

Innovation will take dedication

The city of John Day's purchase of the Oregon Pine property for the John Day Innovation Gateway has amazing potential to revitalize the community, but the project will require dedication.

By transforming the old mill property into an attractive feature for visitors and the community — with walking trails, river access, botanical gardens, ponds, event spaces and more — the city can usher in its own future.

In a county with the highest unemployment rate in the state, with declining populations and poor economic outlook, visionary ideas such as the Innovation Gateway are essential. Outside entities cannot be expected to stop the spiral. The community must command its own destiny.

City Manager Nick Green, in his first year on the job, should be commended for his efforts to inspire and create a long-term plan to improve the city's viability and livability. As part of his growth strategy, this targeted investment on the Innovation Gateway has the possibility to attract new residents, provide new recreational opportunities and create new economic growth.

The site location is excellent. Along the northern side of Highway 26 on the west side of town, the area could be converted into an appealing gateway, welcoming visitors and replacing the current view of what once was with

a vision of what will be. The riverfront trail would be an excellent feature for visitors and residents alike.

But turning the property into something residents can be proud of will not be easy. The purchase itself only provides the possibility. Making the investment pay off will be the hard part.

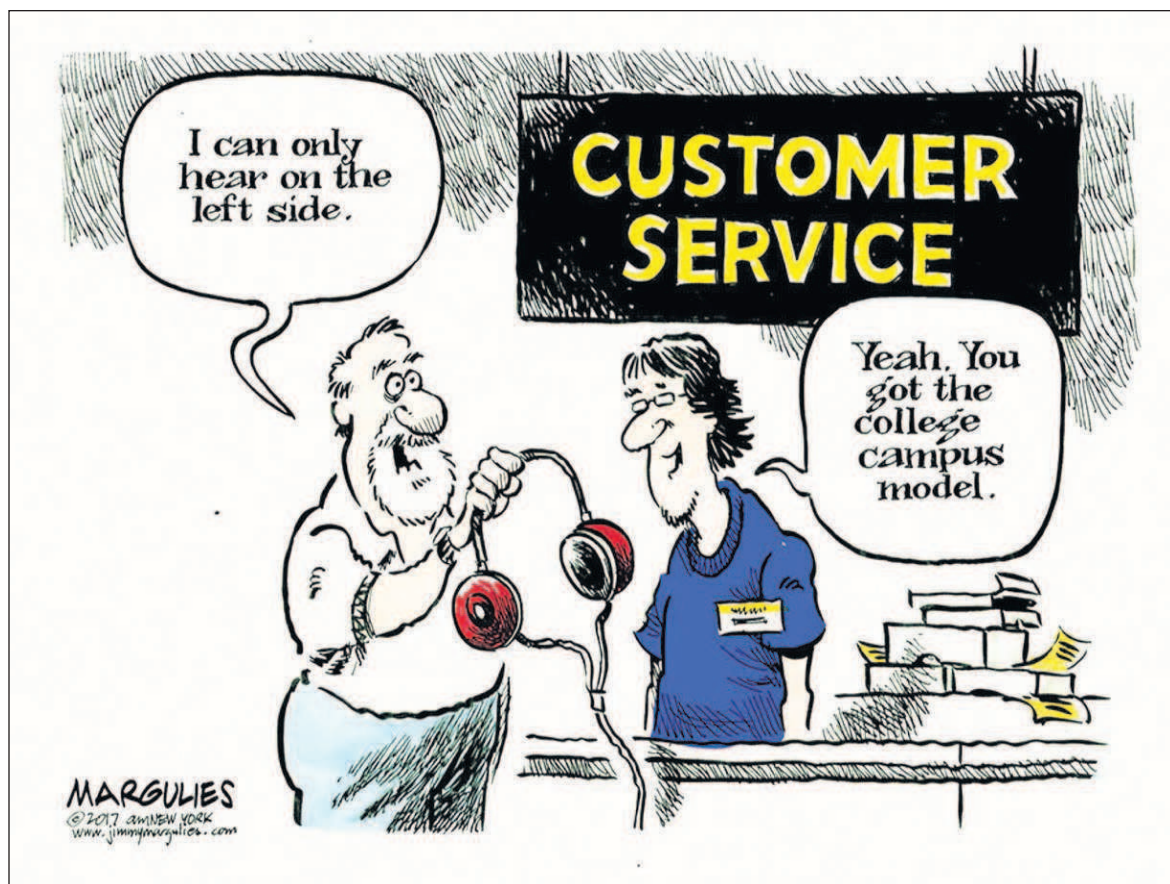
Having land outside the flood plain for the new wastewater treatment facility will be beneficial, but 50 acres is more than a bit excessive if that's all that develops. Taxpayers will not and should not be happy if this half million dollar purchase sits idle, failing to provide tangible benefits.

