

How does Bend better serve the homeless?

Voters elect Bend city councilors to look after their interests and the city's. Councilors aren't elected to rubber stamp what the Bend Chamber of Commerce wants.

On Wednesday, something happened that could have made people wonder.

Preston Callicott, who serves on the board of the Bend Chamber, spoke before councilors and urged them not to buy the Rainbow Motel on Franklin Avenue in downtown for a homeless shelter. Katy Brooks, president and CEO of the Bend Chamber, wrote a letter to councilors making a similar argument. Then, later in Wednesday's council meeting, councilors terminated the city's purchase and sale agreement for the Rainbow.

Just like that the Rainbow deal was dead. Councilors are continuing to look at Bend Value Inn, which is also downtown.

Did councilors do what the chamber wanted? Yes.

Did councilors do it because the chamber said so? No.

Is the chamber against housing homeless downtown? No on that one, too.

Will one hotel fill the need? No. Should the business community do more to ensure Bend gets a homeless shelter and services downtown? We'll let you answer that one.

The city has been in a race to find a location for a hotel to transform into a homeless shelter. The options available now for housing the homeless in Bend are inadequate. Only a few months ago David Savory died on the street in Bend. He couldn't get shelter. The state has made available competitive grant money that Bend could use to help buy a hotel for the homeless. Unfortunately, the city may be out of the running. It could still use funding from the federal American Rescue Plan.

The city has looked at several locations. Exactly what happens in those deals and why they may fall apart is not made public. Real estate negotiations are one of the things that under Oregon law governments can conduct behind closed doors. It protects public money.

If councilors had to plan their negotiations in the open, the seller could know how much to jack up the price.

The secrecy does create a problem. The public doesn't get much explanation of what is going on. Councilors are also not supposed to talk about what happens in executive session. In fact, when we asked councilors to explain their positions on Rainbow, city staff sent out an email to councilors reminding them they weren't supposed to talk about what happens in executive session.

Well, councilors didn't recount for us what happened in executive session. Councilors Barb Campbell, Anthony Broadman, Melanie Kebler

and Mayor Sally Russell did get back to us. The Rainbow is in what Bend calls its central district. That area is ripe for redevelopment. The city is promoting it. Bend is growing. More intense development downtown is better than more intense development in neighborhoods, right? Several projects are being worked on in that very area. They could kick off the redevelopment. That would be good for the city.

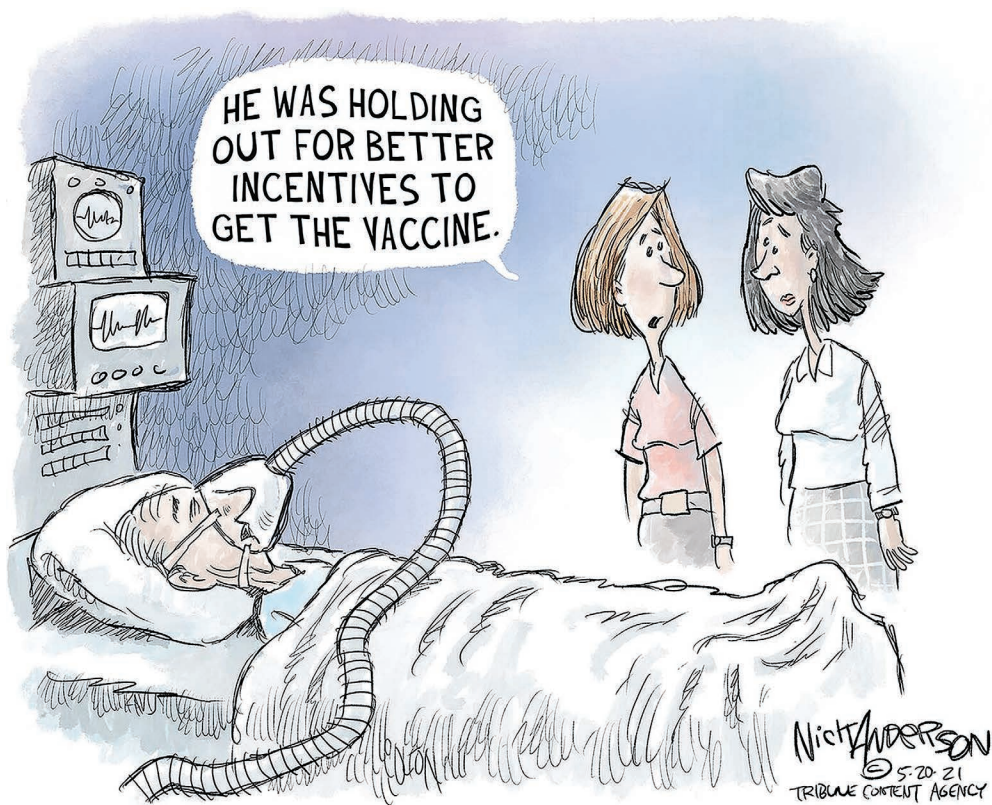
If you know Campbell at all, you know she is not one to sit meekly by and do the bidding of developers. Campbell wrote us in an email that the developers she spoke with convinced her that transitional housing at the Rainbow location would jeopardize those redevelopment plans.

