

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting 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 Government 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)

As a city, we must face a harsh economic reality

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

I have been working with our city staff for almost six years now and find them to be very knowledgeable, professional and dedicated to our city.

If they don't have an answer to your questions, they will find one if there is one to be found. I interact on a council level, as a homeowner, HOA board member and member of our volunteer community.

Uniformly the responses from our city staff has been great.

As with the rest of our country, Florence is going to have to learn to live with a new normal. Hopefully, we are listening to our public health care experts and heeding their advice

about the safest ways to resume business activity, socialization and school attendance.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Ron Preisler
Florence

We know that we are heading toward a deep recession in addition to dealing with COVID-19. What we don't know is how long and how deep it may be.

The revenue from the gas tax and room tax that Florence will lose will hurt us financially. It is heartbreaking to think of the number of small- and medium-sized businesses that may be lost.

While it is a harsh reality, we must face the prospect of a lengthy recession, to say nothing of the possibility of a true depression.

Here in Florence, the city is at full staff at this time — the first time in my service.

I have written to Governor Brown asking for a freeze on hiring and a freeze on salaries and wages (with a few exceptions) for our state, county and municipalities.

The city is looking at very significant increases in its healthcare costs and across the board increases in wages, utilities and services.

I believe Florence needs to look at the idea of a wage freeze and hiring freeze for municipal employees. Isn't that the best way to try to protect our valued employees when we read and hear about the staggering number of layoffs in today's economic world?

I am speaking for myself, as a citizen, and not for the city council.

In defense of the Florence City Council members

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

I couldn't help but be amused, disturbed and baffled by Sally Wantz's recent Guest Viewpoint ("Council Should Make Public Meetings Public Inclusive," 5-23-20.)

Do we have nothing better to do during the current crisis than sit on the sideline and send Letters To The Editor of the local newspaper criticizing our city council's approach to conducting business?

Do we not all realize that we are in very uncharted waters — and the City Council is doing it's very best to conduct business under unprecedented restrictions levied by Salem?

In her letter, Ms. Wantz stated that she was "horrified" at what she heard and saw during the May 18 city council meeting.

Maybe "horrified" means something very different to many of us. She was horrified because the slides shown were fuzzy and because she could not see the expression on the faces of the mayor and council members. She was also "horrified" that the mayor declined to ask everyone to say the Pledge of Allegiance on a phone

call.

Let me address all of these "horrifying" events.

First, it was explained to me that in order to conduct business during these trying times, the city council has adopted updated public meeting policies which can be found on the city's website.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Terry E. Tomeny
Florence

One of those policies was to not hold public comment on items that are not on the agenda. And both the agenda and clear copies of the staff presentations were made available to the public before the meeting on the city's website.

This was apparently explained to Ms. Wantz within hours of her complaints to the city, but not acceptable to prevent what I feel is a critical and deceptive letter in the paper.

Regarding the Pledge of Allegiance, it was explained that since this was a telephone meeting with no visuals, that the Pledge would not be done as usual. This makes sense as normally the Pledge is done when facing the flag — exactly like in Rotary meetings.

It is ironic that, in recent years, a sitting city councilwoman — and friend

of Ms. Wantz — would routinely not say the Pledge of Allegiance at council meetings.

Yet this didn't seem to "horrify" anybody or appear in the newspaper. And in my opinion, anyone who knows Mayor Henry realizes there is no one in town more patriotic — or with more respect for our flag — than him.

Ms. Wantz may want to disagree with the interim policies adopted by the city council or want to see a different technology format for virtual meetings, but the city was able to quickly pivot to a virtual format for meetings using the technology available, including researching the use of Zoom; and they are doing the best that they can do until new and expensive software and hardware are purchased.

It's very easy to sit on the sideline and snipe at a talented and dedicated group of people trying to make the best of an unprecedented and challenging situation.

Are whatever comments that people want to make so critical that they can't wait a few weeks until they can be accommodated?

Can we please take a moment to thank and support the members of our city council rather than rake them through the coals for "horrifying" you?

LETTERS

SHOULD WE RELY ON PROVEN SCIENCE OR SCAPEGOATS?

As we work our way through what is proving to be one of the most severe public crises in the past century (excluding wars), there is certain to be great controversy. In that regard, consider these points.

Much has been made of the inaccuracy in projections promulgated through numerical modeling.

No surprise there.

Of course the models, having little *real* data to work with, are all based on assumptions — and thus results will differ, sometimes widely, based on variations in those assumptions.

That is not the point.

The truth is that serious people were throwing up warnings and were ignored.

The reality is that between 100,000 and 200,000 Americans are going to die.

The point is, every element of our great government denied and diddled for too long, playing politics, back when we might have been able to take reasonable actions to greatly reduce this number.

All right, maybe not.

Or maybe yes.

The key word is "maybe."

There are two things about all this that really scare me.

First is that rampant ignorance is tolerating the denigration of serious science and the people who practice it. How many of the people tweeting outrageous attacks on Dr. Fauci and his ilk can, if asked, describe how science *actually* works?

From hypothesis, to experimentation, through peer review, to resolution of theory; that is the progression of science *fact*.

I want to punch the wall every time I hear somebody say, "Oh, that's just a theory."

Again, profound ignorance of even the most basic principles abound.

In less than 170 years, we have gone — quite literally — from a world lit only by fire to one where microwaves cook our food using power obtained by harnessing the atom.

It was the scientific method — hypothesis through theory — that achieved this. Along the way, science made many wrong turns and some serious errors.

But that is an integral part of the process. Over the long haul, science has delivered the goods.

The second worry is what will happen next time. And there *will* be a next time; it is only a question of when.

What will happen when the transmission rate of some new pathogen is perhaps only 50 percent greater than COVID-19, and the fatality rate is maybe five times greater?

Do we accept that mistakes were made here — some, quite foolish — and try as best we can to develop in advance the systems and procedures needed to deal with it? Or do we stick to the current method of keeping our heads where the moon don't shine, wait until it's over and start looking for a scapegoat?

Knowing, of course, that the

scapegoat will always be someone of the opposing political party.

—Jimmie Zinn
Florence

DON'T BE CONFUSED BY 'HERD IMMUNITY' CROWD

Local businesses and the public would benefit from knowing that Center for Disease Control (CDC) standards on virus risk from "surfaces" have not lessened.

There is no actual CDC "update" stating that COVID-19 "does not spread easily" from surfaces.

This last 10 days, significant U.S. media has quoted a minor formatting change within the CDC website as representing a CDC guidance "update" that "The virus does not spread easily" from surfaces.

On May 11, a minor subtitle using that language was added to the CDC website details to preface how the virus is transferred.

The media, in an absence of diligence, then erroneously touted this as an "update" on CDC risk guidance.

Now, within two weeks, the CDC website has eliminated that added subtitle language, realizing the potential confusion.

So don't let the "herd immunity" crowd confuse you: No original CDC content existed intending to advise the public of an "update" on risk standards showing that the virus "does not spread easily" from surfaces.

—Rand Dawson
Siltcoos Lake

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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, OR Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$79; 6-month in-county, \$56; 10-week subscription, \$25; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$102; 6-month out-of-county, \$69; 10-week subscription, \$35; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$134; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

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.

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