This investment in the land will only set the stage for future investments in the individual projects that could comprise the Innovation Gateway, which will require continuous investments to maintain. If the gateway inspires growth, it could pay for itself. If not, maintaining it could be costly.

We hope Green has the determination, dedication and desire to follow through on his lofty ambitions. If the Innovation Gateway succeeds, the city will be in a much better position.

In the face of decline, we need change. We need bold ideas. We need strong leadership. We need a positive but realistic outlook.

With strategic planning, sound management and community support, the Innovation Gateway may be exactly what we need.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Surprised and perplexed

To the Editor:

I am surprised and perplexed by the number of negative comments that continue to be voiced and/or published about the Blue Mountains Forest Partners and Mark Webb. I have read the rules for a 501(c)(3), including the disclosure rules and the hiring and payment of an executive director, etc. I heard the summary of BMFP's major accomplishments presented to the County Court. I have also perused BMFP's informative website. Since it formed in 2006 (and with membership and participation from a very wide range of community members), they have completed a huge amount of work with and for the community. Their work has clearly resulted in more logging, better forest conditions and more jobs in the community. They also insist on positive and productive attitudes and behavior, which I find refreshing in this county.

On the other hand, the Grant County Public Forest Commission was created in 2002. I have always been confused about their purpose (per their original document), almost never saw a meeting announced or any minutes and, after 15 years, I have yet to see any actual results from their existence. In fact, when I have heard GCPFC members speak, I have heard only complaints and criticism. Totally unproductive.

Am I missing something?

I am thankful and proud that Grant County has the BMFP, directed by Mark Webb, with full participation of a diverse board and membership, and with a well-researched and cooperative and collaborative approach, doing so much for the economic well being of our county.

Vicki Thompson
Mt. Vernon

From the 'other side of the mountain'

To the Editor:

I am writing to the people of John Day from the "other side of the mountain." Years ago, I came to John Day from Portland to work at the Blue Mountain Hospital, and I still consider myself someone who belongs among the people I grew to love. I grew up on a ranch, can ride a horse still at 76 somewhat decently and know something of what it takes to put up hay and the other things that are a part of a rancher's life. Recently I wrote an email to Rep. Greg Walden on behalf of the people who live in John Day. What I said to him was "if you are going to push a health insurance bill through Congress that removes people from John Day from getting health insurance I am personally coming to 'the other side of the mountain' to see that someone else represents them." There are so many issues that we on this side of the mountain do not understand about what people who work in timber and ranching need in order to survive. We have just passed a gas tax on fuel

to cover the tax loss to the state because people in the city are buying hybrid cars and the state revenue is down. What I know is that this is a sorry addition to the diesel costs for pickups and other equipment. This by way of saying that there are people here like myself, who want very much to stop the rural/metropolitan divide and work together with people in John Day to assure there is health insurance for the people, school funding for the children and fuel costs to insure that we all survive this difficult time together. Please, if someone reads this and has a community group that I/we can help, let me know.

Jean Powrie
Portland

'Challenge the opinion, not the person'

To the Editor:

In the May 3 issue of the Blue Mountain Eagle, a letter from Frances Preston was published. It was clearly an attack on Judy Schuette. The letter did include Ms. Preston's opinion on the County Court's management of payments, but it also personally attacked Judy Schuette.

The Blue Mountain Eagle's own policy on letters to the editor states: "Letters Policy: No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person." If this letter is not considered a personal attack, then I need to return to school to learn what a personal attack really is.

Permitting this letter to be published lowers the standards and civility of the Blue Mountain Eagle and violates its own policies. This also seems to give encouragement to others to expect their personal attacks to be published.

Please return the Blue Mountain Eagle to its own guidance that we all are supposed to follow, to "discuss opinions and no personal attacks." The license to write personal attacks and have them published is disturbing.

