visit ci.florence.or.us/bc-pac/public-art-program.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) Explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn’t follow the above criteria.

Email letters to:
nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

WHERE TO WRITE

PRES. DONALD TRUMP The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20500 Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414 FAX: 202-456-2461 TTY/TDD Comments: 202-456-6213 www.whitehouse.gov	U.S. REP. PETER DEFazio (4TH DIST.) 2134 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515 202-225-6416 541-269-2609 541-465-6732 www.defazio.house.gov
OREGON GOV. KATE BROWN 160 State Capitol 900 Court St. Salem, Ore. 97301-4047 Governor’s Citizens’ Rep. Message Line: 503-378-4582 www.oregon.gov/gov	STATE SEN. ARNIE ROBLAN (DIST. 5) 900 Court St. NE - S-417 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1705 FAX: 503-986-1080 Email: Sen.ArnieRoblan@oregonlegislature.gov
U.S. SEN. RON WYDEN 221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg Washington, DC 20510 202-224-5244 541-431-0229 www.wyden.senate.gov	STATE REP. CADDY MCKEOWN (DIST. 9) 900 Court St. NE Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1409 Email: rep.caddymckeown@oregonlegislature.gov
U.S. SEN. JEFF MERKLEY 313 Hart Senate Office Bldg Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3753 FAX: 202-228-3997 541-465-6750 www.merkley.senate.gov	WEST LANE COUNTY COMMISSIONER JAY BOZIEVICH 125 E. Eighth St. Eugene, OR 97401 541-682-4203 FAX: 541-682-4616 Email: Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us