

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
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Bend may make changes to public comment rules

Should the Bend City Council no longer recite the Pledge of Allegiance before every meeting? Should the council limit public comment to items on its agenda?

Those are some of the more combustible changes councilors discussed this week in looking at revising its rules. The council doesn't seem to be leaning toward making either of those changes. A council subcommittee discussed them. Many of the possible changes are mundane.

One possible change is just smart: Move up some items on the agenda early in council meetings. For instance, when the council discusses important discussions in executive session that it will later vote on, it schedules those votes for the end of the meeting. That can be 9 p.m. at night and later. The agenda should be ordered to make it easy for the public to understand what important actions are being taken. This proposal would do that.

Also at Wednesday's meeting of the Bend City Council's rules subcommittee, councilors briefly discussed removing the Pledge of Allegiance from the council agenda. To repeat, councilors did not express a clear desire to remove the pledge. They discussed it. Removing it could create a circus of controversy that would distract from the council's ability to get city business done. Already some councilors have not stood and recited the pledge during meetings. That stirs some people up. Even more people could be stirred up if councilors stripped out the

pledge altogether.

A major topic was public comment. Basically at council meetings people can speak about whatever they want for two minutes. Lately many of the regular commenters criticize the Bend police or the city's treatment of people who are homeless. That can be so even if such matters are not on the meeting agenda.

Councilors discussed limiting public comments to items on the agenda. Councilors seemed reluctant to adopt rules like that for a number of reasons. Foremost perhaps is that councilors want to be accessible. Such a policy would arguably make them less so.

The crucial change that councilors on the subcommittee seem supportive of is creating regular, perhaps even monthly, community roundtables. People could speak to councilors. And unlike in council meetings, the council would permit dialogue back and forth between members of the public and council. It would be a way to foster more community interaction. It's the best idea the council is working on in these subcommittee meetings. We hope it can pull it off successfully.

More discussions about possible changes in council rules are scheduled for June 11 at 1 p.m. You have to register in advance for the online meeting and can do so here: tinyurl.com/CityofBendrulesmeeting.

The journalism watchdog barks

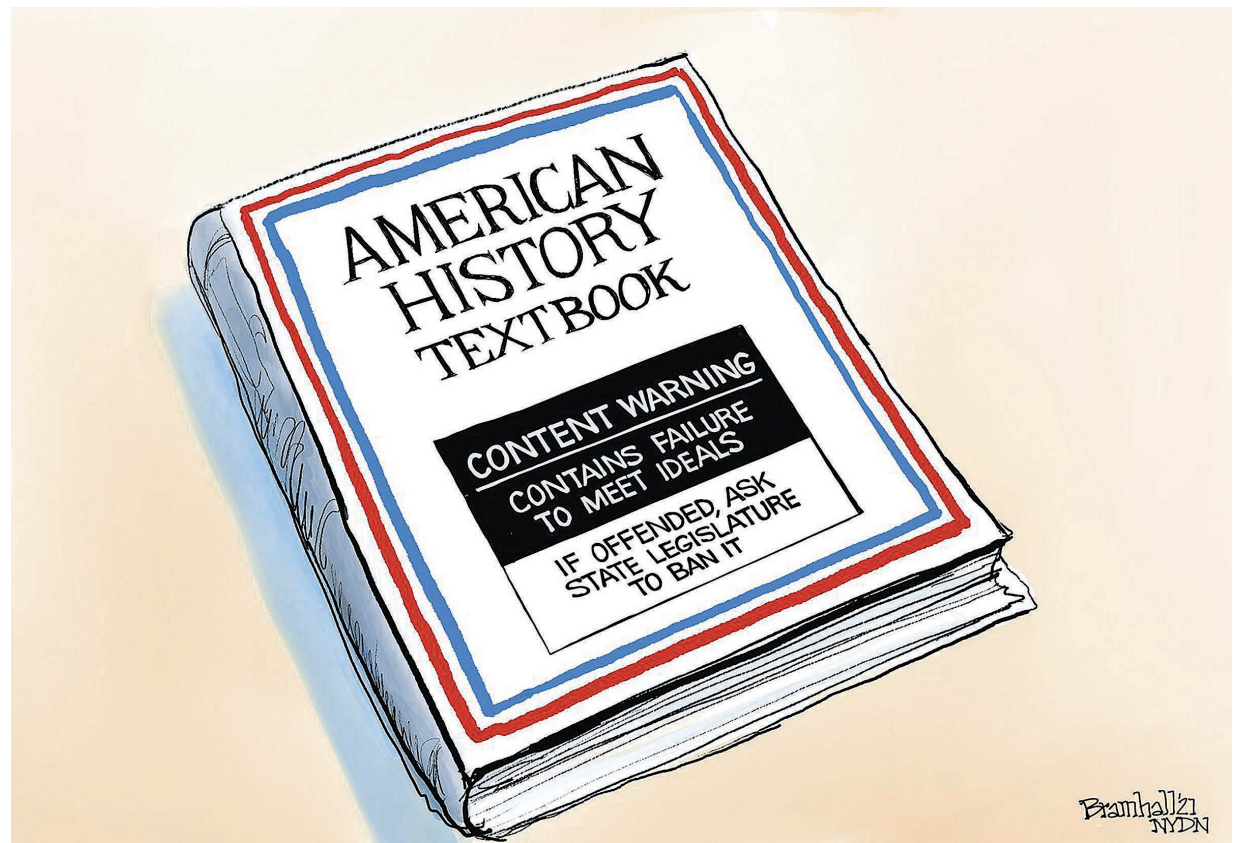
Since 2008 newspapers in the U.S. have lost about half their workforce. There are now about five people in public relations to every journalist.

