

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Want to help run our city?

The pay isn't much but the sense of civic accomplishment can be great indeed.

We're talking about serving on the Baker City Council. But apparently hardly anyone else is doing the same.

The deadline for qualified residents to file as a candidate is barely a month away — Aug. 28. The first day to file was May 30, but as of today just two people — incumbents Adam Nilsson and James Thomas — had even picked up signature petitions (to qualify, candidates must be registered voters who have lived within the city limits since Nov. 6, 2017, and they must receive a petition from City Hall and collect signatures from at least 40 people who are qualified to vote in city elections).

Four of the seven positions on the City Council are up for election on Nov. 6. The top three vote-getters will be elected to four-year terms, and the fourth will serve a two-year term.

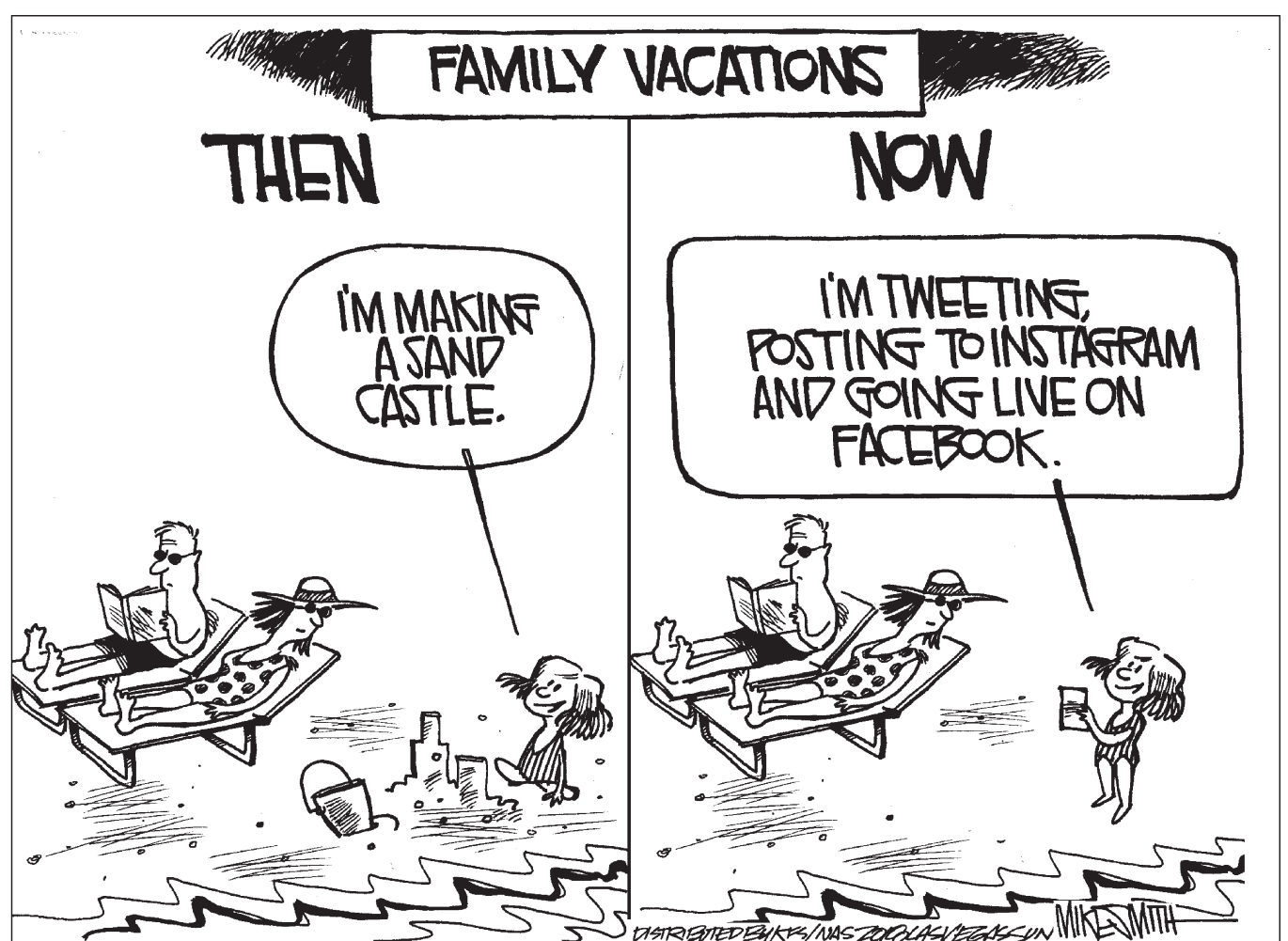
The next few years are apt to pose significant challenges at City Hall, and we'd like to see a large slate of candidates on the ballot of voters to choose from.

