

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Case not made for athletic director

Baker School District Superintendent Mark Witty has failed to make a convincing case for the district to spend an additional \$83,000 to \$104,000 yearly to hire a full-time athletic director.

The Baker School Board endorsed Witty's proposal, and the district is looking to hire the new administrator this summer. The salary range is \$95,193 to \$116,039.

Currently, and historically, the district has paid a staff member a stipend to serve as athletic director. Typically the athletic director is a teacher (and, frequently, a coach). That's the case with current AD Tim Smith, a 20-year teacher at Baker High School and the head baseball coach. The district pays Smith \$12,038 annually to serve as athletic director.

Witty's plan was prompted in part by an audit that a Salem law firm conducted this spring at the district's request. A lawyer examined the district's policies and procedures for athletics, in particular how officials deal with complaints made against coaches.

The event that led the district to contract for the audit was Witty's decision, on Feb. 25, to dismiss Warren Wilson, BHS head volleyball and assistant baseball coach, from future coaching jobs in the district due to complaints made by volleyball players last winter about his alleged inappropriate conduct with them. The district also investigated similar complaints in 2015 by JV basketball players whom Wilson had coached. The district retained Wilson as a coach in that case although a district investigation concluded that his actions with players, though designed to "build positive relationships," were "misguided."

The law firm's audit recommended, among other things, that the district have one person designated to lead investigations into complaints under a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination against students and employees.

That seems a prudent measure. But the new athletic director won't be responsible for such investigations — Barry Nemeč, the district's special education director, will be. The new AD would be the first point of contact for complaints regarding coaches, however.

Witty told the board recently that the new AD, as a full-time administrator, would have more authority, and that the person's responsibilities would be more clearly delineated.

That's reasonable. Yet the issue in the Wilson case was not whether Smith, the athletic director, had authority or explicit duties. The district investigated the 2015 allegations and Witty decided not to terminate Wilson's contract. It's not clear how, or indeed why, the district would have gained more information, or handled the situation differently, had it employed a full-time AD at the time.

Witty cited other potential benefits of hiring a full-time AD, who would work under a 260-day contract rather than only during the school year and in a limited capacity, as is the case now.

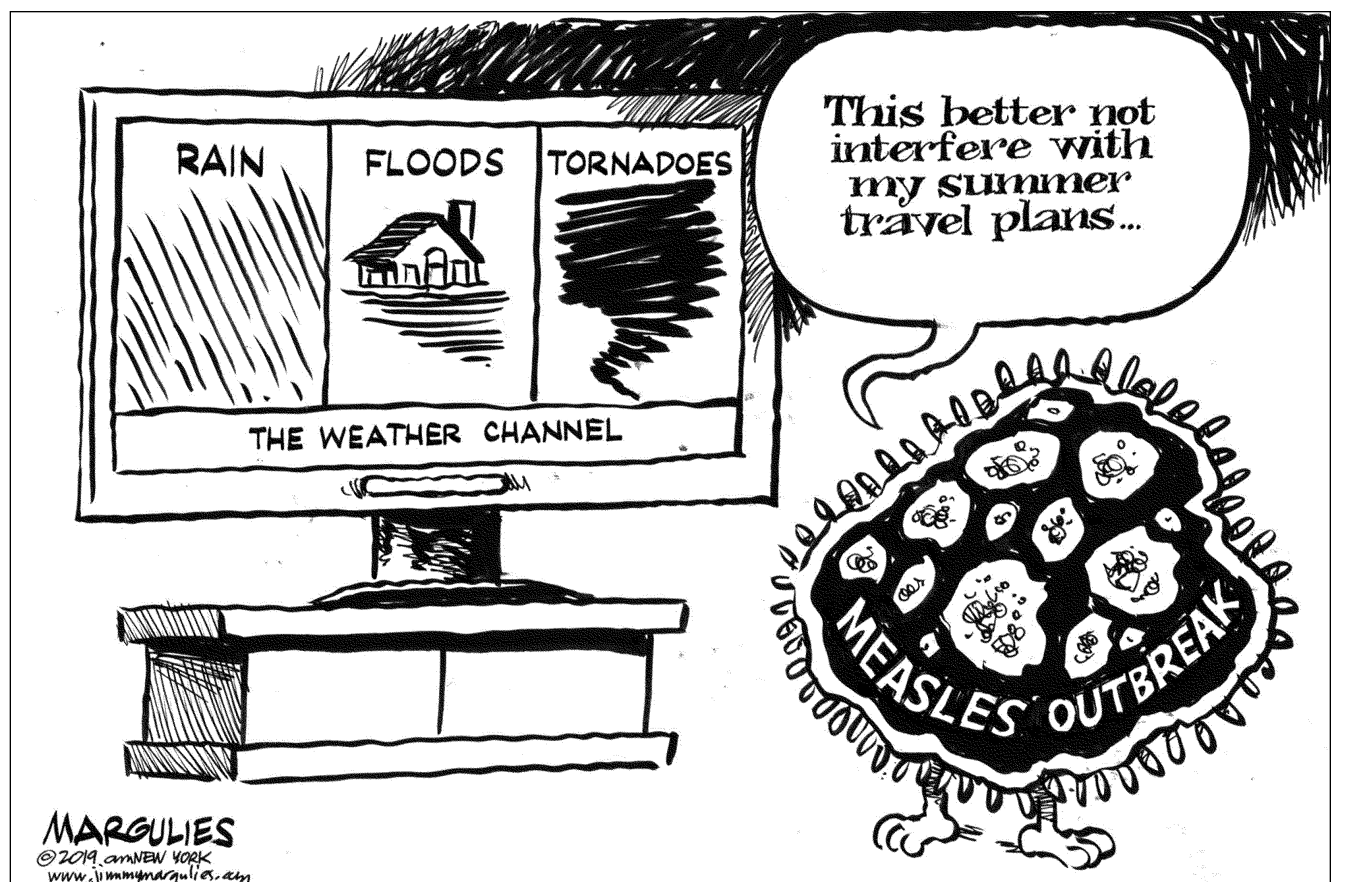
Witty said the new AD could work to bring more events, such as soccer tournaments and batting clinics, to the Baker Sports Complex, with the attendant boost to the district's revenue and the local economy.