That's a dismal picture painted in a recent article in The Washington Post. It's dismal if you value journalism and the power that the press can have to inform readers and be a watchdog on government.

Rather than dwell on the dismal, look at what journalists at Oregon Public Broadcasting, The Oregonian and ProPublica did. They investigated the Oregon Forest Research Institute. And they found the proof

to show that state money was being used to become a "de-facto lobbying arm of the timber industry, in some cases skirting legal constraints that forbid it from doing so." Because of the investigation by those journalists, the Oregon House voted Tuesday to cut the OFRI budget by about 66% and send the money instead to things such as climate research in forests.

State officials, state auditors, state legislators and the governor's office didn't uncover what OFRI was doing. Journalists did. We are certainly biased about the value of journalism, but this should be another reminder of its value.



Bad decision about hotel for homeless

BY ALLAN BRUCKNER

As one who's property has been directly impacted negatively by the homeless situation in Bend, I have thought a lot about the issue. I would like to offer several thoughts.



Bruckner

powerful involved, with a very inexperienced city council. This approach guarantees there is no accountability for this bad decision.

They decided to again foist the problem on to North Division Street businesses, an area with no political pull, just as they allowed a very impractical expansion at Shepherds House several years ago as mentioned in The Bulletin. The result has been a problem for a neighborhood that already suffered after being cut off by the Parkway.

Siting another overnight facility in this quieter neighborhood will create a steady flow of homeless, with attendant problems, between Shepherds House and the new Value Inn shelter. And it places residents, many likely

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without a car, over a mile from downtown services, whereas the Rainbow motel on Franklin Avenue, could serve twice as many and be only ¼ mile from said services.

This is in addition to allowing an apparently permanent tent city at the Revere/Parkway interchange. Clearly the powers that be are abandoning North Division street to the homeless.

This is all the result of a brazen power play by powerful developers, lawyers and staffers on a very inexperienced city using the excuse that it was discussing real estate, when in fact it was discussing a major policy initiative on homeless housing. Citizens have a right to know who is influencing the decisions and the reasons for them.

This power play excluded the Rainbow motel on Franklin Avenue as a housing center because it is in the new Urban Renewal District. Actually, the Rainbow motel site is ideal BECAUSE it is in the Urban Renewal District, which makes available substantial funding and draws attention to the area. This site is also appropriate because it is near downtown and on a major arterial so there is exposure that brings needed attention to any potential problems. Contrast that with North Division Street which is an ig-

nored neighborhood that would be overrun with another homeless center. With a Division Street location, the center would be a big fish and big problem in a small area, where as on Franklin it would be a small fish in a busy vibrant area.

