

EDITORIAL

Striking a balance on enforcing camping, parking limits

“Reasonable” and “unlimited” are among the words that Baker City Police Chief Ty Duby used in a recent press release outlining the department’s effort to enforce rules for camping on public property and parking recreational vehicles on city streets.

Those two adjectives illustrate the challenge that confronts police here and in so many other places around the state and country as they deal with an increase in the number of homeless people.

The city has imposed limits, as it should, on where people can live and how long they can park vehicles including motor homes and trailers.

But as Duby noted, the police department is also striving to be reasonable in enforcing those limits.

Which is to say, they’re trying to treat people with dignity and respect.

As they should.

Yet compassion for people who lack permanent shelter must be balanced with the government’s obligation to residents whose circumstances are more fortunate.

Duby acknowledged that enforcing rules is not always straightforward.

“Multiple cities in Oregon have been overwhelmed dealing with transient camping that has littered their city with makeshift shelters, garbage, hazardous waste and caused public outcry,” he wrote. “In our best effort to protect Baker City citizens, both with and without homes, the City of Baker City has adopted Ordinance 3383 that regulates camping in Baker City. This ordinance offers reasonable accommodations but does not allow unlimited encroachment of public and private properties.”

A longtime city ordinance requires recreational vehicles, including RVs, utility trailers and boats, that are parked on city streets to be moved within 72 hours.

There’s a legitimate reason for this restriction. Snowplows and street sweepers can’t do their work as effectively if their route is blocked by vehicles.

Ordinance 3383 is much newer, passed by the city council this May. It deals more specifically with an issue that has become a more visible in the past couple years — homeless camps.

Ordinance 3383 regulates camping on public property.

The ordinance bans overnight camping in city parks, including the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway path along the Powder River, as well as in several other specific public properties, including within 150 feet of any school, preschool or childcare center, or at the Baker Heritage Museum at 2480 Grove St., the Baker County Courthouse, Sam-O Swim Center, the YMCA gym on Church Street and the YMCA Fitness Center on Pochontas Road.

The ordinance also states that if someone is living in a vehicle, it must be moved at least every 24 hours and for at least the distance of a city block.

The ordinance bans camping on public property in residential zones, while camping would be allowed, from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily, on public property in the general-commercial, general industrial and light industrial zones.

The ordinance applies only to public property. People are not allowed to camp on someone’s private property, at any time, regardless of the zone.

Although the parking and camping ordinances are separate, they do at times overlap, since some homeless people live in a vehicle.

That situation can cause problems beyond the aforementioned conflict with snowplows and street sweepers.

Duby said the city recently had a travel trailer moved after finding that a sewage hose from the trailer had been placed in a nearby hole. This poses a health risk besides the obvious aesthetic problem.

Although some people likely would prefer that police treat homeless people and camps as they do vehicles that exceed the parking limits, it’s not so simple. People have to be somewhere, after all.

And beyond the logistical challenge of constantly rousting people from their camps, there is also a legal hurdle.

In 2021 the Oregon Legislature, prompted by a federal court decision in an Idaho case, passed a law stating that cities and counties with ordinances regulating camping on public property must ensure those ordinances are “objectively reasonable as to time, place and manner with regards to persons experiencing homelessness.”

Baker City’s ordinance 3383, which allows limited camping on public property, reflects the state law.

None of this is simple, or ideal.

Prohibiting homeless camps in Geiser-Pollman Park, for instance, is an obvious, and necessary, restriction.

