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Your views

City shouldn't make sweetheart real estate deals

How dare the Baker City Council even think of offering reduced water and sewer charges in order to sell a property it owns. The citizens of Baker City will soon be on the hook for the millions of dollars necessary to upgrade the sewage facility to new DEQ standards. Obviously we will all be paying more in the future for our water and sewer rates, and now we get to pay for someone else's so the city can cut them a sweetheart deal in order to sell some real estate. Enough is enough! In case the members of the city council don't remember, the citizens of Baker City are currently paying \$3 a month to bail you out of your last real estate deal. For anyone who still doesn't know, the "Public Safety Fee" is nothing more than an unapproved tax to fund the salaries of public employees that the city didn't have money in its budget to fund and should have never been hired in the first place. They gambled on a real estate deal that fell through, and then when caught with their hands in the cookie jar and no cookies left, they suspended the sidewalk fee, raised the amount to \$3 per household, and misled the public by calling it the "Public Safety Fee" in order to raise the money to pay for their mistake. Not one cent is actually dedicated to any public safety program, the money is dumped right into the general fund, (yes they increased their own budget without voter approval), and the money is just as likely to be spent on toilet paper or a PERS payment as anything related to public safety. Please join me on Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. at City Hall. Let us remind the City Council that the money they're giving away doesn't belong to them, because at the end of the day it will always be the citizens of Baker who end up footing the bill for their actions.

Kevin Luckini  
Baker City

School bond measure would solve serious problems

I am writing to voice support for measure 1-88. Mark Witty, the school board, and a committee of Baker County residents have done a fantastic job creating a conservative plan for meeting Baker 5J educational and safety needs. My husband, Carl, and I have lived here

for 31 years. Carl was raised here in Baker County and went to these same schools that our children and now grandchildren attend. It has been 70 years since any real improvements have been made to our school buildings except in response to catastrophe. Carl was a teenager the last time a school bond measure passed in Baker County in 1948 and it's time to make an investment back in our community.

Our elementary and middle schools are severely overcrowded. Currently, instructional rooms are being created from janitorial closets, auditorium stages and shower rooms. The proposal includes using existing facilities to reduce utilities costs by consolidating and moving middle school students to underutilized space at the high school. Current travel to BHS for coursework is costing students valuable instructional time. 1-88 seeks to increase access to vocational and advanced coursework for middle school students and provide adequate cafeteria facilities.

Brooklyn Primary and South Baker Intermediate schools are bursting at the seams. The current solution at Brooklyn is to bring in modular units filling the blacktop, while South Baker has no flexibility to add modular units. This measure would update Brooklyn for use as an early learning facility instead of having our youngest students outside in temporary units.

I encourage you to learn about our district's needs and the proposed plans. Please watch the short video at [www.bsdbond.org](http://www.bsdbond.org) and tour the schools if you have any doubts about the conditions our teachers and students are coping with on a day-to-day basis.

I love our community and I want it to survive and thrive. Good schools attract industry and valuable workforce to small towns like Baker City. We want to support our students and help them become valuable, contributing adults in our community. Please vote Yes on Measure 1-88 this November.

Barbara Stiff  
Baker City

I'm voting Yes on school bond to benefit community

Please vote Yes on Measure 1-88 — for kids and for our whole community. I am retired, own several properties, am fiscally conservative, and have no children enrolled in school. I will vote Yes for the school bond because I want a healthy, vibrant future for Baker Valley.

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). Email letters to [news@bakercityherald.com](mailto:news@bakercityherald.com).

Initially, I raised questions about alternatives, potential negative impacts, and solutions not requiring a bond passage. After considering comparative plan costs, necessary safety improvements, and long-term viability, it was clear to me that the proposed plan requiring bond passage was well-thought out and the best way forward.

If you remain undecided about supporting 1-88, I urge you to tour our schools, review the research on alternatives, and check out the facts about models that are working very well in surrounding communities. You may be surprised. For example, I did not realize that Baker 5J per student funding is near the bottom of all Eastern Oregon school districts, nor did I realize that we have not passed a school bond since 1948. It also surprised me that renovating existing buildings was a lot more expensive than using the existing high school more efficiently and building a new elementary school nearby.

