

EDITORIALS

Looks public, acts public: is it public

Thursday afternoon, city managers led an impromptu meeting with concerned citizens about water rates in the city of Independence.

First, kudos to taking the time to hold the meeting. It shows great dedication to the community.

Where things go sour is when City Manager David Clyne insisted that the meeting was considered private, barring it from being video recorded.

Clyne's response makes us ask — in an otherwise transparent city government — what else could be going on?

That is perhaps unfair to Clyne, but it is a fair reaction. The meeting was arranged on Facebook and word quickly spread.

Eight people RSVP'd to the event created on the social media network; more than 25 packed into a small room in the Independence Civic Center.

Eli Killen, from Willamette Riverside Studios, was asked by the citizen who organized the meeting to video record. He was asked by city management not to. Clyne said the meeting was private, and city employees have a right to privacy.

Clyne cites in a letter to the city council that because the meeting was not held with elected officials, he and other employees have a right to privacy in private meetings.

Clyne says in the letter that city employees often meet with the public in private meetings, and this was one of those types of meetings.

We agree with the first premise; we strongly disagree with the latter.

This was not a case of a city employee discussing an issue that concerned just one citizen — say, Jane has a problem with her meter reading.

This was a discussion with a large group of citizens concerned about something that affects every resident of Independence — water rates, and the water and sewer systems.

Independence city management had no obligation to take minutes or give public notice about the meeting, but that in no way makes the meeting private.

While we respect the right of city managers to meet with individuals in a private capacity, it is difficult to see how public managers, in their public capacity, addressing the public in a public building about a public utility can call the act private.

Denying video recording and claiming a right to privacy in this case flies in the face of transparency, which Clyne has been adamant about preserving. Regardless of motive, it cast a shadow on the very transparency the city works hard to maintain, sending mixed messages.

City leaders have a great opportunity to make things right. Clearly, more residents than previously thought have much to say and learn about the city's water and sewer rates and systems.

The city should arrange a second — more publicized — town hall to discuss the water system and rates, in a place large enough to handle a crowd — the auditorium at Central High School, the conference room at Independence Civic Center, or even the amphitheater at Riverview Park.

The city, already adept at broadcasting meetings through live-streaming, can ensure all residents have access to this town hall.

We look forward to a clearly open discussion about water. We also look forward to an even more open government from the city of Independence.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BOC needs to stop seeking welfare

I really enjoyed your editorial in the April 20 issue. I've watched our Polk County Commissioners drag their feet for literally decades, unable to come up with an alternative to funds that come from our O&C lands, instead whining and pointing fingers and now possibly, wasting our money on lawsuits.

I come from an Oregon

timber family, but we've (almost all) moved on to other careers. We will always need our forests and the wise management of forestlands for all of us, but we don't need timber welfare. We need commissioners who actively seek to attract businesses that can succeed in today's environment, not yesterday's.

Wishing for past glories is an old-timer's exercise.

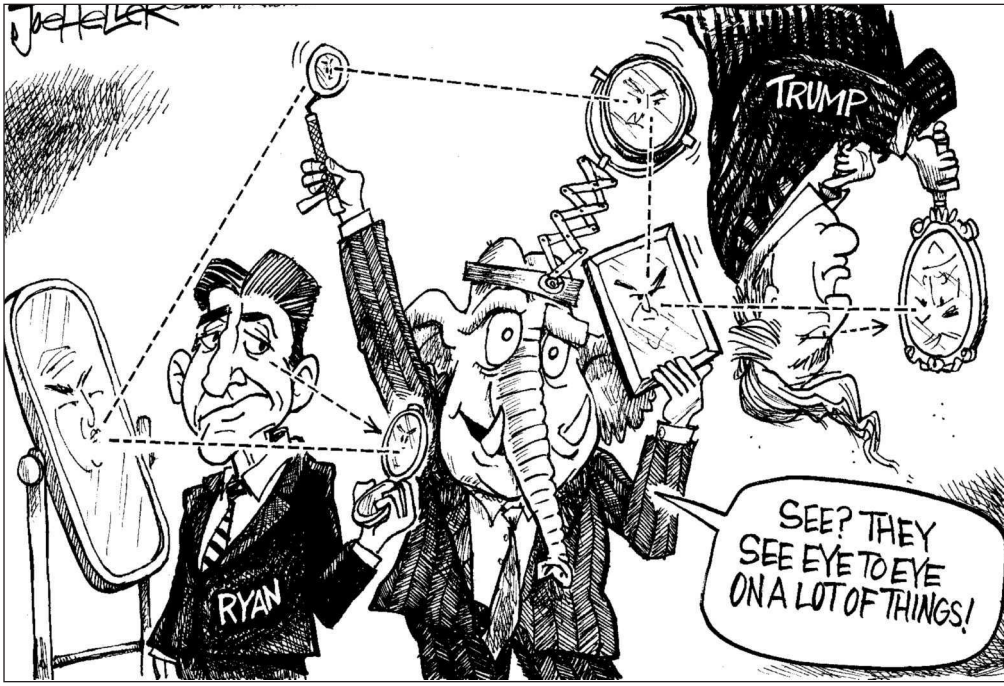
Gail Oberst
Independence

Thank you for voting yesterday

Yesterday, Dallas voters expressed their sense of community at the ballot box. A special thanks to Dallas residents who cast ballots. Your act affirms the democratic process.

For those of you who acknowledged and supported the message of "Citizens for a Better Dallas," I sincerely salute your positive attitude.

E.M. Easterly
West Salem



WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

Letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Longer letters will be edited.

Each writer is restricted to one letter per 30-day period.

Letters that are libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Attacks by name on businesses or individuals will not be printed.

Letters to the editor that are obvious promotions for a business, products or services will

not be printed.

The *Itemizer-ObsERVER* does not guarantee the accuracy of facts presented by letter writers; dissenters are welcome to respond. Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. This includes letters submitted via the *I-O's* website. Names and cities of residence are published; street addresses and telephone numbers are used for verifica-

tion purposes only.

Letters must be submitted from individuals, not organizations, and must be original submissions to the *I-O*, not copies of letters sent to other media.

The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday. Letters submitted may not be retractable after this deadline.

For the complete letters to the editor policy, see the *Itemizer-ObsERVER* online: polkio.com.

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PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the *Itemizer-ObsERVER* via fax (503-623-2395) or email (ionews@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18
Monmouth Planning Commission — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.

Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

THURSDAY, MAY 19
Polk County Fair Board — 8 a.m., Polk County Fairgrounds and Event Center, Main Building, Meeting Room No. 2, 520 S. Pacific Highway (99W), Rickreall. 503-623-3048.

Polk Fire District No. 1 board — 6 p.m., Central Station, 1800 Monmouth St., Independence. 503-838-1510.

MONDAY, MAY 23
Dallas School Board — 6:30 p.m., Dallas School District office, 111 SW Ash St., Dallas. 503-623-5594.

Central School District Budget Committee — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence.

TUESDAY, MAY 24
Independence City Council — 7:30 a.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.

Monmouth Senior Advisory Board — 1 p.m., Monmouth Senior Center, 180 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.

Polk County Board of Commission work session — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, BOC office, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25
Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

Polk County
Itemizer-ObsERVER

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