

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Public meetings problems

January was a poor month for Baker City and Baker County government when it comes to complying with Oregon's Public Meetings Law.

Fortunately both the Baker City Council and the Baker County Commissioners acknowledged, and addressed, their mistakes.

But both involved simply worded requirements of the law, and neither should have happened.

The City Council, after choosing Loran Joseph as mayor on Jan. 9 without announcing during the meeting how each councilor had voted, rectified the violation by making the results public.

On Tuesday the county commissioners, who were meeting in executive session, which is closed to the public as the law allows for certain topics, proceeded to move into a public session and cast a vote.

But the public notice announcing Tuesday's meeting said it would be limited to the executive session discussion.

The Public Meetings Law requires that when a public body plans a meeting which will include both an executive and a public session, the notice for that meeting will mention both. The reason is clear — if a meeting has a public portion, during which commissioners could conceivably make a decision (which they're not allowed to do during an executive session), members of the public might well want to attend. They're also legally entitled to attend.

But just as obviously, members of the public aren't likely to show up for a meeting that, according to the notice, will consist solely of an executive session that they can't attend anyway.

Commissioners rescinded the vote and they will revisit the matter, which involves potential legal action regarding a road blocked by a locked gate near Lookout Mountain, at their next regular public meeting on Wednesday.

The Public Meetings Law isn't perfect. Since it was passed in 1973 it has become larded with exemptions that allow public bodies to meet in executive sessions.

Fortunately the law still requires that our elected officials make decisions during meetings open to the public. But that requirement is rendered meaningless if, as the county commissioners did Tuesday, the public is told the meeting isn't open.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

### Letters to the editor

Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com



Another Democrat enters the race...

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

We have a rule for government programs: They should work. And not just work for work's sake. They should make progress toward a deserving goal.

That's why Oregon legislators should pass Senate Bill 348. It directs that the state do a cost-benefit analysis of its low carbon fuels program.

The program's goal is to reduce greenhouse gases. That might help with global warming. Does the state's program produce a benefit worth the cost? Of course, Oregon lawmakers would never let a program like this continue without checking, right?

The program is designed so fuel importers gradually lower the carbon intensity of their fuels. They can do

that by blending in lower carbon fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel. But if they can't meet the toughening standards that way, they can buy credits from public transit districts, biofuel producers and other credit generators that sign up. The extra costs of fuel get passed along to consumers in what they pay at the pump.

The state claims the program is a resounding success. "Over the first two years of the program, approximately 1.7 million tonnes of GHG were reduced at a cost to comply less than a third of a penny per gallon," the DEQ reported earlier this month.

But as Oregonians have learned from the state's wasteful Business Energy Tax Credit Program, disas-

trous launch of the Oregon health care marketplace, terrible performance in caring for foster children and more, it's always a good idea to dig beneath the surface of what the state says is happening.

The Bulletin is already in a legal battle to get public records that would explain details about how the clean fuels credit market is working. Chevron and REG, an Iowa biofuels producer, are fighting to keep those records hidden. Hmm, there couldn't possibly be something they don't want Oregonians to know?

Passage of SB 348 won't answer all the needed questions about the state's low carbon fuels program. It's a good start.

## Your views

*Editor's note: This letter was submitted to the Curry Coastal Pilot, which, like the Baker City Herald, is owned by Western Communications of Bend. The letter was submitted in response to the company's announcement last week that it had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.*

### The value of local newspapers

The Pilot isn't perfect, no newspaper, reporter or private citizen is. I have heard complaints about The Pilot getting facts wrong (they will print a correction on the front page next edition), printing letters to the editor that "should not be allowed" and typos/grammar errors. The Pilot is an equal opportunity target and gets criticized from the right, left and all points in between. I have seen way more errors of fact on social media, yet that is the main alternative for local news, if we do not have a newspaper. I know more than a few

people who do not subscribe, and rarely read the Pilot, for all the reasons I listed above. I have questioned some of the paper's coverage and content, but I cannot imagine not having a local newspaper.

The Pilot like most newspapers has been struggling in a rapidly changing market. With the limited resources they have been operating under for quite a few years, I am thankful for the paper they have provided. A local minister in Brookings told me he didn't read the Pilot. I asked him how do you serve a community without knowing what is going on in the community? It was a sincere question. I asked him where he got his local news and his answer was online; no one online news source, just basically whatever was posted on Facebook. I expressed serious concern; he listened and said he would reconsider. I am asking all to reconsider.