Broadman, Kebler and Russell pointed out the money issue. With limited money to buy a hotel, councilors faced a choice: the Rainbow, the Bend Value Inn, which is also downtown or both. Councilors chose for now to continue to pursue the Bend Value Inn. Broadman wrote the "Bend Value Inn is less expensive than the Rainbow Motel....The Chamber's argument was reasonable, but my decision wasn't based on their points or all of the input we had about the potential impact of this project in the Bend Central District." Although we don't have other councilors on record, we have every reason to believe their reasoning is similar.

As for the Bend Chamber, it does believe that more must be done to serve the homeless in Bend. Brooks, the chamber's CEO and president, told us the chamber is very supportive of siting a shelter in Bend's downtown. Good.

When we were talking to people about this council decision, something struck us. It was from Travis Davis, a Bend businessman who serves on the Bend Economic Development Advisory Board or BEDAB. That's a city committee to give input to the city from the business community. He said in Bend both the chamber and BEDAB do try to serve as intermediaries. They do try to balance broader community needs and the narrower interests of businesses. We believe that. So then how else will the business community step up to ensure a homeless shelter in Bend's downtown becomes a reality?

There's a big affordable housing project near Bend's parking garage, as Mayor Russell reminded us. Do you know where it is? If Bend can do that so well, can it also provide shelter and services for the community's neediest where rents are sure to soar? That would have a special poetry.



My Nickel's Worth

Protect nurses

As COVID-19 hospitalizations continue, our nurses are still facing significant staffing challenges. More than a year into Oregon's public health emergency, we assumed that hospitals would be using nurse-approved emergency staffing plans. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for many Oregon hospitals.

Normally, hospital administrators are required by law to collaborate with frontline nurses to determine safe staffing plans for our patients. Currently, this requirement is suspended during states of emergency such as COVID-19. The advocating voice of your nurse is being silenced.

The emergency continues, and nurses are still asking, "Will I be able to keep my patients safe during my shift? Will I need to work 12 hours without a break because no one can cover me? Will I be asked to take more patients than is safe?"

We should never have to ask ourselves these questions. During an emergency, safe hospital staffing is more important than ever. Hospital administrators have worked incredibly hard to provide adequate facilities and resources to care for Oregonians during this pandemic. However, one major lesson we learned is that we MUST work together during emergencies to create collaborative, flexible and safe staffing plans. This cannot be disregarded in the name of "emergency."

Oregon House Bill 3016 will close the loophole in our current law by allowing frontline nurses to have a say in staffing levels during an emergency. By passing smart measures like House Bill 3016 now, Oregon will be better prepared for the next crisis. I encourage Sen. Knopp and all Oregonians to support House Bill 3016 to

ensure that safe staffing continues for patients and nurses especially during emergencies.

— Karla Toms is a nurse in Bend.

Papers, please

"Show me your papers." What does this bring to mind? Maybe Nazi Germany? Wherever I go, I would have "show my papers." Absolutely not. I will not be shamed into getting "the" vaccine by being forced to wear a mask until I do, which I won't, I would be indefinitely wearing a mask? Not going to happen. I will not participate ... period. Enough is enough. If this nation wasn't divided enough, this CDC guideline has made it worse. Putting the onus on store employees to be the mask and vaccine police is absurd and very socialistic. Venezuela, here we come. This is government overreach on steroids.

Look at Texas, one of many states that got rid of excess restrictions months ago, and their numbers are going way down.

— Dale McCray, Bend

Should Oregon have a vaccine passport?

If we are going to seriously entertain this question, I have a few others.

