

Elected, public leaders answer to the public

Occasionally it is prudent to remind voters in Oregon of a few, fundamental elements regarding our access to government.

In Oregon, the presumption is always government is, and will always be, open to public scrutiny. This scrutiny promotes our form of democracy and also furnishes a degree of transparency.

In short, all Oregonians have a right to know what their government is doing, how it is spending taxpayer money and what that money is spent on. This isn't a nifty notion, or an aspiration. It is a right. Like the right to keep and bear arms. Like the right of free speech. It isn't a debatable item.

In short, every single Oregonian has the right to prepare and deliver a public records request to any government entity to seek specific records. Some records are inaccessible and are "exempt." These exempt records are that way for a very specific reason with a narrow scope.

The important question for readers is what is a newspaper's role in such a paradigm. A newspaper — a good one at least — acts as a sort of de facto representative of the people. When matters that are important to the body politic as a whole come to light, the newspaper can act in the public interest and file a public records request. This action isn't about pursuing red herrings

or hounding hard-working elected and public officials. The process is designed to help inform the public — voters — so they can make good decisions about policy.

That's because elected and appointed officials — at least in our nation — don't get to do whatever they want. Our system doesn't work that way. Every public and elected official is beholden to the voters. Every public and elected official has but one responsibility — to represent their constituents.

That means, in the end, that public and elected leaders are required to be open with the public. Whether they want to or not, they must answer to the body politic. As a newspaper, our role is ensuring that those elected and appointed officials don't lose sight of that important fact and to certify they are being open and transparent. Occasionally, that system puts us at odds with people who have the best interest of the public at heart but don't see why certain elements of their work should be open to the public. We take no pleasure creating more work for public or elected officials, but we consider our role as a watchdog to be vital for not only the health of our little piece of the republic but for the well-being of our system of government as a whole.

We take our job seriously, and readers should rest assured we will meet any challenge to keep our readers informed.

After all, that's our job.

JEFFREY EPSTEIN'S SUICIDE SAYS MORE ABOUT OUR NATION'S MENTAL STATE THAN IT DOES ABOUT EPSTEIN'S...



GUEST COMMENT

Why business networking is important

I've counseled many business clients who face the same dilemma: not enough business. They tell me about how much money they've spent on marketing, their detailed business plan, the quality product or service they offer and their excellent customer service. They have attractive signage and store fronts and easy-to-find locations. Yet, they do not have enough customers walking through the door.

My first question is to ask about how they network with other business professionals. Often, I hear the same thing, "I don't have time for that."

Really? They've made a hefty financial investment, spend 60-plus hours per week running their business, lose sleep (and often money) and yet can't (or won't) carve out two to four hours per month to meet other business professionals?

Let's rethink this. Apparently, they don't realize that by establishing mutually beneficial relationships they stand to receive valuable business referrals, which could dramatically improve their bottom line.

Business networking is an integral part of running a profitable business. The adage, "It's not what you know, but who you know that counts," is very true. Even in this modern-day



Greg Smith

era where social media platforms, websites and the internet in general provide seemingly limitless ways to reach people, nothing replaces interacting with fellow business owners, professionals and related business organizations on a face-to-face level.

Here are three types of business networking opportunities among a plethora to consider:

1. Casual contact networking: The best example of this type of group is the local chamber of commerce. Meetings often provide opportunities for people to mingle informally or listen to guest speakers who present information on a variety of pertinent business topics, legislative issues, community affairs or applicable business programs. In addition to paying membership fees, consider volunteering, perhaps as a chamber ambassador. The positive business exposure received will likely be worth the effort and time spent. For this type of networking to be most beneficial, business owners need to attend meetings and events regularly to strengthen the relationships.

2. Community service clubs: While not focused on business,

but rather on serving the community, regular participation and volunteering helps strengthen personal and business relationships. Going into this with the mindset of contributing rather than benefiting may very well ultimately help grow the business in ways perhaps not considered.

3. Professional associations: These types of associations generally are from a specific type of industry, and their primary purpose is to exchange information and ideas.

Like any other positive relationship, there is give and take involved. Helping others succeed by making appropriate business referrals or assisting others with experience and knowledge the entrepreneur has gleaned is a vital part of successful networking.

Many valuable networking opportunities are low or no-cost with the only contribution being that of time.

Of course, time is one of the most important assets we possess, but the investment of time can reap many benefits toward the success and longevity of a business.

Greg Smith is the Director of the Eastern Oregon Small Business Development Center, offering free and confidential business advising. To schedule an appointment, call 541-962-1532 or email eousbdc@gmail.com.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Grant County youth second to none

To the Editor:

This past week it was my pleasure to attend the Grant County Fair. Your town is to be commended for putting on a first class fair.

I was greeted warmly from the first moment I entered the gates to the last, and was treated with the friendliness you only find in rural small town America. I loved watching the youth of your community have the opportunity to shine, and shine they did!

For example, there was a gate that needed to be latched every time you walked through it, and without fail it was either opened or closed for me with a smile and a kind word.

Every word I encountered was polite, and respectful. I attended the 4-H/FFA livestock auction and was very impressed with the gen-

erosity of your community as well as the personal contacts that each exhibitor made when their animal was purchased. We were the proud buyers of several of your animals! Thank you for an amazing week. You have a fair to be proud of, and your youth are second to none.

Vicki Anderson
Madras

Letter: Springer an asset at Planning Department

To the Editor:

Over the last three years, using local contractor Mark Boss and his assistant, Mike Wolfer, we have built a small, energy-efficient home, which is a delight to live in. Construction was with insulated concrete forms, which is not conventional material (recycled Styrofoam blocks).

That, along with our inexperience in building, required many

trips and calls to the Grant County Planning Department for clarification and consultation with Shannon Springer, the assistant director.

In all of our contacts with Ms. Springer, we found her to be pleasant, responsible and endowed with incredible knowledge. With my endless questions, only once did she not provide an immediate response. On that occasion, concerning an oddball issue, she paused and then said, "Hmm. I think I'll need to research that one." Two days later, she called with a clear cut answer.

It is not uncommon to hear people complain about taxes and regulations, but the Planning Department is an essential service that assures that structures built in Grant County will be durable and safe. And when a government agency is managed by a civil servant as competent as Shannon Springer, her salary is tax money very well spent.

Vic Pike
John Day

WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.
- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
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