There is definite potential in that area. The Sports Complex is hardly in use every day, and it is an attractive facility. Yet even Witty acknowledged to the board that realizing the Sports Complex's potential will take three to five years of work.

And there's no reason to believe that the district couldn't, with its current staffing level, more aggressively market the Sports Complex.

The Baker School District, to its credit, is in solid financial position. But that doesn't justify creating a new administrative position whose benefits are not certain.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

City Council shouldn't miss boat on pot revenue again

Thank you Councilor Lynette Perry for revisiting Baker City's ban on legal marijuana sales. I urge all of our council to reconsider. I wish to echo, and add to, Dan Collins' recent letter, "City should reconsider ban on marijuana dispensaries."

Are the citizens that are opposed to legal marijuana sales the same ones that helped overwhelmingly crush the school bond? Just asking — trying to get a handle on why Baker City feels it can throw any kind of revenue, whatsoever, out the window?

I am disappointed in our usually caring citizens! They would not even approve a medicinal outlet for a safe and non-addicting alternative to opioids, a remedy for epileptic seizures, glaucoma, Alzheimer's, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) ... the list of proven and historical medicinal benefits of marijuana would take too many of my precious 350 words.

The headline of the Herald's May 29 report on the City Council meeting "Residents say pot ban should stay" was totally misleading and manipulative, especially when only "three" residents are mentioned? Possibly those were the only three quoted out of a huge unexpected crowd of like-minded souls?

I'm unsure why Mr. Hunsaker feels so strongly that it would not be worth it for the Council to reconsider the

ban? My thought is that any kind of (and always needed) revenue would be well worth a reconsideration. Alice Knapp and Marvin Sundean want to mistakenly connect, or lump together, marijuana and opioids (in step with our federal government). I can use the same logic to connect mothers milk to alcoholism. I know what I believe for certain. Marijuana is nonaddictive, has incredible medicinal benefits, its negative societal impacts are minute compared to alcohol, can't recall any overdose deaths and it will create some revenue "legally."

How much revenue is purely speculative but looking at the tourism we draw throughout the year I feel it has a potential to be substantial. We missed the boat once, a second time would be nothing short of ridiculous. City may eventually need that revenue to settle a certain lawsuit I been reading about ... Peace to all.

