

## EDITORIAL

## Streets &amp; striping

Baker City Councilor Lynette Perry took to Facebook this week to survey her constituents about the possibility of restriping 10th Street from its 4-lane configuration, with no center turn lane, to 3 lanes, with one travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane.

That's the striping scheme that's been in place on Campbell Street, from Main to Birch, since 1997.

Perry's two posts on the subject have solicited more than 70 comments since Monday. The vast majority of posters want to keep 10th Street as it is.

Facebook is hardly a scientific survey, of course. But it is an effective way for an elected official to get a sense of public sentiment — almost certainly more effective than relying on people to attend a City Council meeting.

The Oregon Department of Transportation has proposed to change to 3-lane striping on 10th Street between Broadway and Pocahtontas, and possibly on Broadway from Main to 10th. But the decision is ultimately up to the City Council, hence Perry's posts.

Traffic engineers generally prefer the 3-lane setup because it's been proved effective at reducing crashes — in particular rear-end collisions that happen on 4-lane streets when a driver has to stop, in the left travel lane, to make a left turn. According to ODOT data, in the five years after Campbell was restriped the number of crashes on that section dropped by 15%.

In 2013 a consulting firm the city hired to update its transportation plan suggested restriping both 10th and Broadway streets to 3 lanes. The firm's report noted that making that change tends to reduce average speeds, and it creates room for bicycle lanes.

The response to Perry's Facebook posts is compelling evidence that Baker City residents prefer the current 4-lane configuration on those two streets. It certainly gives Perry and her fellow councilors something to consider when they take up the issue next year.

Staying with 4 lanes is reasonable, considering there hasn't been an abnormal rash of crashes on either street that can be attributed to the striping. Moreover, traffic volumes on 10th and Broadway are about half, roughly 5,000 vehicles on average per day, the volume on the 3-lane stretch of Campbell.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## OUR VIEW

## Say no to decriminalizing drugs

Oregonians may be asked next year to approve a ballot measure that would decriminalize the possession of illegal drugs. That in itself is a bad idea; worse is the way the measure would finance improved drug treatment programs.

Initiative Petition 44 is the baby of the Drug Policy Alliance, a national organization that hopes to change the way Americans deal with drugs. It recently turned in to the Secretary of State's Office the 1,000 signatures needed to begin work on a ballot title.

While Oregonians love their legal marijuana, they may be far less willing to decriminalize everything from heroin and other opioids to methamphetamine, and with good reason. Those drugs are both addictive and dangerous, and decriminalization could make it easier for children to get hold of them.

Perhaps the real point of IP 44 is the way it expands treatment for those with drug problems, and the way it finances that expansion.

Initial estimates are that in its first year, the program envisioned in the measure would cost \$57 million, most of which would come from taxes imposed on recreational marijuana sales that now go to cities, counties, state police and various health improvement efforts. In succeeding years, costs are expected to grow, and again, marijuana taxes would be used to finance the program, along with funds redirected from savings on prosecution and incarceration costs.

Only after all of that would the state police, cities and counties receive the tax dollars voters were promised they would receive when marijuana was made legal in Oregon.

While it's probably not surprising

that some in the criminal justice system are opposed to the measure, some treatment providers oppose it, as well. They point out they're already working with the state to improve treatment options and worry that, among other things, the ballot measure includes no way to push those with addictions toward treatment programs.

Oregon voters, if they're asked to approve IP 44, should just say no. The current system may need fixing, but wholesale decriminalization is not the answer. Nor is it appropriate to short-circuit local efforts to improve drug treatment measures in Oregon, as this measure no doubt would.

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- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in

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- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be

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- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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## Anti-hunting columnist dehumanizes people

If I wrote that all liberals are the same because they support labor unions and believe restrictions on abortions are unconstitutional you might accuse me of both generalizing and stereotyping.

And you would, of course, be right to chastise me on both counts.

The tendency to sort people into distinct and narrow categories, as though the Dewey Decimal System were as appropriate for humans as for books, strikes me as the sort of noxious attitude that entices people to deny, however subconsciously, the essential humanity of those whose lifestyles they disdain in some way.

It seems to me that American society has been moving in recent years in the gratifying direction of eschewing such simplistic definitions in referring to each other.

