

Oregon Forest Resources Institute still needed

The Legislature created the Oregon Forest Resources Institute 29 years ago during the timber wars, which featured battles over logging, fierce debates over the role of state and federal forests in the timber industry and, most remarkably, the protection of the northern spotted owl under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The stakes were huge for Oregon's economy. Since 2001, the timber industry has lost 15,000 direct jobs — a drop of almost 18%.

The Legislature's primary goal was to create an agency that would provide information and educational material to the public and schools about the timber industry and how it operates.

The problem: The legislation creating the OFRI was vague about how that would be done.

Fast forward to 2021 and a state audit that found the institute needs more oversight and direction.

The audit, requested by Gov. Kate Brown, followed criticism that the OFRI had lobbied the Legislature. Though many state agencies have "legislative liaisons" that do pretty much the same thing, critics felt the institute was out of line.

Any confusion can be attributed to the poorly written state law.

"Portions of OFRI's statute are broad and vague, contributing to this ongoing lack of clarity as to what exactly OFRI is and what rules it is expected to follow," according to the audit.

The legislative record referenced in the audit shows lawmakers themselves were unclear about how the institute should operate. If legislators didn't know and didn't write a law that was clear, how could OFRI's

leaders know?

The audit compares the OFRI to the 22 commodity commissions, which the state Department of Agriculture oversees. The trouble with that comparison is that in 1991, when the OFRI was created by the Legislature, commodity commissions weren't state agencies. They were taken under the ODA's wing years later because of a series of judges' rulings that found the state could not require growers to give money to private commissions.

By transforming the commissions into state agencies the Legislature solved that problem. That allowed them to promote the crop and fund research — and lobby the Legislature.

With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, the Legislature probably could do the same with OFRI, except put it under state Department of Forestry instead of the ODA.

We would encourage legislators to consider doing that.

In the meantime, the audit makes four suggestions to the OFRI and one to the Legislature. In its response, the institute's director agreed to all of them. They include writing a single mission statement to follow and policies to make OFRI staffers follow what the state statute appears to say but does not specify. Again, the statute is the root of the problems.

Earlier this year, some legislators tried to slash the OFRI's budget — which comes from the timber industry in the form of harvest taxes — as some sort of retribution for past transgressions, real or imagined.

That would be wrong.

The OFRI can and should play a role in keeping the public informed about the timber industry, which continues to be an important part of the state economy.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tax and spend mentality

To the Editor:

The John Day town hall meeting was a love fest proposing their "tax and spend" mentality the Biden administration is forcing on us. The pawns in this scenario of an additional levy are our police force. It alarms me the police did not fight for it as a safety issue while in the budget process. No one wants to defund the police, but the JD administration has already done that in total disregard to its citizens. Safety is the primary function of any government (police and fire). To cover the cost overrun of the fire hall, the city transferred funds from the water fund for a loan to be paid back by the JDFD and JDRFD for this mistake. Now this levy is an attempt to force more debt on citizens for the police. Both have been ignored and are being used as collateral to tax and spend. The city has already been given, in the past two years, by taxpayers in Grant County through the URA (Urban Renewal Ponzi scam) a whopping \$84,257. This program takes away the future increases in value to the taxing districts and gives to the city for incentives. It gives the city the authority to move boundaries to their liking, and the city can charge the program \$30,000 in administrative fees. Their snipes of the Grant County Court were heard and will be met with. In all programs they come up with a substantial opposition effort. It robs from the poor and gives to the rich. The next scam to cover is the greenhouse failure. The city manager was more than a little disingenuous in the figures he gave a young lady in the audience. Fact is \$180,000 of COVID-19 money was put into the greenhouse, not \$5,000, according to the approved budget. Another fact that the manager is wrong about is "out of pocket money (\$40,000)," which in fact there was over \$700,000 put into this albatross. According to this FY budget the net figure for the greenhouse is in the negative \$141,784. At least the COVID money could be used to fund a viable police department. Just a shell game and misinformation by this less than stellar administration. Vote no to hold the administration responsible.

Bob Pereira
John Day

'I want to stay in Oregon'

To the Editor:

To those folks who want to live in Idaho, pack up your stuff and move there. I want to stay in Oregon!

Gary Miller
Mt. Vernon

Introducing politics and division

To the Editor:

The Oregon Department of Education has officially recognized that "Black Lives Matter." This, in my opinion, introduces politics and division into the classroom, and introduces critical race theory into the curriculum. Sorry, but All Lives Matter. No, this is not politically correct; what do you say to an inter-racial couple or mixed-race child? One parent matters and the other does not? Was your white parent born racist? Where does that leave you? Is your parent of color a victim?

Critical race theory has actually been around for a while; it has been in the universities, unofficially, for years. Now parents all over the country are worried about their children's teachers, and study plans. The idea that your child is being taught that he/she is born a racist, or a victim, is wrong. Unfortunately, criti-

cal race theory has been elevated by Black Lives Matter because, in my opinion, some folks have been misled and become woke, thinking to create equity. Equity is not equality. Trying to make students equal by removing advanced math courses in a public school is dumbing down, and does not create an equal outcome. I am a terrible math student, but do not begrudge anyone learning as much as they are able. This is only an example, and it is insulting to all.