With the city's bill rising for Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System, and statutory limits on increases in property taxes, the City Council might need to make difficult budget choices.

Yes, the job pays just \$10 per meeting, with a yearly limit of \$150 per councilor.

But if you've ever been dissatisfied with something the city's done, or simply wanted to burnish your public service credentials, this is a great opportunity.

*From the Baker City Herald editorial board. The board consists of editor Jayson Jacoby and reporter Chris Collins.*



## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

The Endangered Species Act should not ignore the human species. It's right for the Trump administration to consider ways to change the act to better consider its economic costs.

What became the Endangered Species Act began with the first list of endangered species getting federal protection in 1967, including the bald eagle, the grizzly bear and the American alligator. The actual act was passed in 1973. It says endangered animals and plants contribute "esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the nation and its people."

Some benefits are obvious. One that is sometimes missed is the health potential in discovering medicines and treatments from research into plants and animals. Only a small percentage of the possibilities have been studied.

Now try putting a number value on all those benefits. Is there a moral obligation to keep species from going

extinct? How exactly do you factor that in?

It's also hard to get an exact figure for the costs of protecting endangered species. You can look at budgets. President Trump called for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service budget of about \$1.2 billion for 2019 with about \$211 million more directly for the act and related programs. But that federal budget only captures a fraction of the costs. They come in many different forms. What about the Oregon rancher who voluntarily doesn't use all his land to protect sage grouse habitat and keep the bird from being listed as endangered?

One of the most common examples of costs in the West is the impact on the timber industry from the spotted owl. Once it was listed as threatened in the 1990s, the timber industry in the Pacific Northwest fell off a financial cliff. Federal timber sales dropped from a 1983-1989 average of 2.9 billion board-feet in western Oregon to less than 0.5 billion board-feet in 1996, according to the Or-

## Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Letters are limited to 350 words. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days. Writers must sign their letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com.

regon Historical Society. That meant the loss of thousands of jobs. And now the more aggressive barred owl may wipe out the spotted owl, anyway.

The law's flaw is that everyone gets benefits while a relative handful of individuals and businesses have to bear great costs to comply with it. It doesn't endanger the act to find ways to correct that imbalance. It's only fair.

# Camp Carrion: It's better than sleeping in the car

After driving past 187 campsites, each occupied by people smiling the sorts of slightly demented smiles you typically see in beer commercials, my standards for an acceptable place to spend the night didn't so much lower as disappear.

The stench from an animal carcass fouling the air so thickly it seems almost to be liquid?

Surely the wind will shift around. Squadrons of mosquitoes big enough that they have FAA numbers painted on their tails?

This is what DEET was invented for.

A two-lane highway so close that passing cars are likely to plink stray pebbles off the tent?

Probably the slender lodgepole pines will absorb most of the impact if the guy in the lifted diesel pickup carries a bit too much speed into the corner.

A fellow camper who rides back and forth on the single access road on a two-stroke motorcycle, popping a wheelie most of the way and showing every sign that he will keep at it until he runs out of gas or crashes into a boulder?

Well, people used to pay decent money to watch Evel Knievel.

Conditions that would normally seem dreadful are easy to justify when dusk is falling and it appears ever more likely that your family might have to sleep inside a four-door sedan so crammed with debris that stray pretzel sticks and water bottles pop out, as if fired from a gun, whenever a door is opened.

Also this group includes a 7-year-old boy and his 11-year-old sister who sometimes resort to fisticuffs over whose piece of licorice is longer.

That this happened in Idaho, which is as thinly populated as some asteroids, was especially gall-



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ing to me.

According to the latest figures I could find without visiting more than one website, Idaho has 20 people per square mile, which gives everybody 32 acres — a goodly piece of ground.

This is obviously wrong, and dangerously so, not least because it doesn't account for visitors, who number at times in the millions.

But it's no more misleading than the highway signs at the city limits of Stanley.