A Yes vote on 1-88 is for all of us, now and in the future.

Liz Burton  
Baker City

We can continue to use our existing school buildings

Give us a bond issue that addresses the maintenance and safety issues of our existing buildings, not one that gives us empty and underutilized buildings. Give us what is needed and is affordable! Brooklyn, South Baker and North Baker can house around 1,000 students (350 each). Central could house 350-400 students. These schools can all be remodeled and upgraded to be state-of-the-art buildings. This leaves no building empty and utilizes our existing structures. Our existing buildings CAN be upgraded and turned into state-of-the-art buildings giving good service to the community.

Jean Hulick  
Baker City

Harvey has done good work, and he should be allowed to continue

I believe it is in the best interest of the citizens of Baker County to re-elect Bill Harvey to serve another term as chairman of the Baker County Commission. He is familiar with our legal rights provided by coordination. In my opinion Harvey has done well to represent the majority of our concerns and has spent much extra time promoting many projects in outlying districts such as the Panhandle, Huntingotn and Sumpter.

Harvey has grown familiar with ongoing local concerns and has developed name familiarity outside of the immediate area, which could greatly benefit us in the future. These gains should not be minimized. Considering the long, faithful hours that Harvey has worked for us, it would be very unjust to vote against him with his work half done. Please vote for Bill Harvey.

Carmelita Holland  
New Bridge

Solution to school issue is to use the buildings we have

In the beginning there were four: Churchill, North Baker, South Baker and Brooklyn. Then there were three: North Baker, South Baker and Brooklyn. Now there are two: South Baker and Brooklyn. Surprise! Overcrowding!

Remedy: Move the high school programs now housed in North Baker to the half-empty high school and return North Baker to an elementary school. North Baker School can house approximately 350 students which would take care of the overcrowding now existing in the elementary schools and would also provide room for population growth.

As for the middle school, remodel Central. Central can house 350-400 students (present middle school enrollment is around 265) which easily takes care of overcrowding and would allow for growth also.

The remodeling and use of these already existing schools would not only cost less and address overcrowding, but it would also leave us with no empty buildings. And, there would be two beautiful state-of-the-art historic structures to show off!

Judith Head  
Baker City

'Truth' an elusive quarry in Kavanaugh debate

The words "truth" and "facts" have been ubiquitous in discussions about Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and the three women who have accused him of sexual assault.

But the reality is that we'll probably never know the truth.

I don't expect that irrefutable evidence of what happened will suddenly appear, plucked from a hat by an FBI magician. The number of years that have elapsed since the alleged incidents militate against this. There won't be cellphone records from 1982. And probably no other forms of physical evidence.

Nor do I expect either Kavanaugh or his accusers to retract their stories.

We have claims from Christine Blasey Ford, Deborah Ramirez and Julie Swetnick. And we have denials from Kavanaugh.

These are facts, all of them. But none is indisputable proof of anything. None is truth.

We also have the riveting testimony from both Ford and Kavanaugh before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 27.

Both seemed to me compelling witnesses. And both were believable.

But I have no trouble admitting that after listening to both of their stories I am no closer than I was before to actually knowing what happened in 1982.

Because believable is not the same as belief. Which is to say it is not certainty.

Just as a series of facts does not always give us the truth about a specific incident.

All this is unsatisfying to me. I understand why people yearn for the comfort of absolute confidence on such an important matter. I shudder at the prospect of hav-



JAYSON JACOBY

ing a man serve on the Supreme Court justice and thus help shape American society for the next three decades who sexually assaulted a woman.

But I don't know if Kavanaugh is that man.

I wonder, though, whether my ambivalence regarding the allegations against Kavanaugh marks me as a member of a small minority.

When I perused various sources of opinion journalism the day after Kavanaugh and Ford testified before the Judiciary Committee, including syndicators that supply columns and editorials to the Herald, I was struck by the almost unanimous belief among the pundits that Ford was truthful and Kavanaugh was not.

Either a lot of commentators are much more adept than I am at distinguishing between truth and lies based solely on watching a person speaking on TV, or else they believe they possess such an ability, which is not at all the same thing.