Clearly, if such a facility were located in this vibrant economic area with new investment guaranteed through the Urban Renewal District, which will have over \$200 million of tax payer funds, the negative aspects will be much less than if were in a more inactive area like North Division Street. This busier area would assure more eyes on the situation, spot potential trouble, provide better supervision and quicker response time to any problem. And plenty of money to address any issues.

This action also makes a mockery of the promises of Central Oregon LandWatch and other promoters of the Urban Renewal District who guaranteed that it would be to the benefit all citizens and not just gentrify this diverse area. Such hypocrisy.

The decision to choose a location far from downtown, that will serve less than half as many clients, is an obvious power play at its worst. It is the ultimate NIMBY act by powerful interests and a NIMBY endorsed by the city. And the secret manner in which it was enacted is despicable.

■ Allan Bruckner is a former mayor of 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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Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

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.

Bend should provide more public notice of developments

BY ROBIN VORA

The city of Bend needs to provide better public notice of developments of potential community-wide interest. The public should have learned about the Bend Village development at the corner of



Vora

Colorado and Century Drive (present Pine Ridge Inn) when the city considered the application more than a year ago.

City planners rationalized the Bend Village development as being in an "Opportunity Area."

While serving on the urban growth boundary committee we did recommend "Opportunity Areas" but did not delve into site-specific details of each area. Those were just blobs on a map.

We envisioned mixed-use development, including some mixed-income that would include affordable housing, especially next to the college. It would be a place where people lived and worked, and was an integrated

community. We didn't envision tall high-end hotels marring a scenic view, luxury condos for well-to-do, second homes and short-term vacation rentals, and more tourists as an "opportunity."

We assumed that added congestion from a development would be mitigated and a project would not make traffic worse.

We assumed the city would give site-specific consideration to any approval, including special features of interest to all citizens of Bend, such as scenic views from popular Farewell Bend Park, Reed Market Road, and the east river trail south of the Healy Bridge.

We assumed that city officials, elected and staff, would better inform all residents of proposed projects of likely interest to many, not just some adjacent property owners.

I urge the City Council and staff to work to overcome the several shortcomings of the way the Bend Village project was handled.

1. The public notification and involvement undertaken by the city and the developer were inadequate for a project of this magnitude and interest.

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People will see the 5- to 6-story buildings from much further than 250 feet. The Bend Community Development department should be able to identify projects of significant interest and use press releases, newsletter and website posts to inform all residents.

2. A traffic analysis should be more than a technical procedural requirement, and it should be conducted for several peak use times. It should include a funded implementation plan to completely mitigate the added traffic congestion from a project. New nearby roundabouts on Simpson won't alleviate traffic congestion from this project at adjacent Century Drive intersections, already backed up at times with ski traffic. Adjacent OSU-Cascades was approved with the promise that bus service would alleviate traffic congestion. The direct bus between COCC and OSU-Cascades didn't last long. That campus is growing. The Cascades Lakes Scenic Byway is becoming more like an urban highway. The citizens of Bend deserve to know how the added traffic

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from this development will be accommodated without making congestion worse.

3. The Bend City Code needs further refinement so that projects such as Bend Village are not just run through the process because they appear to satisfy the code. Site-specific considerations and public interest should be important considerations in how City Planning handles a project.

4. It is unfortunate the Bend Park & Recreation District Board didn't discuss any concerns over the loss of quality views or added congestion on the river trail. The only communication between the city and Bend Park and Recreation was between staff regarding the Haul Road trail easement

crossing of a driveway.

5. All of the Neighborhood Associations should include in newsletters significant proposals anywhere in the city that may be of interest to all residents.

The Bend Village project suffered from inadequate public involvement, adds to traffic congestion without mitigation, does not have affordable housing, and should have been kept out of view from the river. The City Council should not only evaluate a project if somebody pays for an appeal to the council. Councilors should also look out for public concerns and interests and take the initiative to add projects of potential concern to the council agenda.

■ Robin Vora lives in Bend.