

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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Challenges exist
in the city’s draft
camping code



Tents line a section of Hunnell Road on the north side of Bend in September.
Ryan Brennecke/
Bulletin file

The plan was never that the city of Bend’s camping code was going to solve the city’s homeless challenge. It’s not.

The code sets rules designed to improve safety for everyone in the community. And it also comes with its own complications. That became clearer this week during the two roundtables councilors held to gather public input on the draft code. No matter what the code says about when, where and how people can camp on city property or in city rights of way, enforcement is going to be problematic. City councilors and staff knew that. But if the police aren’t the best to enforce it, if it isn’t going to be regularly enforced by the city’s code enforcement, if the city would rather not hand out citations to homeless people, who is going to enforce it and how is it going to be enforced? We have not heard a clear answer. That’s understandable. Those are not easy questions. The code itself is not finalized. But the community does need more clarity on enforcement. Providers who work with the homeless believe one thing the code is going to do is move campers around — not do much to reduce camping. People are going to be asked to pick up all their belongings and move each day. That would be a task for anyone. For people struggling to get by, it’s going to make struggling to get by harder. “How am I going to eat today? Where am I going to get water

from?” said Eliza Wilson of J Bar J Youth Services and who experienced homelessness as a teenager. She pointed out it can take most of the day to do those things. “If they also have to move all their belongings, it’s just not going to work.” It would also make it harder for service providers to locate people they are trying to help and stay in contact. And it’s not like Bend is full of welcoming places for hundreds of people going through homelessness to go each day. Another issue will be the way the policy will actually encourage camps in some locations. For instance, consider the section in the draft code that says that camps cannot be within 500 feet or 1,000 feet of a homeless shelter. A well-intentioned idea. It will also have a way of encouraging camps in other locations just outside that boundary, such as in certain spots along Second Street in Bend. There’s concern that the city code may encourage people to move to areas outside the city on public land. That might please some. It can be further from services and in areas of acute fire danger. These challenges are no reason to stop councilors from drafting a camping code. But when they meet on Wednesday, what are they going to do about them? You can tell councilors what you think at council@bendoregon.gov.

Historical editorial: A
land of opportunities

Editor’s note: The following historical editorial originally appeared in the November 1, 1907 edition of what was then called The Bend Bulletin.

A few days ago a young man drove into Bend who was in pretty destitute circumstances. He had enough money to buy feed for his horses and then was obliged to borrow money to provide himself, wife and child with food. Today he has a filing on a homestead and is earning (unreadable) a day with the aid of his team. The good part of it is that work is plentiful and he can find all the work he wants at those wages. This young man is not a knocker. If you ask him how he likes the

country, he replies with a loud smile that it’s plenty good enough for him. And he is more than glad he came. The Bulletin knows other men who came into this country and afterwards borrowed enough money to send for their families. Later some of them sold out property they had in the meantime accumulated, clearing up from two to five thousand dollars. Everyone who might come here undoubtedly could not do as well in so short a time as the last named cases, but if anything is certain it is that there is no better place in the big and growing West for a young man, with strength and a willingness to work, to come and cast his lot. ...

■ 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.



Lost pets lose when they can’t be
reunified with houseless owners

BY SEAN P. CADDEN

Deschutes County, like many other places across the country, is experiencing increased number of homeless, or houseless persons. West Coast cities in particular have struggled with this problem for years with few success stories. Difficult problems require complex, customized solutions, and each person experiencing homelessness has their own set of challenges, so the problems persist and the homeless population grows. In animal shelters, the growing homeless problem equates to new complexities of reuniting dogs with their houseless owners. Having reliable shelter is part of responsible pet ownership when the weather is particularly extreme, but that can be subjective. Shelter can be a vehicle, a tent, or an RV — dogs are remarkably resilient. While living in Southern California, I observed some of the most calm, well-behaved dogs were pets of homeless people. After all, they spend all day with their owners, sometimes looking for food and shelter — very much like the original dogs who partnered with humans. These weren’t anxious, abused animals; they were loved family members/protectors/partners. Society should not be biased against pet ownership by those facing homelessness. In fact, we should acknowledge how important a pet may be to someone who may have few possessions. However, if that pet — specifically a dog — gets away from its owner, and is then picked up as a stray, there are difficult challenges in reuniting the two. Shelters are increasingly faced with these challenges, and the wayward animals are the ones who lose when the system fails.

