

Bend City Council picks its goal posts

Goal-setting for the Bend City Council is more than a formality. What the council picks as goals makes a difference, because those are what city staff works on.

And the new councilors can use the goals to make their mark.

Some of the goals councilors will discuss on Wednesday aren't new. But there are some changes.

The city may start paying stipends to people who serve on city committees. The issue has been discussed before. Serving on a city committee can be an exclusive position. It's a commitment of time and energy that goes beyond just showing up for the meetings. It should not be a requirement that a person work for themselves or run a business to be able to serve on a city committee. How could the city get more people to serve?

Maybe, pay them. A stipend could help with a computer, travel, parking, a babysitter and whatever else. Will that open the role up to more people? It could. The biggest obstacle for many, though, is finding the extra time in a day on top of making a living and family responsibilities. We wonder if a stipend would not mean opening up the possibility that more people can serve. It might just mean that the people who do serve get stipends.

Another goal is to transform the role of the police chief's advisory council into something with a focus on "community representation, transparency, public oversight and accountability." Will that mean that

the council will have an actual role in determining how the police department will run? Will there be more information to the public about any disciplinary action and a role of the advisory council in any action? Disciplinary changes would undoubtedly require a change in the city's contract with the police union.

The council is also looking at an ambitious goal for the homeless — "create housing units or facilities to house 500 homeless individuals on a temporary or permanent basis." We don't know if that includes the options that already exist, but 500 is a big number regardless. That's a major shift in priorities for city government toward more direct action to address the city's homeless.

We'd be remiss to not mention an overlying theme to many of this council's priorities: equity. That should not come as a surprise, because the four newly elected councilors made it a focus of their campaigns. Expect any new council action to be viewed from an equity lens — from deciding what happens first to how initiatives are structured.

The goals you may be interested in may be different than the ones we highlighted here. You can see them all in the agenda for the Council's Wednesday meeting.

End the mail-in ballot guessing game

When is it too late to mail in your ballots before an election? Three days in advance? Four? It's a guessing game.

The Oregon Legislature is considering at least three bills that would provide more certainty. One is from state Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend. Knopp's Senate Bill 694 and the bills in the House are similar. Knopp's bill requires that a ballot would be counted if it is postmarked no later than the Saturday before Election Day. The two House bills put the deadline for the postmark on Election Day.

We hope the Legislature passes a version that will make the change. It makes it easier for people to vote and should ensure more ballots are counted. It will mean, though, that election results will be murky until several days after the election.

Oregon does have drop boxes all over the state so people can ensure their ballot is in on time. But it is more convenient for some to mail their ballot. And voting should be convenient.

Knopp's bill and House Bill 2226 also put restrictions on who and when a person can turn in another person's ballot. We don't see any need for such restrictions, though there is always the chance ballots might not be turned in. The progressive political group Defend Oregon failed to turn in 96 ballots for the November 2018 election in time to be counted.

We would prefer it if people didn't wait to vote until the last moment. But people mailing in their ballots deserve a clear deadline for when their vote will be counted, instead of having to guess or rely on the speed of mail delivery.



My Nickel's Worth

Loss of standing

Our son, who was born in Bend and attended public school in Bend through high school, is a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. On Jan. 7 newspapers in Kenya headlined in large letters "Chaos & Shame" and stated "Capitol chaos leave image of 'exceptional' U.S. in tatters."

Saturday 43 Republican Senators voted to not hold former President Trump accountable for his actions in undermining faith in our national elections, for inciting the insurrection that took place in our Nation's Capitol on January 6th with loss of life and destruction to the sacred building and to our democracy, and for failing to uphold his oath of office to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Sadly, our son says he, as a representative of the U.S., no longer has moral standing in Kenya and East Africa to encourage other nations and their politicians to uphold the rule of law and maintain fair and free elections. Unfortunately, they will just laugh in his face after what they have seen happen in America. Would be dictator politicians will have more freedom to undermine democracies in their own countries. The reverberations of the Insurrection will continue around the world for years. Those 43 Senators, including the former majority leader, failed our country and failed to uphold our democracy. Their names will live in infamy.

—Ron and Mary Carver, Bend

Solutions for the homeless

On the front cover of The Bulletin, dated Feb. 12, one of the main stories was about the new permit system required for some local trails "as a way to curb the degradation of trails due to the ever increasing numbers of trail users". Inconvenient, but I see the reasoning behind it, to protect our public lands.

I then turn to Page 2 and I read the story about the proposed bill (3115) by Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek which would limit the cities or counties abilities to do anything about homeless folks residing/sleeping on public property. This follows up the federal "camping lawsuit" in Boise which says if there isn't enough room in shelters you can't prosecute people for camping on public property. What happened to the protection of public property?

Many of the homeless continually trash our public lands with piles of garbage and human waste, with no concern for our public lands and water ways. Something needs to be done.