I have found no online source for comprehensive coverage of Brookings

and Curry County news/events except for The Pilot. If we do not shop local, the few stores we have will not survive, if we do not support our schools, young families will move. I am asking all to think about the loss of our local newspaper. If you don't subscribe how often do you see someone post online something that originated in The Pilot? There is a very popular Facebook page for the area that routinely posts content from The Pilot for discussion.

Please subscribe to the Pilot for the next 6 months. Show that Brookings as a community wants them to continue and will support them. No matter what your views of the paper, do you really think Brookings will be better off, without it? You can have the newspaper delivered to your front porch or your laptop or both. Often we do not realize what we have, until it is gone.

Teresa Lawson  
Brookings

# A boy's first play highlights volunteers' value

There is nothing quite like the anxiety that afflicts the parent of a child who is standing alone on a stage, illuminated by a spotlight and preparing to deliver a series of lines.

No parent wishes his child to fail at anything, of course.

But the fear is especially acute, it seems to me, when the setting is a public one and the parent is utterly powerless to offer help should it be needed.

And there are few settings quite so public — or so conspicuous — as a stage.

That's the purpose of the stage, after all — to literally separate the performers from the audience, the better to focus the latter's attention on the former.

The spotlight further accentuates the concept.

I had little experience of any of this until my son Max, who's 7, joined the cast of "The Reluctant Dragon," a production of Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre that had



JAYSON JACOBY

its four-day run last week.

It was a revelation.

Participating in the comedic play provoked aspects of Max's personality that neither my wife, Lisa, nor I had suspected might be lurking beneath his generally modest facade.

Turns out the kid possesses a repertoire of facial expressions and gesticulations that heretofore he had rarely demonstrated — and then only when he was embroiled in a dispute with his older sister, Olivia, who's 11.

We were surprised too that Max showed little if any trepidation at performing before an audience.

This from a boy who, just a few years ago, would hardly speak to people he didn't know well.

I was confident that Max was

ready for the show. Lisa and Olivia spent hours going over the script with him, and when the cast put on the show for relatives, the day before the official opening, there were just a few glitches.

(And even those I likely wouldn't have noticed except that Lisa, who probably could have recited the entire script, pointed them out to me.)

Still and all, during both of the public performances I attended I felt a slightly diminished version of the nervousness that makes my heart beat faster when, for instance, I have to speak in public.

I needn't have worried.

Max not only didn't seem bothered by the spectators, but he reveled in playing his role. He even added some embellishments that I suspected were not suggested, or endorsed, by the director, Leanne Hinkle.

I think Max's first play is destined to be one of the more memorable episodes of his childhood.

I certainly hope so.

It's unlikely, of course, that his newfound interest in theater will directly influence the course of his life — the vast majority of kids who play sports, for instance, won't become professional athletes.

But no matter.

You needn't earn a paycheck to be an actor; any more than you must sign a multimillion-dollar contract if you just like to shoot baskets in the backyard.

The value of the experience can't be measured in any conventional way, and I have no interest in engaging in such an exercise.

It was quite satisfying enough to watch Max smile and laugh, to know that he has gained confidence in himself. He also made several new friends among his fellow cast members, Natioshya Hickson Clarke, Khloe Borbon, Erelah Rosin, Paige Wolfe, Jarren Cikanek and Justin Wolfe.

What I gained was an appreciation for the dedication and enthu-

siasm of the people without whom the nonprofit Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre would neither exist, nor thrive.

Those involved in "The Reluctant Dragon" included, in addition to Hinkle, Joeline Murray, Marge Loennig, Bob Hinkle, Isabella Evans, Lily Hoelscher, Cherie Evans, Sebastian Cole, Liz Lippert, John Murray and Brandon Myers.

They made it possible for Max to learn things he might never have learned otherwise — things that he will remember decades from now, things that will, I expect, enrich his life in ways he can't begin to imagine today.

This is no small gift.

Nor is the gratitude I feel, living in a place where people have that magical combination of talent and generosity that can make the lives of ordinary kids like Max something more, well, extraordinary.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.