Should Oregon issue a "clean passport" to those vaccinated against influenza as well? What about people with AIDS? Maybe their passports should be a different color for easy identification? They could be prevented from entering social proximity to others, from entering restaurants, from traveling by plane or enjoying similar basic liberties. I certainly hope at least a few of my fellow Oregonians find these suggestions as offensive as I find the suggestion of a vaccine passport.

If the new rule is to save "just one

life," then there is no end to which we can justify giving up the basic liberties of others for the feeling of having done something for the greater good. Is it right that the "we" who agree with vaccine passports enforce their will upon the "them" that disagree, value their privacy and would rather live their lives unmolested by state bureaucrats and nosy self-righteous fellow citizens who lack basic respect for their individual sovereignty? Would it not be effective and efficient to set up mandatory electronic checks during credit transactions to purchase food and other staple items so that such people could be continually identified and properly chastised and ostracized, relegated to digital leper colonies? I am sure identification and expulsion from a society of those who conform to state policies has never proven a recipe for evil in humanity's sordid history.

And what about the concern for the risk non-vaccinated people pose to the vaccinated? Why wait for database checks and risk accidental infection when people could simply be required to wear a plainly visible yellow badge or other such garment that would identify them as a hazard to others, a socially undesirable person.

Clearly, we would want such an item to be visible at a distance and effective at preventing any accidental transmission of deadly intransigence to state authorities — I'd recommend a mask. That seems perfectly reasonable does it not?

Of course, let us not complicate our thought processes by asking what good is a vaccine if it remains true that the unvaccinated continue to pose such a risk to those who are vaccinated that they must themselves be vaccinated or face penalties?

Should "we" have mask laws or vaccine passports? No.

— Ethan Nelson, Bend

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.

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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.

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What have we become and what are we afraid of?

BY WILLIAM BARRON

We have witnessed and experienced a lot in the last year, as individuals and as a country.

However, the capitulation and implosion of the Republican Party may be the most shocking. The Grand Old Party, which once championed global influence based on principles and global trade, has become a Group of Patsies wallowing in self-delusion, fearful of shining the light of truth, and idolatry.

The party, in my lifetime, faced down the tyranny of Soviet Russia but now embraces its own form of tyranny, race-based caste system and isolation. It is a party that advocates hiding behind walls rather than tearing walls down.

The party, which once proudly advocated for fact-based decision making, is now advocating hiding from the investigation of the Jan. 6 insurrection. Burying their collective head in the sand trying to make believe it did not happen. That a mob, flying the flags of a corrupt defeated dictatorship, the flag of racism and slavery, and those of idol worship, did not attack the Capitol, did not assault Capitol Police and the foundations of our Constitution.

Nope, didn't happen. It is fake news and was a group of peaceful, law-abiding citizens exercising their freedom of speech and having a "tour of the Capitol." Denial does not mean it did not happen. Denial does mean it will happen again. How many members of Congress will stand up for the Con-

GUEST COLUMN

stitution and this country and try to determine what happened on the days before and after Jan. 6.

And how many will prove they are panderers and patsies only vying for votes from those who are too afraid to seek truth?

What are we afraid of? As we consciously and unconsciously practice our unique form of race-based caste system. What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of losing some of our race-based privileges? Are we afraid of equal rights, equal treatment and equal access? Are we afraid, that on any given level playing field, we can no longer compete? That maybe, just maybe there are those who are better

who have never had a chance to show just how good they are? If we consider ourselves a team, TEAM USA is failing. It is failing to play the best the players or even to let them try out for the team. We must look forward and recognize everyone has more talents and more to offer. Exclusion based on race, gender, creed, orientation, nationality, education or anything else succeeds in maintaining a false-based caste system and inhibits all of us from moving forward toward greater goals. It succeeds in allowing those who strive to see us fail drive wedges of misinformation into the fabric of our nation.

The principles of fiscal discipline, personal responsibility and accountability, global leadership and trade, and social compassion have been cast

aside. Cast aside for denial, scapegoating, isolation and radical racial divide. The Republican Party I was a part of for more than half a century has been displaced by a cult, worshipping a demigod in the hopes of maintaining a failing direction and whose leaders care more about being reelected than taking a stand for the principles of the country.

The party was bigger than one person and now is as small, and as shallow, as one. The party, whose leaders once stood in defiance of tyrants and dictators now embrace them rather than standing for freedom, truth and democracy. The idea of "truth will set you free" can only come to reality if we actually seek the truth. #NeverFeartheDream

■ William Barron lives in Bend.