

## EDITORIALS

### Your voice matters

In the last few months, we've noticed an uptick in citizen involvement at local council meetings.

Councilors, mayors and city employees have noticed, too, because it has meant some meetings run longer than those governmental bodies are used to.

As Monmouth Councilor Jon Carey said in the March 21 council meeting: Participatory democracy is a slow deal.

Oftentimes that's true. Monmouth councilors agreed to consider an inclusivity resolution — which they will vote on at their April 4 meeting — after hearing comments from citizens and Western Oregon University students since January. At first, requests to declare Monmouth a "Sanctuary City" failed. Once the focus turned to a strong statement about inclusivity, councilors were open.

As Councilor Tom Steinke said, "... We're such a nice town as it is."

Mayor Steve Milligan said he has been working on welcoming resolution of some sort for the city of Monmouth — as well as broader efforts countywide — since about 2011, when he was a Monmouth city councilor. It wasn't until the residents got involved that a resolution is coming before the council. Whether or not the council approves the resolution remains to be seen, but the fact that they will consider it is progress.

In Independence, residents are appealing business plans for marijuana growing and processing operations. A neighborhood does not want this kind of business near their borders and have gotten involved in the process.

A movement was attempted in Monmouth recently to curb marijuana retailers, but failed, mostly because of the timing. We'll see if Independence residents are too late to intervene at this point, but in 2014, when recreational marijuana was legalized, the city of Independence was the first to establish a tax on the drug. Councilors were open to the idea of welcoming medical dispensaries and recreational outlets. It wasn't until Independence residents started speaking out about marijuana related businesses that the council paused and made stricter zoning laws.

In Dallas, the council was ready to approve a new business registration. Councilors had discussed it at length, and they were ready to move forward until residents and business owners got involved and spoke against the policy.

Now, our county, cities and school districts are heading into the heart of what we like to call budget season. Many important decisions will be made about infrastructure, services, utility rates, and staffing. We know budget meetings aren't always the most interesting, depending on your point of view, but they are incredibly important. All the money our local governments are spending comes from our pockets — it's all taxpayer dollars.

Pick up a copy of the budget in your city or school district, or from the county. Read through the budget messages. Ask questions. Stay involved.

## 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 email (ionews@polkio.com).**

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29

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

### MONDAY, APRIL 3

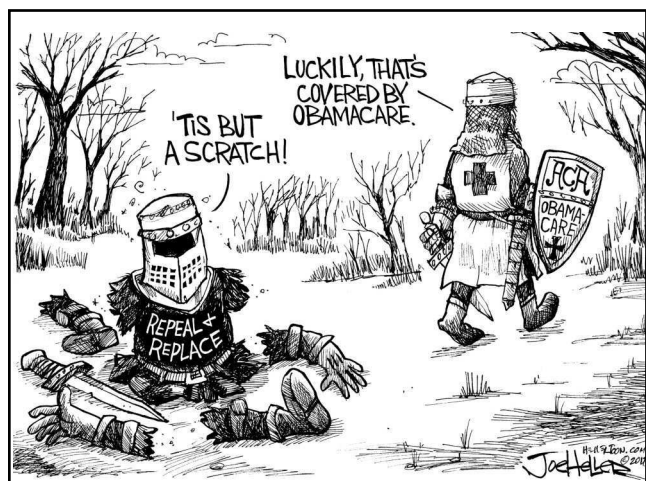
- **Central School District Board of Directors** — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence.
- **Independence Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.
- **Polk County Budget Committee** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

### TUESDAY, APRIL 4

- **Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Polk County Budget Committee** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5

- **Monmouth Historic Commission** — 6 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Polk County Budget Committee** — 10 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Existing building better for center

I don't understand the thinking of the person or group that overlooked the empty buildings and properties available in Dallas, and settled on the small space behind the Carnegie building on Church Street for a new senior center — a building that will need an elevator, and no parking for its patrons.

The Plain & Fancy building would have been an excellent location. Look at the parking available, and the exposure it would have gotten. What about the empty lot on the corner of Church and Mill — easier access — RadioShack building.

