

Bend may ease rules for off-street parking. Should it?

Of all the treasured moments in your life, we'd guess that time spent searching for parking spots is not up there.

The search is usually an inconvenience, not an emergency. What if, though, the city of Bend changed the rules? What if the city eased up or eliminated any requirement for buildings to have off-street parking?

A supermarket or an apartment developer could decide, yes, they want to provide parking. But maybe other developers would decide they could do so much more with the land if they didn't have to add a bunch of parking. Parking in Bend could become much more precious. Cars, for better and for worse, could make a lot less sense.

The idea of Bend reducing off-street parking requirements is not that far-fetched. It looks like the Bend City Council will, at least, discuss it.

The battle lines, such as they are, are being drawn. A group of individuals who have not identified themselves have organized a website at doesparkingmatter.com to influence the debate. The group clearly supports continued off-street parking requirements. It has a survey on its website and plans to deliver the results to councilors. Don't expect councilors to interpret the survey results as precisely representing Bend's opinion on parking. They are sharper than that.

Councilors also skirmished over parking at their meeting Wednesday night. You probably know they are trying very hard to find an option for purchasing property for additional housing for the homeless. The city may buy a hotel. It needed Wednesday night to make

some code changes fast to clear the way. The vote on the code changes required a unanimous vote from councilors if they were going to get done in a hurry.

Councilor Melanie Kebler proposed an amendment to the code changes to essentially remove all parking requirements for temporary housing. If Kebler's amendment passed, a homeless shelter could elect to have much less parking or even none and use that space for something else.

Councilor Barb Campbell and others pointed out parking requirements are an area of friction that might lead to opposition to a homeless shelter.

Mayor Sally Russell, a strong supporter of adding more resources for the homeless, didn't say she would vote against the code changes if the amendment passed. But it was clearly giving her pause. Kebler withdrew her amendment and got assurances that councilors would take up the matter again.

So that's not the end of it. Councilors will have a broader discussion about parking requirements in Bend in the months to come. There certainly does seem support from some members of the Council to consider reducing or perhaps even eliminating some off-street parking requirements.

What do you want the council to do? You can tell councilors by emailing them at council@bendoregon.gov or write us a letter to the editor of up to 250 words and send it to letters@bendbulletin.com.

Your tax dollars at work at COIC

We doubt anyone is going to give the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council an award for it, but it does do something interesting at many of its meetings. It takes a moment to highlight something it accomplished.

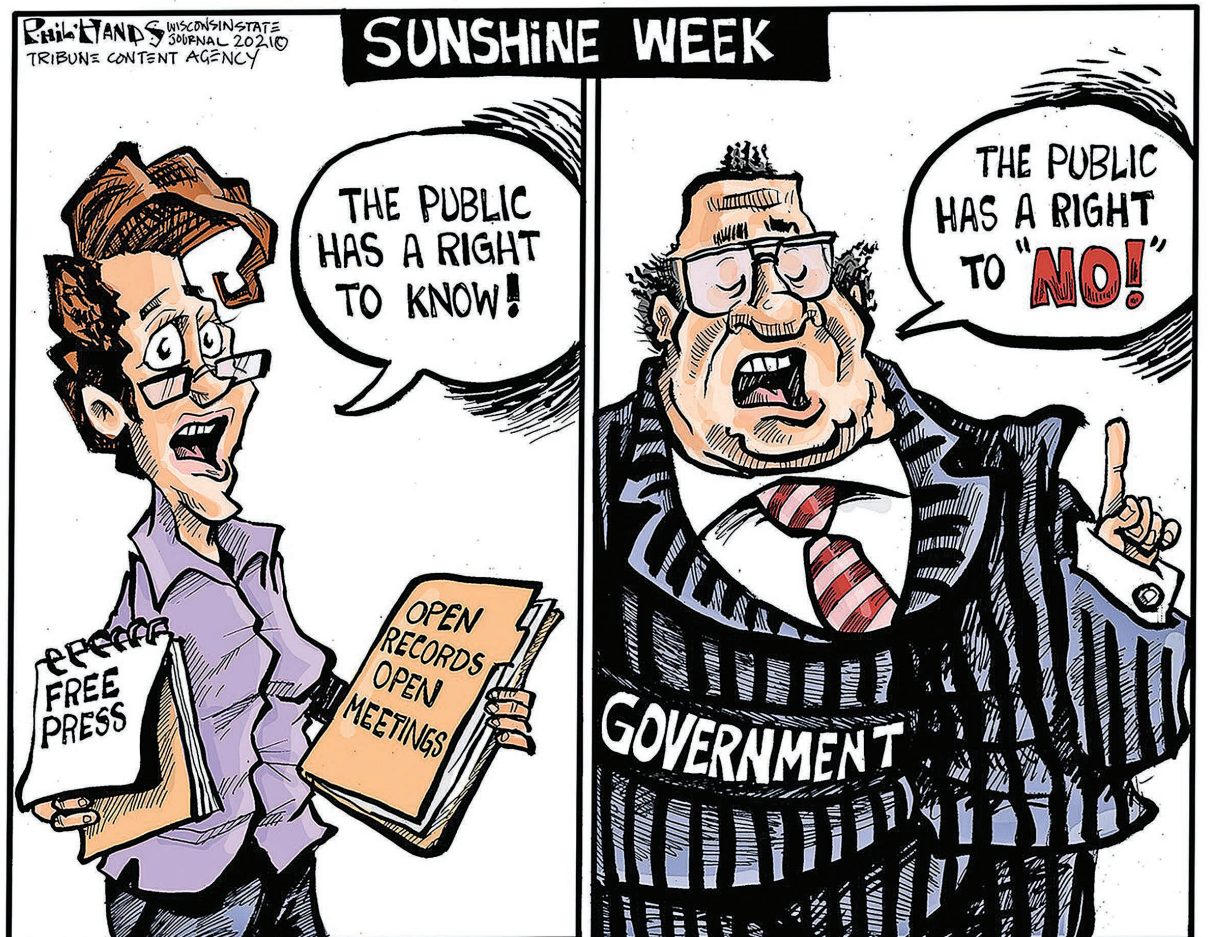
COIC is one of those government agencies that can fly under the radar of even certified government geeks. It's best known probably for being the parent organization of Cascades East Transit, the regional bus system. It is also where elected leaders talk about regional problems and solutions. It offers opportunities for students to get their GEDs. There's a lot more going on.

