

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

City land sales and budgeting

Now that Baker City has actually sold property in the Elkhorn View Industrial Park, it makes sense that the City Council would create a separate fund in which to divert the revenue.

We hope, though, that city officials will not make the mistake they made last year, and assume money from land sales will be available even if the contract hasn't been signed.

The debacle in the 2016-17 fiscal budget — it included \$286,000 in potential revenue from industrial park land sales, none of which happened — contributed to the financial mess that prompted the City Council to approve a \$3 per month “public safety fee.”

In his proposal to councilors, City Manager Fred Warner Jr. wrote that another option was to add money from land sales to the general fund, which includes both the police and fire departments.

Warner recommended councilors instead create the separate fund, noting that putting the dollars into the general fund “could tend to skew the budget as this money could not be counted on to fund ongoing programs.”

That's true.

The city's mistake last year was more egregious, though — the problem wasn't that a source of money dried up, but that there wasn't any money at all.

The resolution the Council approved Oct. 27 to set up a new fund for the proceeds from land sales states that the city should use the money “for economic/community development projects” in the city.

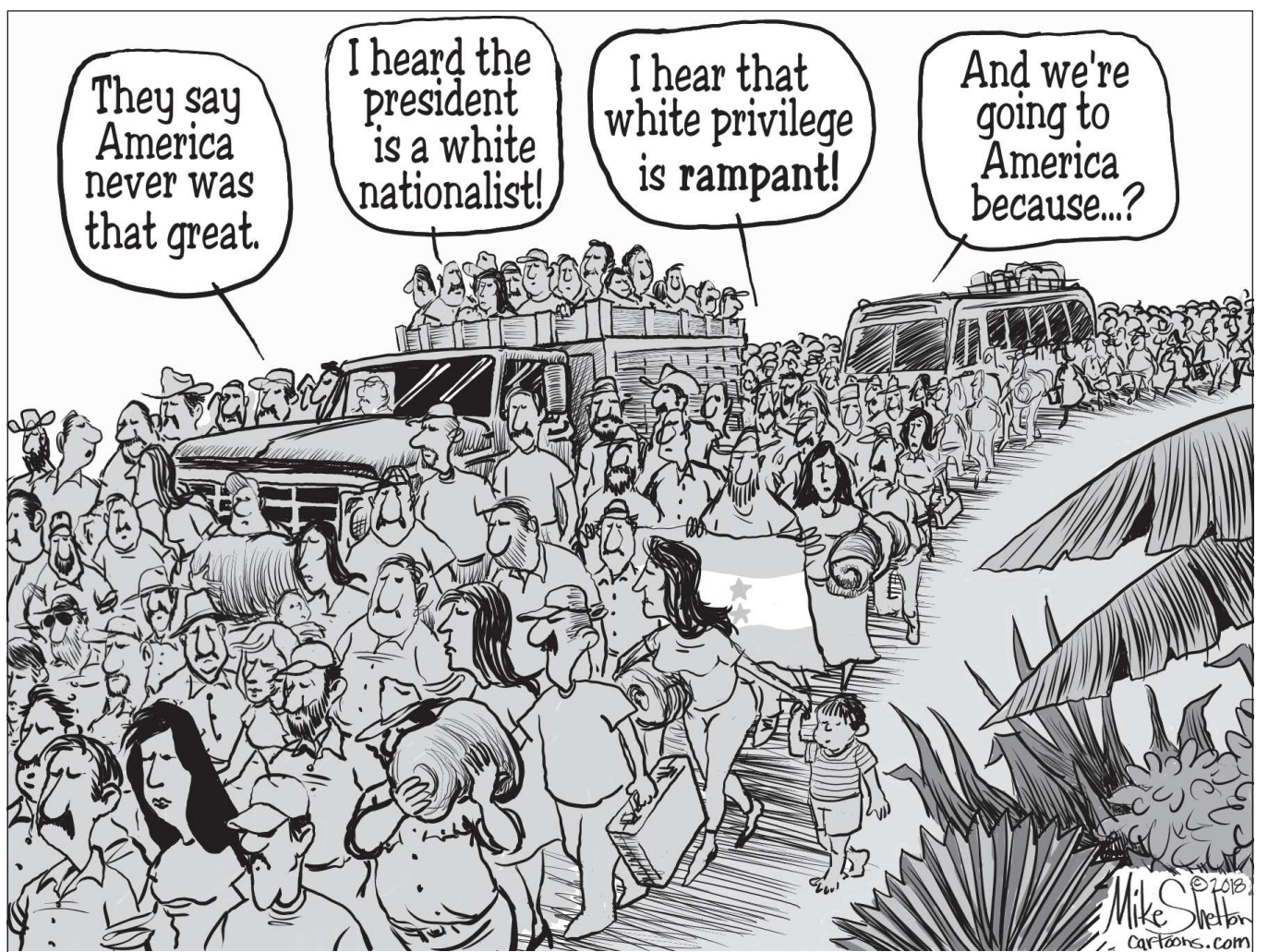
That, too, is reasonable. Creating jobs is the main reason the city used grant money to buy the 65 acres that became the industrial park.

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

Letters to the editor

- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

Mail: To the Editor, Baker City Herald,
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Vote: Make your mark on history

As a patriotic American, the daughter of an immigrant mother who taught herself English in order to become a U.S. citizen and a father who was a waist gunner in a B-24 Liberator bomber during World War II, I want to do what's necessary to help our country. That was their legacy and I honor it.

I want us to resist the centrifugal forces of ignorance and vitriol currently sucking the sanity out of our public and private discourse and spewing it out as hate speech. “Free” speech and “hate” speech are not the same.