As well we should — humans are nothing if not complex, and I appreciate the increasing recognition that each of us is unique, notwithstanding the inevitable commonality of certain qualities and interests.

I was rather surprised, then, by a column offered recently by a syndication service the Herald uses occasionally for content on this page. The columnist contends that hunters who kill deer and eat the meat are ethically identical to hunters who kill black rhinoceroses in Africa and import the animal's skin, skull and horns as



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trophies.

"Despite what 'sport' hunters would like you to think, they're actually all the same," writes Michelle Kretzer, a senior writer for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). "There's really no difference between people who kill elephants, rhinos and lions for fun and those who find amusement in gunning down deer, squirrels, turkeys and bears."

That's quite an obnoxious allegation.

But it's not even the most offensive paragraph in Kretzer's column. That dubious distinction, in my view, is reserved for a work that isn't even her own. She also quotes author Howard Siegel, whose book title — "Ordinary Beasts: Hunting and Cultural Psychopathy" — suggests that there's no great difference between a hunter and a serial killer.

Siegel's conclusion, Kretzer writes, is that hunting "is killing without a purpose other than the self-pleasuring of the hunter."

I don't generally pay much attention to PETA, or to authors whom PETA officials admire.

I have lampooned some of the

organization's more outlandish campaigns, including its effort to rid the language of such sayings as "kill two birds with one stone," and to cajole us, while also shaming anglers, into referring to fish as "sea kittens."

These examples seem to me harmless, since I don't detect any intent on PETA's part to demean entire classes of people based on a single shared hobby.

But I've always believed that the veneer of silliness that overlays many of PETA's public pronouncements disguises a bigotry that, like all examples of that breed, isn't even slightly amusing.

Kretzer's screed against hunters does away altogether with PETA's sometimes disarming fatuousness. Her column lays bare what seems to me the organization's underlying hatred for people who don't subscribe to PETA's narrow beliefs about the relationships between humans and other organisms.

Kretzer's indictment of hunters is rife with claims so hyperbolic that any writer with a modicum of self-awareness would I suspect blush at the very thought of penning them.

Lines such as "hunters kill because they enjoy killing," and hunters who kill animals "do it just for the 'thrill' of it" remind me of nothing so much as the hysterical ramblings of a teenager whose self-righteous indignation is as honed

as a bodybuilder's biceps but whose faculty for soberly contemplating a complex topic is as flaccid as a newborn's abs.

If I didn't find Kretzer's exaggerations so abhorrent I might admire her confidence in dashing off proclamations so easily disproved that none but the most robotic acolyte could read the passages without a reflexive shudder.

She writes, for instance, that "natural predators help maintain the balance of the ecosystem by killing only the sickest and weakest individuals. Hunters, on the other hand, aim for animals whose heads they'd like to hang over their fireplace."

This seems to me the written equivalent of children who, when ordered to eat their lima beans, hold their breaths until they pass out.

Kretzer is correct, of course, that humans are the only predators who care whether a buck is a well-proportioned four-point or a misshapen three-point.

This is hardly a revelation. And it's a point any reasonable hunter would readily concede.

But Kretzer's smug assurance that predators "only" kill the weakest and sickest is not a biologically defensible claim. The idea that a cougar, or a wolf pack, that happens upon a perfectly healthy adult deer will in every such case allow the deer to saunter past, and then

wait however long it might take to find a sickly specimen to pounce on, is nonsensical. Non-human predators are opportunistic hunters. And although prey animals weakened by illness, age or injury obviously are easier to catch and kill, animals in that condition aren't always handy when a predator decides it's time to eat.

Kretzer's allegation that hunters kill animals "just for the 'thrill' of it," ignores reality in a similarly sophomoric way.

If Kretzer were right there would be no need for venison recipes. Yet even a cursory internet search reveals hundreds.

I recognize, of course, that PETA isn't interested in an actual debate about the differences between trophy hunting and sport hunting.

Kretzer's column could hardly express more clearly the organization's disdain for killing animals for almost any reason.

What I find curious is that a PETA official would be so callous as to define people based on a single characteristic. It is one thing to find hunting distasteful regardless of its purpose. It is quite another to suggest, as Kretzer does, that a person who shoots a deer and ends up not with a trophy but with a freezer full of healthy meat might well suffer from a mental defect.

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