For instance, it had a brief report in February about how through its

adult education and training, two particular individuals were able to get jobs. Another time, it highlighted that through a grant provided through COIC, the Ochoco Humane Society was able to reopen and put one individual who had been struggling into a position where they could get a job, car and an apartment. One final example: A patient needed transport to a critical medical appointment in Portland for a transplant. COIC helped arrange transportation and managed to connect the patient with services so they could get meals and stay in the Portland area for follow-up care.

Those are your tax dollars at work, helping to make those things happen.

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.



Oregon should not allow mink farms

BY SCOTT BECKSTEAD

In their March 16 column ("Should Oregon have tighter regulations for raising mink?"), the editors of The Bulletin raised the issue of the public health threat posed by mink, and more specifically, mink raised for their pelts on factory farms. Animal Wellness Action is supporting SB 832, a bill sponsored by state Sen. Floyd Prozanski that aims to close down the small number of industrial mink farms in Oregon and help the farmers transition to other commodities or lines of work. The legislation will be heard by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery on April 5.

It's true that animal welfare advocates have long sought to end commerce in fur. As the grandson of an Idaho mink farmer who spent much of my childhood and youth on mink farms, I can attest to the inhumane conditions on those operations and the undeniable misery endured by the animals.

But the legislative and regulatory efforts to regulate mink in Oregon have more to do with protecting human health than ending inhumane mink farms. Mink are uniquely susceptible to the coronavirus, which they easily catch from infected farm workers. In Denmark, the world's leading producer of mink pelts, scientists discovered the virus uses the mink to mutate into a pathogen that is transmissible back to people, and in a form that could be resistant to vaccines. That's why Denmark called

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all 17 million of the mink raised on over 1,100 mink farms and provided farmers with a generous relief package. Other European nations, responding to outbreaks of their own,

have similarly moved to shutter their mink farms.

While other countries have moved swiftly to eliminate the threat posed by mink farms, authorities in the U.S. and the states where outbreaks have occurred, including Oregon, have largely shrugged off the threat and taken a "wait and see" approach. Their ho-hum attitude was matched by an alarming lack of transparency; after the coronavirus outbreak on an Oregon mink farm, state agencies refused to disclose to the public many important details, including the location of the farm where the outbreak occurred. In Oregon as in other mink-producing states, agencies appear more concerned about protecting the viability of their mink industries than in informing and protecting the public at large.

The Oregon outbreak was anomalous in a couple respects. First, while mink in other countries and states quickly succumbed to COVID-19, the Oregon mink got sick, but then recovered. Officials also noted that captive mink that escaped from the farm and

were later trapped tested positive for the virus. Farmed mink that escape (a frequent occurrence on factory mink farms) pose a major threat to our native wildlife, including wild mink and other mustelid species, such as fishers, martens, and badgers. Should those creatures catch the virus, they could potentially transmit the disease to a trapper or other human who comes in contact with them.

