

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

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)



Where will we go from here as a community?

embark on something of this size and importance. Ultimately, the decision to publish our 11-week series came down to one simple belief: To allow the partisan manipulation that has woven its way into our community and local government to continue unchecked is much more harmful to our town than saying nothing at all. I care about this community, which I have been a part of for 30 years. The only thing I care about more is what this community will be like in the next 30 years.

Our series was a gut check, which is our role as a community newspaper, regardless of how unpleasant that can be at times. And without question, this was one of those times. However, while the series shed light on where we are and how we got here, what really matters most is how we *move forward*.

Ultimately, who is elected next week isn't nearly as important as how we engage with our city council and local government as a community from this point on. We can't rely on social media pages, posts and comments to inform our positions and perspectives. We must be present and engaged with one another as community members

in a way that is less about partisanship or political ideals, and more about the ideals we all share as members of this community. We need to remember that most of us either moved here or decided to stay because of similar ideals regarding a way of life that reflects the merits of a small community. We all want many of the same things for our town

— to be a safe, vibrant and supportive place with opportunities to live, thrive and enjoy a lifestyle different than larger cities. We want to know or recognize most of the people we run into at the store, restaurants, post office and at events rather than be surrounded by complete strangers in a fast-paced lifestyle. And like a family, we should be able to disagree on things without being forced to disown one another simply because a relative few can benefit from dividing us through partisanship. It's like having that unhappy relative that always shows up for family get-togethers and tries to create rifts so they don't have to be miserable by themselves. We know they are coming and what they will try to do. So, we accept it, recognize it for what it is and

simply don't feed into it. Eventually, they either stop or simply leave. On a personal level, I like many of the individuals we wrote about in our series. That includes Joe Henry and all of our councilors who, over the past few years, have had a more and more thankless job — for which they *volunteer* as a service to our community. What's at issue is the *divide*. As we pointed out, our city council, as well as the community as a whole, has been caught in a tug of war between partisans on both sides while the vast majority of people in our community are somewhere in the middle. The question is whether we are willing to acknowledge that and, as a community, meet in the middle rather than allow ourselves to be pushed out onto the edges by a relative few. As I said in my original Aug. 8 editorial, hopefully by understanding how the many moving parts within our community have each contributed to arriving at this destination, we can at least have the option, as a community, to pump the brakes long enough to decide if this is the direction we wish to continue taking. Or whether we want to take a different road that leads to a better place for all of us as a community.

From the Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

One thing Terry Tomeny and I agree on in his Oct. 24 Guest Viewpoint ("Enough is Enough: Rebuttal of 'Investigative Series'") is his final paragraph:

"For God's sake, once the new City Council is seated, let's stop the bickering and concentrate on making this City even better."

Working on and publishing our investigative series wasn't any more enjoyable for us to write than it has been for the community to read.

In addition to requiring many, many hours of work, analysis and discussion, it also resulted in personal threats — both financial and physical — against myself and several of our team members.

However, no wound heals if it's allowed to fester beneath the surface. The only way to honestly move forward and learn from our mistakes as a community is to unblinkingly acknowledge what happened and how we arrived here.

And while we know there are lots of folks who didn't agree with the series, in my 21 years here I have never received more emails, phone calls or notes of appreciation — from both sides of the divide — for having the courage to

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LETTERS

THANKFUL FOR ACTIONS OF FIRST RESPONDERS

My wife and I are so grateful to Brianna (a nurse at Peace Harbor) and Corey (a local EMT) for their kindness to us following our car accident near Heceta Head on Sunday, Oct. 18. Brianna tended to us and to the other driver while we waited for the official vehicles to arrive. Fortunately, there were only minor injuries. Corey and Brianna patiently remained on the scene to offer comfort, and gave us a ride back to town. They made sure we were checked in to The Riverside Inn for the night, before going back to their own lives. Thank you, thank you and God bless you both! Many thanks also to the emergency responders, the state police, and the tow truck operators who were all very competent and caring on that day.

—Tom and Linda Jenkins
 Visitors to Florence

WE NEED MAYOR WITH EXPERIENCE

The challenger in the Florence Mayor's race has been described in Letters to the Editor as a personable individual, good, kind and very sincere.

Our current Mayor Joe Henry is most often described as experienced, knowledgeable, dedicated and compassionate.

In times of uncertainty, we need an experienced leader to help guide us through the challenges of the future.

The job of mayor is more than showing up at community gatherings, smiling and waving to the crowd. Behind the scenes there is real work to be done. The mayor and city councilors not only attend city council meetings, work sessions, various city committee meetings and read mountains of documents, they also travel to many meetings throughout the state. Oregon government leaders know and trust Mayor Joe Henry because they have worked with him for many

years. On the first day of the new term, we need a mayor who knows how to get things done for the city of Florence. If we need support at the county, state or national level, Mayor Henry knows who to call to help solve the issue. In these uncertain times do we want someone who has to ask city employees: Who do I call? On the first day of the new term we need an experienced and dedicated leader at the helm. We do not need a kind person meandering through the halls of city, county and state buildings introducing themselves. Mayor Joe Henry is the experienced leader Florence needs as we pull out of the current crisis and look to building a future.

—Joe Cullivan
 Florence

TIME TO 'RESET' THE COUNCIL

I read with interest the article in the Oct. 24 edition of the *Siuslaw News*, "EMAC Again Tables Climate Discussion."

To be clear, EMAC stands for Environmental Management Advisory Committee. A committee devoted to the environment fails to even have a discussion on climate change?

But then, you take into account that our current mayor stacked this committee with his own appointments, and it becomes clear that there is a partisan agenda here.

The Florence City Charter does not provide for a "strong" mayoral form of government; the mayor is only one vote out of five. The position of mayor is to facilitate the meetings while it is up to the entire council to come to a consensus on the issues.

All council positions are (supposed to be) non-partisan. Certainly there have always been disagreements on the city council. But until recently, which political party any person belonged to was — and still should be — irrelevant.

I have lived in Florence for near-

ly 20 years. I have always voted for council members and mayor based on who I believed would work in the best interests of all citizens of Florence, regardless of their personal political party affiliation. I believe it is time to reset the current mayor and council. For that reason, I am voting for Jo Beaudreau as Mayor, as well as Maggie Bagon and Sally Wantz for city council.

—Marybeth Marengo
 Florence

CREDIT, BLAME WORKS BOTH WAYS

In his Letter to the editor "Some Clarification On Where Credit Is Due" (Oct. 24), City Councilor Ron Preisler mentioned that he served as a tax counselor for AARP Tax Service when I was the Local Coordinator in Florence. I would like to remind him that if an error were discovered on a tax return that any counselor prepared, it was the responsibility of the local coordinator (me) even if I did not prepare that tax return that had the error. Conversely, if our AARP Tax Service received a commendation, e.g. successfully passed an IRS audit, I received the credit again even though I did not prepare any of the tax returns that were audited.

I find the relationship between the mayor and the city councilors is very similar to our tax service. Even if the mayor did not do the "hard service" on any of the positive things that happened under his leadership when he was mayor, then he deserved the credit just like he was blamed for any of the negative things that happened while he was mayor.

In closing, I want to thank Councilor Preisler for his service as a city counselor with a favorite saying of one of his favorite politicians: "Come on, man."

—Frank Williams
 Florence

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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 un-sourced 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.

Email letters to:
nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

WHERE TO WRITE

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