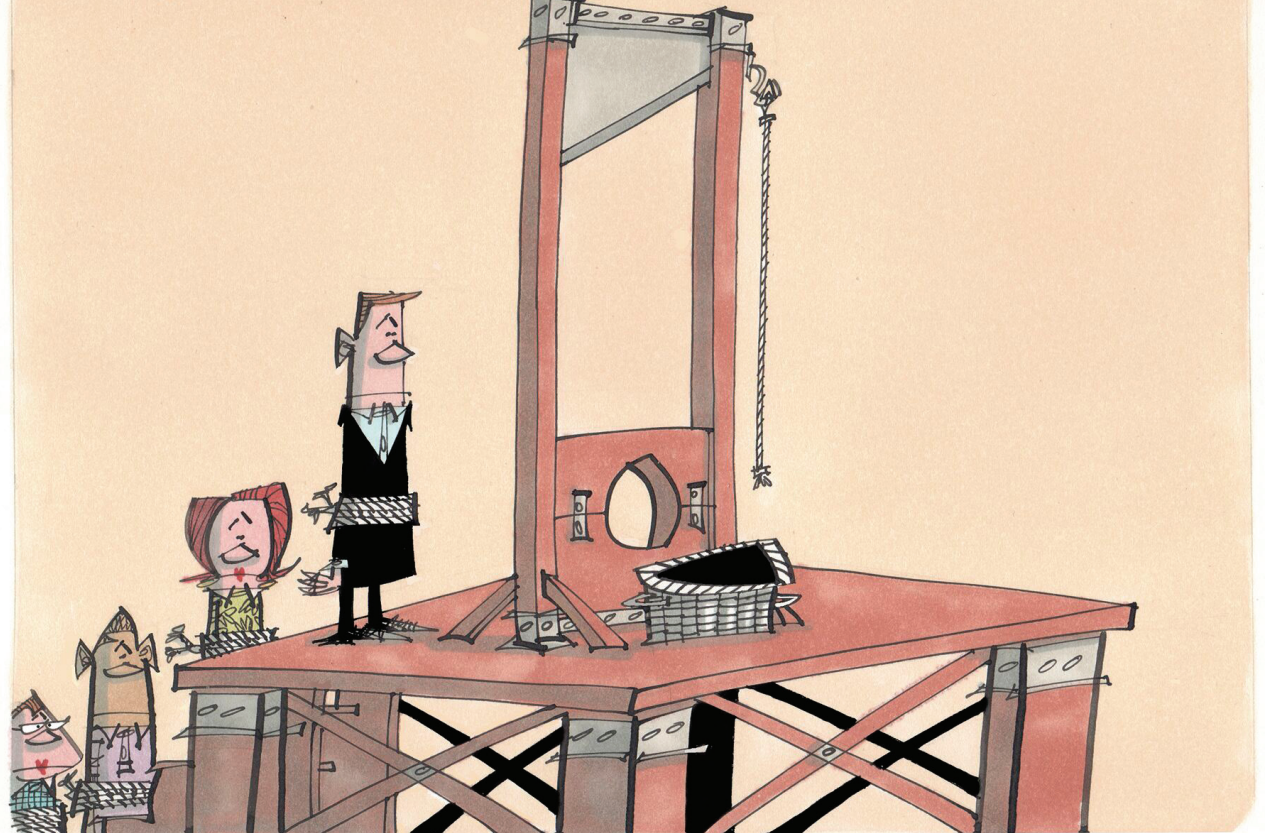
But dealing with homeless camps on private property, which isn’t subject to ordinance 3383, can be difficult if, for instance, the property owner doesn’t object.

Nonetheless, the city council was wise to pass the ordinance, and Duby is acting appropriately in trying to enforce it to the extent possible.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

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COLUMN

Remembering the Korean War on Veterans Day

Each year, our nation sets aside Veterans Day to remember all the men and women who have defended our liberty through their honorable military service. American cities big and small celebrate with ceremonies across the nation to honor their service and their sacrifice.

We are proud to note that even in the wake of devastating and destabilizing world events like the COVID-19 pandemic, celebrations that honor our nation’s veterans were among the first to return to full strength. The value that we as Oregonians and Americans place on honoring and showing gratitude toward those who have served and sacrificed to protect our freedoms and way of life is immense.

This year, while the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs continues to honor all veterans of all eras, we are paying tribute to one particular era of our veteran community: Oregon’s Korean War veterans. Though this war is referred to as the “Forgotten War,” we in Oregon have never — and will never — forget the extraordinary and heroic veterans who fought for freedom in the Korean War.

This theme has a personal significance for me. My father fought as a Marine during the Korean War, where he earned the Purple Heart. After I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army and asked for my first tour of duty to be in South Korea, my father shared the only thing he ever said to me about his combat experiences there. He half-joked that if I ever traveled near the DMZ, I would surely see his fingernails where he desperately attempted to dig a deeper foxhole as enemy artillery rained down on his Marine unit.

Of course, my own experience of being stationed in the Republic of Korea was vastly different, thanks to those courageous men and women who fought during the Korean War. In fact, I enjoyed my first tour in Daegu so much that several years later, I served a two-year tour in Korea. The Korean people are wonderfully gracious and kind. Whenever I was in uniform outside the military base, older Koreans who remembered the war would sometimes approach me and thank me as a representative of the American military.

In 1950, our nation was weary of war after years of global conflict. Yet, 1.5 million Americans — including 60,000 Oregonians — left their family and friends and their homes to



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help defend our nation’s friends and allies halfway around the world, in a place they had never been and on behalf of a people they had never met.

Together with men and women from 20 other nations, they joined shoulder to shoulder with the brave people of South Korea to defend their independence, to safeguard other Asian nations, and to protect the freedom that remains our greatest gift. All those who fought in the Korean War endured terrible hardships — deadly cold, unbearable conditions, an enemy of overwhelming numbers, and the threat of brutal imprisonment and torture.

But their courage never wavered — not when they were defending the perimeter at Busan, braving the tides at Inchon, confronting the world’s fastest fighter jets in Mig Alley, enduring hand-to-hand combat on Heartbreak Ridge and Pork Chop Hill, or even fighting their way back from the infamous Chosin Reservoir. In September of this year, I had the privilege of speaking at an Honor Flight of Portland, Oregon, send-off event for 24 honored veterans — 19 of whom served in the Korean War. It was an honor to meet them, shake their hands, hear some of their stories, and wish them well as they prepared to fly across the country to visit the fabulous memorials built in our nation’s capital to honor and remember their service and sacrifice. They set a standard of valor and perseverance that may be equalled, but will never be surpassed in the annals of American history.