Eva Harris
Canyon City

Poor headline validates attacks

To the Editor:

I appreciate very much your article (May 3) about forest harvest volume alternatives as proposed by the Forest Service, but I am appalled by your choice of headline.

The Oxford Dictionaries chose "post-truth" as the word of the year in 2016. That is a reflection of the pervasiveness of lies, half-truths, innuendo, fake news, misrepresentations and alternative facts in much of today's media.

Your choice of "ALTERNATIVE FACTS" as your headline is very clever and accurate in its own way, but it also serves to validate the use of "alternative facts" by the Trump administration to both mislead us and attack the integrity of the press. Seems to me any newspaper would be naturally sensi-

tive to the use of that term.

Maybe I'm an extremist in my belief in and commitment to the truth and overly sensitive to any assaults on the truth. Or maybe I am suffering a diminishment of my sense of humor in my old age.

Richard Thompson
Mt. Vernon

Integrity of voting process preserves democracy

To the Editor:

Beyond the personal attack by Frances Preston against Judy Schuette in a letter to the editor in last week's Eagle, Preston made false claims that cannot be left to stand.

Incredibly (and mistakenly), she requested the county court to make Mrs. Schuette pay the legal costs associated with an investigation requested by the County Clerk in order to determine the voting status of Preston's nephew, John D. George of Mountain City, Montana. County counsel is on retainer, and his service was appropriately requested and used by the county clerk to sort out confusing details in George's peculiar residency status.

Preston blames Mrs. Schuette for asking why a man, who maintains a seemingly permanent abode in Montana where he is fully employed, is voting in Grant County? There is nothing unique in asking that question; others have asked the same. Preston claimed her nephew's status as a resident was established by the county clerk sometime earlier before the investigation. This is absolutely not true. If it had been previously established, there would have been no need to investigate it.

Preston made an odd reference to John George's political position about Blue Mountains Forest Partners. This is irrelevant to his residency status. The out-of-context injection of Julie Carr's dealings with the Secretary of State Election Division (over her duties as chief petitioner of the recent recall effort) made no sense in this discussion about George's confusing residency status.

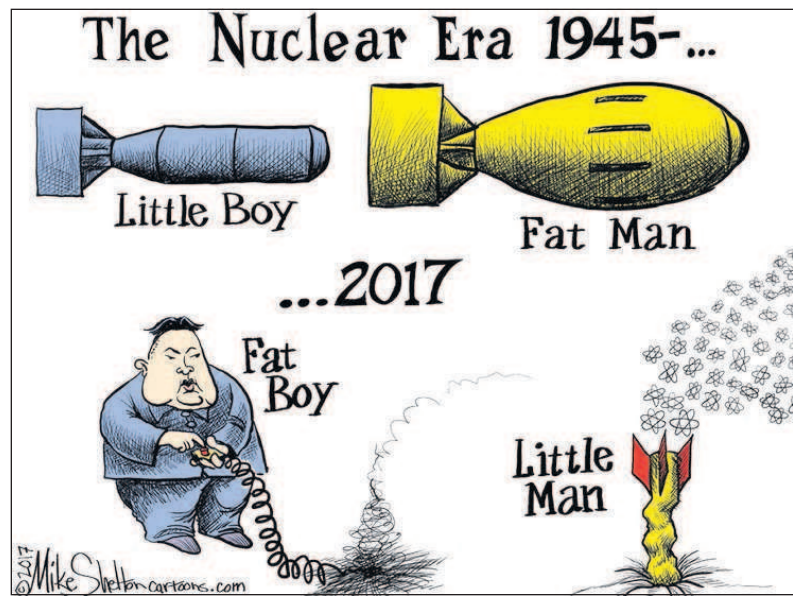
I listened to John George give testimony about his residency status, and had no problem wondering, "How could the county clerk have unraveled the confusion without duly investigating it?" Several times counsel had to ask Mr. George to repeat his information to obtain clarity.

The takeaway from this? When Brenda Percy, or any citizens question or verify that election rules are followed, democracy is protected. She did the right thing in conducting this investigation. Thank you, Judy Schuette, for helping preserve the integrity of the voting process. And thank you for your personal integrity.

Frances Preston owes Judy Schuette a full apology.

Kay Steele
Ritter

See LETTERS, Page A5



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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
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