Will Bunch of the Philadelphia Inquirer, for instance, wrote about the "unflinching directness of Dr. Ford's account," which was "delivered with a remarkable, crisp clarity, even as her voice sometimes cracked and tears welled in her eyes as she brushed away a stray hair."

Bunch's take on Kavanaugh is rather less complimentary (and lacking any gratuitous references to his hair). Kavanaugh, Bunch wrote, delivered a "loud, forceful — some might dare say belligerent — burn-

it-all-down afternoon rebuttal, in which the 53-year-old jurist called both the confirmation process and the mounting allegations against him 'a national disgrace.'"

I'm not sure why Bunch felt it necessary to employ the weaselly method of writing "some might dare say" that Kavanaugh was belligerent.

He certainly was belligerent — anybody who watched his testimony would agree, whatever their opinion about his truthfulness, that that adjective is apt.

But this gets us — or at any rate, it gets me — no further toward having confidence in branding Kavanaugh as a liar or a truth-teller.

I expect any normal person who is accused of a heinous crime he says he didn't commit would be belligerent in defending himself.

I'm fairly certain I would be. Also "loud" and "forceful," to borrow two other of Bunch's words.

And I might well describe the proceedings as a "disgrace."

But just because Kavanaugh acted the way I would expect an unjustly accused person to act doesn't mean I know, or even that I think, that he was unjustly accused.

I don't know. And I feel the same about Ford's testimony.

I would expect a person who has been the victim of a terrible crime to have tears well in her eyes while describing the incident.

But though I understand that Ford said she was "100 percent" certain that it was Kavanaugh who assaulted her, Kavanaugh was equally unequivocal in his denial.

I recognize that similar scenarios play out sometimes in courtrooms in criminal cases. Sometimes juries have to decide whether they believe one of two diametrically opposed

stories is the truth and which, by necessity, is false.

(Although in many cases the information presented to a jury also includes physical evidence as well as testimony, the former being in short supply in the Kavanaugh hearing.)

But as important as the Supreme Court is, the stakes in Kavanaugh's confirmation, at least to him individually, don't compare with, say, a murder trial. If Kavanaugh is not confirmed — if, in effect, his denial fails to overcome Ford's allegation — he will lose a coveted job. And his reputation, whatever happens, has suffered irreparable damage.

But a murder defendant whose denial fails to persuade a jury might, depending on the state, lose his life.

Ultimately, I think President Trump should have withdrawn Kavanaugh's nomination, or convinced the judge to do so.

I understand that some of Kavanaugh's supporters would argue that by ending his nomination based on allegations that have not gone through the adversarial gantlet of a trial the nation would, in effect, make it possible for opponents to defeat any political nominee merely by bringing forward sexual assault claims.

That's a troubling prospect, to be sure.

But I'm not convinced the risk is so great as to threaten the sanctity of the federal nomination process.

Which is to say I'm not convinced that stopping Kavanaugh's confirmation would set a precedent or create a template that guarantees future nominations will also turn into spectacles.

Indeed the level of hysteria that surrounded last week's Judiciary Committee hearing makes me think it's all but impossible that we'll see

anything like that again.

It seems to me farcical to believe that opponents to every future Supreme Court nominee could find people willing to accuse the nominee of sexual misconduct in the most public arena possible.

That didn't happen when Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch last year, after all.

This is of course a political issue, which means the usual standards, which is to say anything resembling reasonable, don't apply.

But I think Trump had an option, and it's one that ought to have appealed to a man who frequently confounds expectations.

Pulling his support for Kavanaugh's nomination would in no way constitute an admission that Trump believes Kavanaugh committed any of the acts for which he is accused — something Trump no doubt could have emphasized in his uniquely brazen way.

(Imagine the tweets.)

Rather, it would be a brave act that showed the president recognizes that the Supreme Court is more important than one nominee. Moreover, Trump could have made the point that allowing the confirmation process to devolve into a situation where a possibly innocent man is branded as a rapist, and a possible victim of a heinous crime is ridiculed, benefits neither the people involved, nor the nation as a whole.

There are many qualified judges from which Trump could choose.

And although I reserve the right to concede later that I was naive, I don't believe that for every judge on Trump's list there are accusers waiting to tell their stories.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.