Mike Meyer
Baker City

German chancellor's speech speaks the truth

On May 30 German Chancellor Angela Merkel gave the commencement speech to the 2019 Harvard University graduates. I highly recommend watching the YouTube broadcast, which can be accessed at the web address at the end of this letter. Although Merkel addressed the huge commencement crowd in German,

Letters to the editor

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her comments were alternated with the English translation.

Chancellor Merkel's theme was about walls that divide us. Having grown up in East Germany, walls are a subject Merkel knows about personally. (During my year (1962-63) studying at Tübingen University in West Germany, I visited the Berlin Wall shortly after it was built.)

Merkel made six points during her speech, which was interrupted many times by applause. But it was her fifth point that received a standing ovation, when she made a plea for honesty. "Dazu gehört, dass wir Wahrheiten nicht Lügen nennen und Lügen nicht Wahrheiten nennen." Translation: That requires that we not call lies truth and not call truth lies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ofED6BInFs>

Gary Dielman
Baker City

GUEST EDITORIALS

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

The cost of Oregon's green goodness will come at the pump. To get Oregonians to use less fuel, House Bill 2020 raises its price. The carbon reduction bill — seemingly destined to become law — is expected to raise the price of gas in the state by about 21 cents in 2021. That won't be the end of it. The bill will keep driving prices up, which in turn will increase the cost of living for Oregon families.

Do the Democratic legislators behind HB 2020 believe average Oregonians have too much money? Of course not.

Editorial from The Dallas Morning News:

The trouble with presenting oneself as a unity candidate is that, eventually, you will have to deliver something that looks unifying.

But as we review Beto O'Rourke's plan for overhauling the nation's immigration system, we struggle to find anything to support his claims toward unity.

O'Rourke earned our recommendation for U.S. Senate because he set a political tone that promised to pull us away from the bitter partisanship too eagerly embraced by Sen. Ted Cruz.

The country has had enough of endless political warfare, and we were hopeful that O'Rourke might be a candidate with the kind of courage to lead us toward compromise and comity.

What we have seen of presidential candidate O'Rourke suggests that might not come to be.

We find little true compromise on the major issues in O'Rourke's immigration reform plan. The nine-page memo is

But people on a mission to save the planet sometimes stop at nothing. Even logic.

Given that this bill is going to pass, shouldn't more of the clear benefit go directly to Oregonians? Oregonians may be all for the idea behind HB 2020 — clean energy and a cleaner Oregon. But when the price of fuel ratchets up and up, that's going to be a harder and harder choice.

HB 2020 could have been written to return those hundreds of millions of carbon tax revenue directly to Oregonians. But Democratic leaders wrote

passionate in its defense of immigrants, unflinching in its attack on the border wall, and hazy in its alternatives for border security. While we understand O'Rourke must work to stand out among the packed bench of the primary, he has come this far on a platform that suggested a meeting in the middle that this major policy proposal belies.

In his presidential immigration plan, we see the worst traits of O'Rourke's candidacy for Senate laid bare. In debates with Cruz, O'Rourke avoided specificity in favor of gestures of unity — gestures that were never finally backed up with unifying policy.

His immigration plan departs from serious proposals Congress has grappled with that would see increased security as a trade-off for paths to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants. His nod to security is to increase staffing and "modernize" our ports.

Last year, we recommended that Congress strike a compromise that would trade some 230 miles of physical barrier along a 2,000-mile border in

the bill so they would control the money themselves.

If the Legislature isn't going to do the right thing, Oregonians should. There may be no perfect mechanism, but state Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, has a way to send a message on the November 2020 ballot. His New Green Deal Tax Cut ballot initiative would reduce the state's gas tax from 34 cents to 18 cents. Boquist's initiative would, of course, undercut the green goals of HB 2020. But if the state isn't going to return carbon taxes to Oregonians, Oregonians should take back some of the taxes themselves.

exchange for full protection and a path to citizenship for the Dreamers who lost the protection of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA.

That is the sort of fair compromise that would acknowledge the nation's right to protect its border with the necessity that we treat migrants with compassion and care fitting for a nation like ours. We applaud O'Rourke's compassionate stance toward people brought here as children, as well as his overall humanitarian approach to immigration. We wish it would more plainly acknowledge the need for security.

Through his rhetoric, President Trump has marked "the wall" as a battle line. But O'Rourke cannot dismiss the need for securing the border without alienating many of the Republicans he would claim to seek common ground with.

A true unity candidate will find a way to be honest with his own party that compromise is on the table.