

A more dense city is a challenge for Bend's parks

Slowly and almost surely Bend is losing its parks. They aren't going away. They aren't being bought up for development. But as Bend's population grows and becomes more dense everyone's public open space gets a bit less.

Is it noticeable? Perhaps not. But if you think about what Shevlin Park was like 10 or 15 years ago and how parking can be gobbled there now, there has been a change.

Bend is lucky, of course. It has great parks and other nice facilities. It has a river. And just outside of Bend there is fantastic access to public land. So there is hardly a crisis. There is a gradual shift.

Housing density is loved, because it protects Oregon from sprawl. It lowers development costs for infrastructure. Roads, sewers, water and more are cheaper to provide if the population is close together. It doesn't help city parks. Land prices go up. And although people can get exercise in multistory indoor facilities, it is not the same as being outside on the grass.

Planners for the Bend Park & Recreation District can show the numbers. The acres per thousand people of parks are predicted to decline in Bend over the next five years. That's true of neighborhood parks. It's true of big, regional parks, such as Shevlin. And it's true of city trails. That depends on assumptions about population growth measured against the plans the park district has over the next five years and also other things it knows will be built.

The district also looks at accessibility of parks and trails to ensure they are spread out across the community. It would like to have parks within a half mile easy walk for ev-

eryone in the district. It's true for less than half of district residents now.

And the district is working on more granular data. It is overlaying census tract information on income, minorities and more to see if it is truly reaching out equitably. It should make those maps available to the public on its website when it has them ready. That should provide important information about where parks and facilities may be needed.

The most difficult thing to measure may be along the lines of what park district board member Jason Kropf asked: What does it mean if neighborhood park acreage slips from 7.76 acres per thousand in 2019 to 7.67 acres per thousand in 2020? Probably not much. But if the long-term trend continues down, it does mean something. A crowded park can make it much less attractive for people to go and get exercise or just get outside.

The park district is looking for answers. What can it do? It can work with developers to ensure they include open space and trail access in new housing projects. It can encourage apartment builders to include gym space or perhaps even a pool. The district may need support from voters for a bond to make investments in additional facilities. And it may need to think about ways to make it easier for people to access the ample public lands beyond the district's borders.

Legislative pay raise really isn't that crazy

It may not be the best time to talk about a pay raise for state legislators during a global pandemic. That's what House Bill 3144 is about.

It would establish that the annual salary of legislators be the average of all the occupations in Oregon. Legislators make about \$31,000 a year now and get a per diem of about \$150 a day for food and lodging when the Legislature is in session. If HB 3144 were to become

law, they would get more than a \$20,000 a year raise.

Maybe this bill will go nowhere this session. A similar proposal died in 2019. But there is more to it than just an effort to get a raise. The Legislature shouldn't be a place where only the wealthy can serve. And if lobbyists get paid handsomely for their work and legislators do not, that could give lobbyists the edge in the time and energy they can put into influencing legislation.



My Nickel's Worth

Help the people in need

Given the extreme partisan politics displayed by Trump and McConnell in the past four-plus years, it is amusing to now hear Republicans complain about the lack of bipartisanship by President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

But, let's set right-wing hypocrisy aside and focus on what really matters to American people who are suffering from Trump's COVID malfeasance and economic wreckage.

People desperately need and want help. I don't think they care if that relief comes from a partisan vote in Congress. They could care less if it is the result of "reconciliation." That's because the result will be bipartisan relief for everyone — Democrats, Republicans and independents.

Negotiating a compromise with those who supported Trump's ruinous policies, practiced extreme partisan politics, and now want to provide less help to suffering people is not the solution. If Republicans in Congress don't want to help people in need, that's on them.

If Trump supporters are all that concerned that Biden rejects compromise, they are welcome to decline the money, decline the unemployment benefits, and decline everything else that is in President Biden's much-needed COVID relief package.

— Michael Funke, Bend

Three questions for Bentz

After watching the Senate impeachment trial of Donald Trump, I am hoping that my newly elected Oregon Republican congressman, Cliff Bentz, has had second thoughts about his Jan. 13 vote to exonerate Don-

ald Trump's Jan. 6 actions to incite a crowd to sack the Capitol and ignore congresspersons' pleas to call off the rioters. Even Mitch McConnell has acknowledged that Donald Trump's actions were inexcusable.

In remarks to the media, Bentz said the Jan. 13 'rush-to-judgment' impeachment would only divide the nation more and undercut efforts to get both parties working on key issues, such as COVID-19.

"I voted against impeachment because our focus should be on unifying our nation, ensuring a peaceful transition to the Biden administration," Bentz said.

Even though congressman Bentz is a conservative Republican, I would expect him to denounce a tyrannical Republican president who acted to overthrow American democracy.

