

Public records should be affordable to the public

Ginger McCall, Oregon's first public records advocate, left office Oct. 11 with some suggestions for her successor, the Public Records Advisory Council she headed and lawmakers and other officials in Oregon.

Public records, she says, should be obtainable at prices the public can afford.

She's right. Most of her proposals are right on the money. As she makes clear, the high cost of records requests can keep the public and the press from information they're entitled to have.

McCall would create two classes of records requesters. The first, including news organizations, nonprofit organizations and educational requesters, would pay only for the cost of duplicating requested records. All others would pay that charge, plus the cost of searching for requested records.

As McCall points out, state law allows public bodies to set their own charges, which vary wildly from agency to agency. Worse, she says, they also can

charge attorney fees, sometimes \$180 per hour or more, to have those records reviewed. The result is a price tag that is beyond the reach not only of the public and media — it may well be beyond the grasp of many of the lawmakers who write public records bills in the state.

She's right to suggest that the state scrap the allowance for attorney's fees, then set specific, low fees, perhaps \$15 per hour or 5 cents per page, to fulfill all requests.

In addition, McCall writes, Oregon should emulate the federal government when it comes to first-party requests for records related to themselves or a deceased family member, and charge lower fees to that group, particularly if they've been victims of crimes. She says charging those people exorbitant fees for records "is a clear and uncompassionate miscarriage of justice."

McCall's suggestions would bring order and uniformity to a system that lacks both. Lawmakers should take them to heart, preferably during the 2020 short legislative session.



WITCH: OFFENSIVE TO WICCAN-AMERICANS



SUPERMAN: PROMOTES SUPERIORITY OVER MERE MORTALS



KIRK

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FRANKENSTEIN: INSENSITIVE TO PEOPLE MADE UP OF DEAD BODY PARTS



CARE BEAR: YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM LAWYERS OF THE BEARS ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE... SERIOUSLY



GUEST COMMENT

Hands-on experience

Over the course of the last two years, I have grown an interest in writing and journalism.

I recently became involved in activities that will help strengthen my abilities, such as being a school newsletter author and participating in an essay class and English class.

In order to verify my interest in this field, I was given the opportunity to job shadow Angel Carpenter, a reporter for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

On Oct. 3, Angel met me at Prairie City High School to give some hands-on experience of what it's like to interview and



Emily Ennis

photograph. We had the chance to follow around some lunch buddies at the school cafeteria and partake in the fun!

How special it was to hear the responses from both older and younger lunch buddies on what their objective was for the program.

She allowed me to take over the camera for awhile and take some snapshots myself, while giving many tips on how to get the perfect image. From there, we traveled back to her office to edit and discuss.

I learned the importance of an aligned photo, how to edit the photo color to make it more eye appealing and the proper image description.

We then had time to chit chat, and I was able to get a little past the professional talk and asked about how she got where she is and what her schedule looks like.

Overall, the job shadow experience was very helpful, and gave me clarification that I indeed would like to pursue this career in the future.

Emily Ennis is a senior at Prairie City High School.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Stuttering is the only disability people still laugh at'

To the Editor:

Oct. 22 is International Stuttering Awareness Day. Stuttering is the only disability people still laugh at, but we're working to change that. Just over 70 million people around the world stutter, including more than 3 million Americans. Most people know someone who stutters, but few understand the condition, what causes it and how it is treated. Many famous people, including actors, singers, statesmen and athletes are among those who stutter. One in five children stutter for a time during their development. For more than 70 years, the Stuttering Foundation has offered trusted information and help for those who stutter. For more information, visit stutteringhelp.org or call 800-992-9392.

Jane Fraser
President, the Stuttering Foundation
Memphis, Tennessee

'Lawlessness has become the norm'

To the Editor:

Lawlessness has become the norm! No longer enforced are the common ordinances enacted to prevent otherwise neglectful property owners from practices that threaten public safety, health, neighboring property value and community quality of life.

Facing lowered tax revenues federal, state, county and city agencies are having to focus more on matters of urgency. Predictably, behavior by those having the lowest civic regard becomes normative.

Prairie City is evidence of this downward spin. The obvious question is this: Deprived of administrative enforcement of legally enacted ordinances, how do the civically responsible citizens counter the festering decline by neighbors who demonstrate no regard for the community?

Storie Mooser
Prairie City

Mala mutatio

To the Editor:

Skippy was a lady in the valley of the strange. There was something very shady in her home there on the range.

A macabre grotesquerie, specific and precise. "Who," would be the query, by what reason or device?

Specific organs taken? No blood at scene was found? You're sure you're not mistaken? No tracks upon the ground?

All sorts of holy creatures sacrificed by whom? So many common features, these crimes of fear and doom.

By thousands we can count them. No one has yet been caught. Do anything but doubt them. The answer we have naught.

Calvin Weaver
Boise

LETTERS POLICY: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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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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