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In Deschutes County, the Humane Society of Central Oregon (HSCO) sees several dogs each week come in as strays from areas known for homeless camps. These dogs rarely have ID tags or chips. For all strays, the shelter searches social media posts and sites such as Pawboost for any matches, and if there’s none, the dogs are placed in stray status for about a week. After a week they’re behaviorally assessed, then made available for adoption. In the meantime, the dogs sit in a kennel. Sometimes the HSCO gets calls from those searching for their lost pets. Of course, even relatively simple tasks as having the shelter phone number, making a phone call, finding transportation to reclaim a pet and then paying the impound fees can be insurmountable if someone is truly destitute. It can be heartbreaking to know the dog and the owner should be together, but it doesn’t happen. Of course, there are times when a pet owner is unable to care for their pet. Incarceration, hospitalization and other situations can make reunification impossible. The HSCO has a “safekeeping” program whereby they will house an animal at the shelter while someone is in a temporary situation wherein they cannot care for their pet. The county picks up the cost for animal to stay at the shelter, but it cannot be an indeterminate time period. After all, the animal’s quality of life at the shelter is not ideal. They’re fed, housed and provided basics but long shelter stays can degrade an animal’s

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mental state. From the perspective of what’s in the dog’s best interest, it’s difficult to argue for long-term shelter stays. Therein lies a conflict: those living “on the edge of society” may highly value their pets, but have societal structures that make it challenging to claim them when the pets become strays. Shelters struggle to connect animals with their owners, and don’t operate separate systems for those experiencing homelessness. And the dogs become the unfortunate pawns. Perhaps some of the funding prescribed for the homeless crisis can be directed towards better assisting the reunification of pets and their owners facing homelessness. No, it’s not a solution to tent cities, but each responsible pet owner and their animal deserve the dignity of being together. And if a society is judged by the way the treat their animals, one could argue we’re failing both the animals and society.

■ Sean P. Cadden lives in 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 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 and 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

Question everything you think you know to find the truth

BY WILLIAM BARRON

When we were children, we listened and absorbed the lessons taught by our parents and our role models. As adults we must ensure the lessons we teach and actions we take are based on truth and facts, not perspective and conjecture. Just as “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32) and “I think therefore I am” (Rene Descartes) we must challenge everything we think we know and view from every perspective before we can conceive it is the truth. We must escape from our own Plato’s Cave (The Allegory of the Cave, “Republic” by Plato), and seek the blinding daylight of reality, and encourage those who are still captive

in their cave to escape. The Allegory of the Cave is an excellent illustrative story for our times. Trapped in a darkened cave watching images parade upon the wall. All we can see are these images and hear their sounds as each creature passes. This is our only means of knowledge and therefore deemed our reality. Just as children we believe what we see and hear. If the figure of an ass passes by and trumpets, we have no choice but to believe the ass trumpets. We know no difference. Not until we are able to escape our bonds of our dark cave can we see a little more truth. We discover the visions we saw on the wall were shadows of silhouettes made with artificial light, not reality. Yet, we

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still think an ass trumpets because we know nothing different. The puppeteers stay in character as they move the silhouettes and continue the ruse. It’s not until, once again, we strive to reach the bright daylight outside of the greater cave do we see reality. We are blinded by the brilliance of the sunlight. It hurts at first. We try to shield our eyes until they become accustomed to truth’s brilliance. We see and hear the real ass and elephant and are shocked, in denial and disbelief. We see the sky, hear the surf and thunder, and smell the wonders and stench of real truth. We think to ourselves; we

must tell those left behind, still in their cave. However, after harassment and threats we understand another great reality. Each of us must find our own way out of our caves. Regardless of the amount of encouragement, each must decide to either stay in the comfort of manipulated delusion or face the enlightened discomfort of truth. But we can still encourage them and should. And today the shadows projected upon our wall are controlled by mass and social media. One controlled by only a few for their financial interests and the other manipulated by inhuman bots programmed to disseminate disinformation. We are told ‘truth isn’t truth’ and follow our tribal instincts finding ourselves more com-

fortable to believe those in our group-think world and our new puppeteers. For us to break free of their influence we must escape the chains by which they bind us. So, here’s the deal: if you are not viciously challenging what you believe, or think, and those two are different, every day then you are not in a position to challenge or question anyone else’s ideas or comments. This is a pretty high bar, but one each of us is more than capable of jumping, every day. Through this self-challenge we can see truth is truth, not perspective or the chaos of conspiracy theory. Elephants trumpet like elephants and asses don’t, they heehaw.

■ William Barron lives in Bend.