I am not a member of the senior center at this time, so I can only report what I have heard from the general public, that because of a timeframe, the grant money had to be used or it would be lost.

Losing the grant and ap-

plying later may have made more sense than purchasing a site that is too small for the purpose intended. What were they thinking?

Sounds like the cart went way ahead of the horse. Are there secret plans to tear down the Carnegie that the public is not aware of? Does the city of Dallas not want to sell any of its property for this purpose?

For Dallas, in my opinion, a remodel on an older building would have fit in better.

Barbara Whitlow  
Dallas

### Foundation supports James2

We at James2 Community Kitchen would like to send out a big thank you to the Dallas Community Foundation for the grant we received on March 9. By receiving this generous grant, we are able to help feed over 4,500 people locally in the Dallas community through-

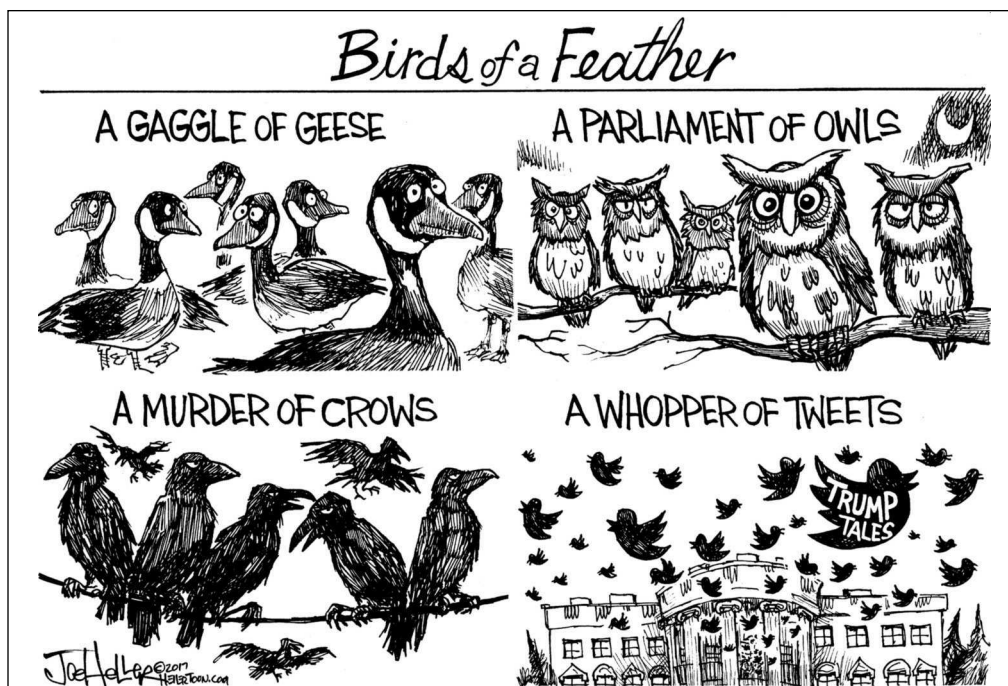
out the year. This grant enables us to purchase fresh produce, vegetables and meat for the people we serve.

For those of you not familiar with James2 Community Kitchen, we are a non-profit organization where volunteers cook and serve free meals every Tuesday at St. Philip church and every Thursday at Dallas United Methodist Church. The meals start at 4:30 p.m. and are served until 6 p.m. at each site. We are solely funded by donations and grants.

Falls City volunteers also prepare and serve free meals on the second, third and fourth Tuesday of every month from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at the Falls City Methodist Church.

Come by any of the sites and enjoy a nutritious meal. Bring your neighbor and enjoy an evening of socializing while dining. We even do the dishes.

Loretta Hodous  
Dallas



## WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

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

Election-related letters of all types are limited to 100 words. Writers are limited to one election-related letter per election season. Election letters from writers outside of Polk County are not accepted.

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. Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers should maintain a civil discourse and address the subject, not the author.

Letters, like all editorial material submitted to the newspaper, are edited for length, grammar and content.

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 verification purposes only.

poses 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.

Letters of thanks to businesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names.

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

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