While the city of Bend is in the process of purchasing a motel to house some of the homeless, it just scratches the surface. There will never be enough beds in shelters. I think the best solution would be for the city/county to purchase or donate a large parcel of land, put a fence around it, and provide some basic needs like water, toilets, showers, garbage containers, and a large building or two, maybe with a large commercial kitchen. The building would be a warm winter shelter and a dining hall. People could put up tents and shelters. With this in place the local cities and counties would have the ability to curb the occupation and trashing of our public lands that are there for all of us to enjoy. They could enforce violators of our existing laws. Law enforcement could make rounds through the facility and maybe some other social services could be provided. It's not a perfect plan but it could solve some of the existing problems that no one seems to have the ability to deal with.

—Scott Erwin, Redmond

Wrong policy

Summit High School returned to in-person learning Feb. 8, and within 3 days had a COVID outbreak and had to return to distance learning. But Governor Brown just had to put vaccinating teachers ahead of seniors, like myself. Oregon is the only state in the country that did that. So, now teachers have been vaccinated and can't even safely return to in-person teaching, while one of the most vulnerable groups (seniors) had to get in line behind them. What a waste! It will probably cost senior lives just because of a premature plan to return to in-person learning.

Even Jace Bracelin, a junior at Summit, who founded a student group to demand more stringent reopening safety measures, realized this and is wise beyond his years. And a nurse/mom of a sophomore there was wary of students returning so soon. Washington state is already vaccinating 65 and older, while Oregon is still at 75 and older, likely due to Brown's decision. I hope Governor Brown sees the error off her ways and would not make the same decision going forward.

—Katy Sanchez, Bend

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

How to submit Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred. Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Physical education class is not — and should not be — canceled

BY KELLY FIELD

Special to The Washington Post

It's almost time for gym class, and my fifth-grader can't find her tennis ball.

"Adrienne, did you take it?" she demands of her younger sister, who swears she didn't (although she probably did).

"How about a soccer ball?" I ask. They're practicing dribbling skills.

"No, Mom," she says firmly. "We're indoors." It has to be a tennis ball. She searches under the coffee table and behind the couch; she scours her sister's cluttered room. No tennis ball.

This is what remote physical education looks like in our house. And what it sounds like? Thundering footfalls from the bedroom above my office, as my third-grader runs through games her PE teacher is using as a warmup.

The coronavirus pandemic and the resulting widespread shift to remote learning have brought major changes to physical education. Games such as Turkey Ninja Warrior and water-bottle bowling and solitary pursuits in spaces as small as a studio apartment have replaced class in open fields or gyms. Rolled-up socks and laundry baskets have replaced balls and nets.

The PE instructors I spoke with said the students seem to be having fun —



Physical Ed teachers Jonathan Tuttle, left, and Steven Lennon teach a class remotely from the gym at the Osborn School in October in Rye, New York.

the ones they can see on video, at least. Privacy policies in many districts bar teachers from requiring students to keep their cameras on, and some students don't.

But it's hard to gauge whether they're getting the same benefits from online PE as they did from in-person classes. Some students lack the equipment, space or parental support to participate fully. Instructors say it's tough to teach and assess motor skills, such as catching and kicking, online.

Meanwhile, public health experts say children need exercise more than ever.

"PE is so important, because our kids are sitting from 8 to 3," said Michelle Huff, a high school PE teacher in New Jersey who has taken to posting TikTok videos inviting kids to join in on PE activities.

In a majority of districts, students are spending some or all of their school days online. They're missing out on recess and extracurricular sports, many of which have been canceled for safety

reasons. Public health experts are worried about unhealthy eating, too.

Compounding these issues, many students live in crowded apartments or in neighborhoods where it's not safe to exercise outside. In some cities, parks are closed because of the pandemic.

In places where schools remained closed through 2020, childhood obesity rates were predicted to climb by more than 2%, according to estimates in a recent study by a researcher at Washington University in St. Louis.

Yet, even before the coronavirus shut down schools, fewer than half the states set any minimum amount of time that students must participate in PE, according to the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE), which represents PE and health instructors.

With much of PE now online, some kids are getting even less time in class than before. Because of the pandemic, California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, waived the state's time requirement in March, prompting some districts to eliminate PE as a stand-alone class or make it an elective. Portland, nearly laid off its elementary adaptive PE instructors, who work with children with disabilities, before teachers defeated the move. At least two Massachusetts districts have elim-

inated elementary PE altogether this year, according to the president of the state's SHAPE chapter.

Advocates for physical education fear more cuts as districts grapple with looming budget shortfalls stemming from the economic downturn. And if the Great Recession is any guide, those cuts could fall hardest on high-poverty districts, where students already have less access to after-school sports than in wealthier ones.

"Not all students have the privilege of taking ballet classes or sports clubs," said Julia Stevens, the president of Oregon's SHAPE chapter.

Many PE instructors said they're eager to return to the gym and sports fields.

"I became a PE teacher because I needed to keep moving," said Andrew VanDorick, an elementary PE teacher in Maryland. "Sitting on a couch in front of a computer may be some people's dream job, but it drives me crazy. I can't wait to be back in front of the kids."

Oh, and that missing tennis ball? Turns out it isn't essential after all. When it vanishes again, just in time for water-bottle bowling, my 11-year-old substitutes a lacrosse ball — and rolls a spare.

■ Kelly Field is a reporter for the Hechinger Report.