Today, my opinions are not politically correct, and they are not racist either! Our history is good and bad, and learning all of it should not create hate and division; it should create love and understanding. Take a look at South Africa today. Reconciliation has been destroyed amidst corruption and hate. Is this what some want? The power players of the world want this country to fail and fall.

Margie Mortensen
John Day

'Ask detailed questions and make your voices heard'

To the Editor:

The primary topic at the city of John Day's town hall meeting July 27 was the funding for the police department. It was obvious that those in attendance supported maintaining the police service with the city. It was also obvious that most attendees were concerned with how the city was prioritizing their funding and properties being taken off the tax rolls either permanently or temporarily (Urban Renewal Agency).

The city did apply for a Community Oriented Policing Services grant to help partially fund the department with \$125,000 per year for three years. The results will not be known until around October. In the meantime, the last day for three police officers would be Aug. 31. Why is this when the city has adopted the FY 2021-22 police budget in the amount of \$513,240, an increase of \$118,265 over the revised budget for FY 2020-21? Could it be that they are required by statute to pay the police officer's salary for one year after Aug. 31 if the levy fails? We must understand the levy, like the grant, is only a short-term remedy.

If the levy fails and the police department is consolidated with the county's sheriff's department after one year, the sheriff's department/county will have to decide if they can continue the funding as the city will be relieved of their financial responsibilities. If not, we will only have police services in emergency cases.

It is interesting that we haven't heard an option to contract services with the sheriff's department, only to consolidate. In either case the cost to the sheriff's department will increase.

If the police department does go to the county after one year, what happens to the property tax funding the city currently receives and uses for funding the police department? Where will these funds be allocated, or will the property tax collection rate be reduced?

Residents and voters of the city of John Day must become more informed of what is happening in John Day and what the effects may be. Ask detailed questions and make your voices heard by the mayor, councilors and city manager.

Louis E. Provencher
John Day

Think about the financial burdens

To the Editor:

After attending the most recent John Day town hall meeting, I left

with one question. It was not how to amend the budget and keep the local police department, and it was not about if we are trading tomatoes for police protection.

My question stemmed from a statement made by Mr. Green. Mr. Green stated that he was working on a Homeland Security grant, while sitting by the pool, on vacation. There was an utterance from the audience, by a local business person, "at least he gets a vacation." I certainly do not begrudge anyone for taking a needed vacation. However, this left me pondering a few thoughts.

First and foremost, if the panel sitting before us knew the reality of the many folks living here in John Day? Are they aware of the immediate needs of folks living right here in the city? There are a number of financial needs right here and right now. There are seniors, parents and businesses struggling. I have to question if the folks wishing to impose another tax understand the financial burdens that folks are already facing? Instead of giving yourself raises, charging nearly \$5 for a head of lettuce, and imposing new taxes, why are we not collectively figuring out ways to save money and put money back into the citizens' pockets? Money needed for medical expenses and other necessary expenses to survive.

We have all just been through the complexities of COVID-19. How about easing the burden on the public? Perhaps, the tax is not an issue to you. Please consider others and consider the burden we are placing on our economically depressed community. Do you want to be responsible for a person not having the gas money to get to a necessary medical appointment? Do you want to be responsible for someone not being able to pay for their car to be repaired? The same car needed to get their cancer treatment? Do you want to be responsible for someone having to close their business? These are reasons I will vote no! I care about others and the financial burdens they face.

Katrina Page
John Day

'Vote no and make him fiscally responsible'

To the Editor:

Question for John Day City Manager Nick Green: When you can "find" funds to recently hire two new staff at the city hall for a total of well more than \$60,000 per year (and you still want to add a city planner?), yet you can't find \$50,000 to fund the No. 1 essential service the city has, there's not a revenue problem over there, Mr. Green? Don't even ask Mr. Green about the greenhouse continuing to lose money (a lot), taxable property removed from tax rolls, Mr. Green's exorbitant increases in salary (compared to other city employees), Mr. Green's ongoing accumulation of bonuses out of city coffers (\$37,000 total of late), etc. Obviously, the money to fund the police, exists, and plenty more.

What there is is a "budgeting priorities problem" on Mr. Green's part. This is another "power play" by Mr. Green with the police his pawns, just like he did with the kids as pawns and the swimming pool; my way or the highway is his modus operandi.

If the levy fails, I predict he will "suddenly" find the police funding. Clearly it's there: Vote no and make him fiscally responsible.

Tom Olson
John Day



Blue Mountain EAGLE

USPS 226-340

Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

Email: www.MyEagleNews.com
Phone: 541-575-0710

John Day, Oregon

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

EDITOR & GENERAL MANAGER Sean Hart, editor@bmeagle.com
REPORTER Steven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
SPORTS sports@bmeagle.com
MULTIMEDIA Alex Wittwer, awittwer@eomediagroup.com
MARKETING REP Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
OFFICE ASSISTANT Alixandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY EO Media Group

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(including online access)

One year \$51
Monthly autopay \$4.25

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery
POSTMASTER — send address changes to

www.facebook.com/MyEagleNews

[@MyEagleNews](https://twitter.com/MyEagleNews)

Blue Mountain Eagle
195 N. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845-1187
Copyright © 2021 Blue Mountain Eagle

All rights reserved. No part of this publication covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means — graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping or information storage and retrieval systems — without written permission of the publisher.