The signs list the population as 63, which suggests that the biggest problem thereabouts isn't finding suitable accommodations but rather finding the person who has the door key.

But on one Thursday evening in July the place made downtown Boise after a Broncos game seem deserted.

This was of course the evening we arrived.

It was the only night of the four during our camping trip for which my wife, Lisa, was unable to reserve a site.

We deemed this an acceptable risk, figuring that although July is apt to be a busy month in a place such as Stanley, where the winters are positively Siberian (not that there's much positive about that), at least we would avoid the weekend.

This was a miscalculation, and rather a severe one at that.

Our first choice was one of the several Forest Service campgrounds at Redfish Lake, just a few miles

south of Stanley. We were disappointed but not terribly surprised that the campgrounds, most of which don't even accept reservations, were full. Redfish is among the more photogenic places in Idaho, a category in which the state is far from deficient.

I suggested as an alternative Stanley Lake, several miles west of the town and with a fetching, if not quite so dramatic, view of the Sawtooth Mountains.

We were optimistic as we pulled off the highway and noted that, unlike at Redfish, there was no sign listing any campground as full.

It turns out that the Forest Service is not exactly thorough when it comes to tracking the occupancy of its campgrounds.

(To be fair to the agency, this task is not as simple, what with the dispersed nature of campgrounds, as a motel clerk switching on the "No" sign next to "Vacancy.")

As we headed back to Stanley, Lisa and I began to be worried.

Our daughter, Olivia, however, was quite pleased.

She had noticed a motel in Stanley and was entranced by the notion of overnighting in a "lodge."

Or possibly she was just excited about not having to swat at mosquitoes.

I will concede that I didn't begrudge the possibility of not having to set up the tent or inflate the air mattresses.

Or swat at mosquitoes.

I steered into the parking lot, which was crowded but not overflowing.

Five minutes later, as Lisa and Olivia walked out of the lobby, I could tell, by the sour expression on Olivia's face, that there was no room in the inn.

Or in this case, the lodge.

The story was the same in each of the Stanley's lodging establishments — a decidedly modest list, to be sure.

I perused the atlas and noticed four campground symbols not far away, along the highway that follows the Salmon River east of Stanley toward Challis.

The first campground had the by now familiar appearance — trailers crammed into every gravel lane and nylon tents sprouting like mushrooms after a warm spring rain. (Albeit mushrooms in the sorts of fantastical shades that all but scream "I'm a poisonous toadstool.")

We exited at the second campground — aptly, if unimaginatively, called "Riverview" — and at first it seemed as though our search would continue at least for a few more bends of the great Salmon.

But then we saw the empty spot.

No trailer.

No tent.

No coolers or lanterns or the other detritus of the car camping family stacked on the picnic table.

I drove ahead and we all but leaped out.

And almost as quickly we leaped back in, each of us grimacing at the awful odor and grateful for the artificially cooled — and more vitally, the well-filtered — air inside the car.

We suspected the source was the nearby outhouse, but after a brief visit we found it was well-maintained and emitted a pleasant odor.

Comparatively pleasant, anyway. The unclaimed campsite was easily explained.

There was, however, a second empty site, perhaps 150 feet or so farther down the road.

The aroma there was still

detectable though somewhat less pungent.

In deference to the lateness of the day we decided it would have to do.

It wasn't the most pleasant night of our trip.

I kindled a fire, thinking — and not unreasonably, I think I am justified in saying — that the scent of pinesmoke might mask the noxious odor or even waft it away.

Instead the heat, at least at times, seemed rather to invigorate the stench, much as those aromatic waxes are warmed to release their soothing scent.

But at least the traffic waned considerably once the stars had come out — and what a celestial show we were treated to there in the Idaho mountains.

The stunt rider parked his motorcycle, and the mosquitoes couldn't get at us inside the tent.

(I heard some frightful thuds against the nylon walls during the night but that might have been only a bear.)

The next morning the air was refreshingly cool, if still somewhat fetid.

After breakfast we stopped at Sunbeam Hot Springs several miles down the highway and had a reviving — and generally unscented — soak on the edge of the Salmon, at the place where water that was very recently snow mixes pleasantly with water heated by the Earth's mantle.

There were no other bathers, and it was for me the most blissful episode of the trip, an interval of pure contentment.

Even the mosquitoes, who have no morals whatever, kept their distance.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.