The men and women who served in the Korean War set themselves apart not only by their courage and sacrifice, but by their unity and dedication to one another. It was just before the Korean War, in 1948, that President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 — abolishing discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin in the United States Armed Forces.

When war broke out in 1950, our country — for the first time in its history — entered the fray with a fully integrated and desegregated military. These proud service members of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds joined the people of 20 other nations and South Korea to

fight this war.

Earlier this year, we also observed the 73rd anniversary of the establishment of the Korean Augmentees to the US Army (KATUSA) program. It was started as a spoken agreement between President Seungman Lee and U.S. General Douglas MacArthur. At that time, the U.S. Army needed a military force that had the proper knowledge of the geography of Korea, and the ability to distinguish South Korean allied troops from North Korean enemy troops and communicate better between U.S. soldiers and Korean soldiers. Therefore, some men were drafted as KATUSAs, and others voluntarily applied. After training, they were assigned to U.S. military units. During the Korean War, nearly 44,000 KATUSA soldiers fought for South Korea with U.S. forces. They, too, are heroes, and we honor them today.

This program continued after the Korean War, and KATUSA soldiers would spend 18 months with the U.S. Army learning an occupation and would then return to the ROK Army to train others. The program remains active today and is a symbol of the ongoing friendship and mutual commitment between the Republic of Korea and the U.S.

I was fortunate to have KATUSA soldiers in my organization during both of my tours in Korea. They were among the most dedicated soldiers I have had the honor of serving with.

Finally, on this day, we remember and give thanks for the 40,000 Americans who paid the ultimate price in the fight for freedom and independence during the Korean War. Among their number were nearly 300 Oregonians whose names are inscribed on the Oregon Korean War Memorial in Wilsonville. Similarly, we give thanks for the more than 11,000 KATUSAs who went missing or were killed in action.

The world is a better place because of these men and women. Our duty as a nation and people is to remember and honor them, and to always strive to live up to the ideals for which they served and sacrificed.

■ Kelly Fitzpatrick is the director of the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs and Governor Kate Brown’s policy advisor on veterans’ issues. She is a retired Army officer. Her military awards and decorations include multiple awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the Army Parachutist Badge.

OTHER VIEWS

Public health officials need better messaging

EDITORIAL FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES:

Heading into the third winter since COVID-19 emerged in the U.S., public health leaders have an abundance of information about the deadly virus. How it spreads and how to stop it. What they haven’t yet figured out is how to communicate this information effectively.

For weeks, public health leaders have been encouraging people to get the latest booster shot. But only a minuscule number of people have heeded the recommendation, with about 9% of Los Angeles County residents getting the updated shot, slightly higher than the national average.

Clearly, the guidance isn’t getting through, but it doesn’t have to be that way. Health specialists should remember that trusted voices are at the heart of any successful information campaign.

Mixed messages about the coronavirus from top policymakers throughout the pandemic haven’t exactly inspired confidence. The House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis last month released a report detailing how the Trump

administration downplayed the risk of the pandemic to the point of attacking scientists providing accurate information. And there have been recent blunders. Rochelle Walensky, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, downplayed masking earlier this year even as the agency was recommending this as a preventive measure. President Joe Biden’s statement in September that the pandemic is over was widely lambasted as premature and counterproductive. These high-profile missteps have muddled communication, but policymakers can move forward by taking cues from successful public health campaigns that have helped reduce COVID infection rates in the past.

Officials should consider making tailored efforts to reach specific communities. For instance, they should once again send “promotoras” into Latino communities disproportionately affected by the coronavirus. These Spanish-speaking community health workers have proved to be trusted messengers, and helped inform Latinos about the importance of testing

and vaccinating at the height of the pandemic. Latinos in June 2020 were five times more likely to die from COVID-19 than white people, according to a KFF analysis.

The disproportionate effect of the coronavirus on Latinos and other people of color prompted state policymakers to allocate \$17.3 million to more than 110 community-based organizations focused on underserved communities in California. Targeted vaccination campaigns have proved effective, helping reduce Latino death rates. Also, outreach efforts should focus on other communities still suffering a disproportionate number of COVID-related deaths, including lower-income, Pacific Islander and Black people.

Policymakers should also consider reviving health campaigns creating awareness about the higher risk of coronavirus transmissibility in certain sectors such as food service and retail industries, which get busier during the holiday season. The COVID Workplace Outreach Project was another effort to address the dangers faced by

workers in these industries. Such messaging can help remind employers, workers and the public of the importance of vaccinating, testing and masking to help prevent illnesses and keep businesses running smoothly.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has called for an end to the COVID-19 state of emergency on Feb. 28, 2023, but indicated that certain measures such as vaccination and testing efforts will continue through the winter to maintain low levels of infection. The newly created state Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications should use some of the \$65 million allocated in the state budget for these targeted campaigns, considering that achieving health equity is one of the agency’s chief goals.

The tiny percentage of people getting booster shots indicates there’s much room for improvement in public health campaigns. The holiday season, which has come with surges of COVID cases the past two years, requires public health leaders to step up their messaging to the public.