It would be one thing if mink were being raised to supply a much-needed product for consumers in the U.S. But they're not. Americans have largely sworn off fur as a luxury fashion item, so the pelts being raised on Oregon mink farms are destined for China, where a small segment of the population still wears fur. Why should Oregonians be expected to tolerate a grave public health threat for the sake of a product destined for the very country where COVID-19 started?

The global pandemics that have resulted in millions of human deaths started as a direct result of our unhealthy relationship with wildlife, especially wildlife raised on factory farms. Scientists are warning that if we don't move to eliminate this threat, COVID-19 might look like a comparatively benign precursor to a far deadlier pandemic. Thankfully, some Oregon lawmakers are heeding that warning and moving decisively to mitigate the threat for the people of our state.

■ Scott Beckstead is director of campaigns for Animal Wellness Action. There is more information about the group at animalwellnessaction.org.

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

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

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

Don't go wobbly, Mr. President — beat the pandemic

BY DAVID VON DREHLE

The Washington Post

What was true on the day President Joe Biden was inaugurated remains true some 60 days later: The potential success of his presidency hinges on one thing and one thing only. The opposition, many in his own party and the media's fleeting attention span all seek to pull Biden in a dozen different directions. Don't go wobbly, Mr. President. Beat the pandemic.

We've reached a critical point in the yearlong war that has shaken the world. The end is in sight. But a lot can go wrong between sighting the end of a war and reaching it. The end of World War II was in sight by 1943, when the Soviets broke the siege of Stalingrad, the Allies entered Europe and the Japanese withdrew from Guadalcanal. The actual end was two years and two atomic bombs away.

In the war against the coronavirus pandemic, we can see how it will eventually end. Pharmaceutical factories are producing effective vaccines by the millions of doses. As those doses go into arms, the spread of the disease will slow. Fewer mutations will produce fewer variants. Meanwhile, progress on therapies to treat severe COVID-19 will continue. When the spread is essentially halted and deaths are few, the world can declare victory.

But we're not there yet. A new poll has found that 30% of health care workers don't plan to be vaccinated or are unsure. Another survey found that more than 40% of Republicans have no intention of meeting the needle. The scientific triumph of vaccine development and the logistical feat of delivering the first 100 million injections may be squandered unless we speed toward universal compliance.

That won't be achieved without

relentless focus from the top. With vaccine stockpiles growing, Biden should examine every possible lever to increase vaccination rates and pull on those levers that pass legal muster. There must be a price attached to vaccine avoidance. If children can be required to be vaccinated for other diseases before going to school — and they are, with a few exceptions — then coronavirus vaccines can be a precondition for attending sporting events and concerts, for returning to college classrooms and for working in offices, factories, warehouses and restaurants. It should be unthinkable (barring some special circumstance, like a severe allergy) for an unvaccinated person to work in health care.

If Biden loses focus now, tilting toward a dozen political windmills, only to have a new variant of the coronavirus wallop a half-vaccinated nation next winter, his presidency will be

neutered. Republicans will gallop to victory in 2022.

On the other hand, if Biden keeps his eye on the ball — even at the expense, temporarily, of voting rights, the fate of the filibuster, infrastructure, tax hikes, immigration reform, the border, China, Russian espionage, and so on — the rewards will be enormous. Freed by mass vaccination to gather again without fear, the public will be elated. The economy will boom. Biden will bank mad stacks of political capital. Then, if he wishes, the president can take a progressive agenda to the voters in 2022 and let them have their say. First, clear the air of COVID-19 and, then, have an election about what comes next. This is the playbook Democrats will follow if they want to transform America, because no transformation rammed through a 50-50 Senate is likely to endure.

It is the playbook written by the

most transformative Democratic president of all, Franklin Roosevelt. Inaugurated in 1933 as the Great Depression was raging, Roosevelt understood that voters had one thing on their minds: the economic crisis. He plunged in single-mindedly, enforcing extraordinary measures, including the forced closure of the nation's banks long enough to restore the health of the financial system. The public rewarded the president in the subsequent midterm elections by strengthening his hand in Congress. Only then did Roosevelt expand his agenda, turning to transformative legislation such as the Social Security Act of 1935.

Biden's presidency is on the line. Will he be goaded by his party's left wing, hectoring by the opposition and distracted by the Twittering press? Or will he win like FDR?

■ David Von Drehle writes a twice-weekly column for The Washington Post.