But when that very sentence seems to be an invitation to an argument, it takes an effort. It's tough to have a productive and open-minded conversation when you're gritting your teeth, biting your tongue and clenching your jaw.

And a lot of us — and I'm including myself here — have discovered that it's become increasingly tricky to approach even the most benign subjects without glimpsing underlying political messages. At the supermarket last weekend, a young man rebuked me for my bagging practices.

“You're using plastic? Don't you want a clean Earth?”

“Yeah, but first I want clean litter boxes. That's what I use these bags for.”

I found myself feeling not only defensive, but also vengeful. I didn't do anything, of course, because I retain self-respect and because I genuinely do want a cleaner planet. But what I most certainly didn't want was somebody preaching at me.

So how can we do better? How can we, especially during what is a fraught election season, resolve not to encour-

GINA BARRECA

age hate speech in our politicians, in our social media, in our communities and in ourselves? I turned to my friends for their advice.

Emily Heiden, a doctoral student at the University of Cincinnati, suggests that we begin by having difficult conversations with our relatives (as if Thanksgiving doesn't already have enough angst) and then “going new places and meeting new people. Introducing friends of different groups to each other to put a human face on what it means to be Muslim or Jewish or Sikh. Stories and humanity change hearts and minds like nothing else.”

Tim Stobierski, founding editor of “Student Debt Warriors,” sent a suggestion composed of very few characters: “Signing off Twitter.” I agree. Nuanced perspectives are not nurtured by a platform permitting less subtlety than a bumper sticker. At least most bumper stickers have been proofread.

Reading complex and well-written works longer than 280 characters is also a way to combat hate speech. Anne Barreca, librarian and manager of a branch of the New York Public Library who just happens to be my niece, argues that empathy comes from understanding. She quotes James Baldwin: “You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was Dostoevsky and Dickens who taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the

people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

Shawn Lang reminds us, however, that being civil and being respectful still means we need to take a stand and speak up. Shawn, as well as a number of other friends on Facebook, quoted Elie Wiesel: “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

Kristi Stephens Walker suggests making those who casually use hate speech take full responsibility for their choices. “Making eye contact and not making it easy for the offender by balking or nervous smiling or even rolling my eyes — as if to say, ‘Oh, you silly sexist/racist’ — puts the responsibility on the offender.”

Barbara Cooley, my friend from Grand Rapids, says that while we must pay attention to well-reasoned argument from all sides, we can stop hate speech by turning a deaf ear. Says Barbara, “When it has no audience, hate will have no opening night.”

The protection of freedom is a value for which real patriots have risked their lives, devoted their lives and given their lives. And voting is the most powerful demonstration of that freedom, as well as the most powerful argument you can make. Making a mark on that ballot is leaving your mark on history.

Gina Barreca is a board of trustees distinguished professor of English literature at University of Connecticut and the author of 10 books. She can be reached at www.ginabarreca.com.

Your views

Promoting school bond Measure 1-88 has been a pleasure

Measure 1-88 has been a pleasure to promote primarily due to all of the new people I have met and the constructive conversations I have had with a very diverse group of citizens. I have literally knocked on the doors of strangers and been thanked for my involvement and compassion. Everyone who has expressed support for this bond has articulated a specific reason as to why they voted Yes and the reasons have been as varied as the people themselves. Many people agree that we must make a change and many of those people trust this process and are hopeful for the outcome. You can see their names in the multitude of letters to the editor, the newspaper endorsement ads, and on the radio. Drive around town and you'll see signs proudly displayed on the lawns of your neighbors

and in the windows of businesses who value a strong community and providing the best that we can for our most important citizens, the children. You can go on and on about passing along debt but the reality is that none of that will matter if tragedy strikes while our children are sitting in a building that cannot protect them because we were unwilling to make some sacrifices to ensure their safety. We simply cannot ignore the needs and the fact of the matter is that passing this bond will address them all. Please join me in voting Yes for the future of our community.

Karla Macy
Baker City

Translator district explains property tax charge

Many Baker County property owners will notice a \$100 service charge for “BMTV” on

their property taxes this fall. Blue Mountain Translator District has been broadcasting channels from Portland and Boise since 1978, and we collect revenue through a system of service charges. Every June, BMTD mails service charge letters to all properties in our rural district where signals can be received, and properties within city limits where an antenna was discovered during a physical inspection. Property owners must send in a voter-approved payment of \$100 for use of the signals or request an exemption by the following May, and BMTD has initiated the courtesy of sending a second letter to delinquent property owners every winter to ensure that no one is billed improperly. If BMTD does not receive the letter, the service charge is automatically entered onto the following year's property taxes as a lien. BMTD sent service charge letters in June 2017 and reminder

letters in March 2018 that were due back on May 31, 2018. All returned service charge letters from Baker County were manually checked for accurate entry in our database, and Assessor Kerry Savage reviewed our initial delinquent property list to ensure that ineligible properties were removed. Entry of the charge on 2018-2019 property taxes was approved by BMTD's elected board of directors on June 12. This process is authorized by ORS 354.690, and BMTD has taken steps to ensure that these statutes are correctly implemented. For more information about this process and our policies, please visit www.bmtd.org or call 541-963-0196.

Alex McHaddad
Secretary/treasurer
Blue Mountain Translator District

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley: D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Pendleton office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

State Sen. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-301, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. District office: P.O. Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; 541-889-8866.

State Rep. Lynn Findley (R-Vale): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep. LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Rosemary Abell, Arvid Andersen and Adam Nilsson.