My questions to Rep. Bentz now:

1. Do you believe the 2020 election might actually have been stolen from Donald Trump? If so, why?
2. Assuming time constraints would not preclude a fair investigation and trial, and knowing what you now know, would you still vote "no" against Trump's impeachment?
3. Do you support Donald Trump as a leader of the Republican Party?

— Brad Raffle, Bend

Control immigration

Three weeks ago, the Source Weekly expressed admiration for the Bend citizens who staged a demonstration against ICE officials who were attempting to process two individuals who were here illegally and had pending charges against them.

A newly released report from the Department of Homeland Security should make The Source and demonstrators reconsider their actions.

Last year, 185,884 illegal immigrants were deported and 64% had pending charges, or criminal convictions.

This included 1,900 homicides, 3,800 robberies and 37,000 assaults; 4,276 were gang members.

I don't want my children, grandchildren or the country subjected to the illegal activities of criminal immigrants, which the Biden administration seems willing to do.

How many people know that over 10% of inmates in Oregon's prisons are in the U.S. illegally?

Yes, most immigrants are honest, hardworking individuals, but how can people believe it is OK for thousands of immigrants to pour across the border illegally, ahead of many others who are working hard to come here legally?

— John Williams, Bend

Holding officials accountable

I wish to comment on the latest attempt by the legislative branch of these United States to address the will of the people.

To my admittedly limited viewpoint it is not about the history of impeachment, it should not be about retribution and ought not to be about gamesmanship, but needs to be about accountability.

If the impeachment process does not work to address that, then how else (besides the democratic election process) do the citizens of the United States hold their elected officials accountable? And given that the democratic election process is held in such contempt by such a large segment of the population, what other avenue(s) do the regular citizens of this country have? And even though I am an eternal optimist, in this I despair.

— Neil Erickson, Powell Butte

GUEST COLUMN

Dear movie fans: Step up and save your local theaters

BY DREW KAZA

For those who have been missing the opportunity to check out first-run movie releases on the local big screens, last week seemed to portend some good news.

With Gov. Kate Brown's new guidance and the latest revision of county risk levels, Deschutes County dropped out of the extreme risk category. Movie theaters could then, in theory, reopen again. But for operators like us at Sisters Movie House, this was, quite simply not an option. Like Regal Cinemas in Bend, we have been closed now for many months simply to ensure our survival. To reopen now under Oregon's current state guidelines would guarantee we lose even more money than we currently do, while staying closed.

For starters, Oregon is currently the only state in America where movie theaters are not allowed to sell concessions at any level of reopening. Since the large percentage of every ticket sold goes to movie distributors, concessions are essential to our industry's

survival.

This prohibition does not appear to be grounded in science. The National Association of Theater Owners reviewed the scientific literature and

could find no peer reviewed analysis tying a COVID-19 outbreak to movie theaters anywhere in the world. To the contrary, contact tracing in South Korea showed that out of 31.5 million theater visits in the last year, 49 COVID-positive people attended theaters, and there were no outbreaks due to these visits.

Live performance venues, restaurants and bars can all sell food in Oregon, despite the fact that all of them involve higher risk indoor behaviors that are 1 to 3 orders of magnitude more risky in terms of COVID-19 transmission, according to a peer reviewed journal article.

This letter is a cry for help from our elected public officials.

Unlike a number of nonprofit venues and cultural institutions who received assistance (\$25 million worth) from the state emergency board way



Kaza



Brey Kissler, 13, front center, takes in a showing at the Pine Theater in Prineville in 2007.

back in the summer of 2020, Oregon's movie theater businesses have received next to zero assistance to date.

There are circa 600 movie screens in Oregon in 118 different locations spread across our fair state, with a greater proportion of small independents and "single screen" venues than

just about any other state in the country — and yet we have been wholly ignored by the state's bureaucracy.

Most of us have been ineligible to receive loans like those that have aided the restaurant industry (PPP loans) and any emergency assistance has been so small it can only register

as a blip of income. For theaters like ours, that have now been continuously shut for over 330 days, the losses have been massive. Most cinemas (big and small) in our state have seen revenues drop by 90% or more between 2019 and 2020.

Compounding the problem, we have no firm understanding when life might "return to normal."

Many movie theaters in Oregon are on the brink of bankruptcy and/or closing entirely. We are asking every movie fan to reach out to local legislators and to tell them how much we mean to you.

Help make Salem aware that the local movie theater is actually an endangered species right now, and without some assistance to make up for our unjustified and crippling losses, many will shutter for good.

In so many of Oregon's smaller towns and counties, the local movie theater is the cultural life blood of the community. We must act now if we are going to save it.

■ Drew Kaza is managing partner of quoin media & entertainment LLC, which owns the Sisters Movie House in Sisters. He lives in Redmond.