

OUR VIEW

Breaking the stalemate on police funding shows leadership

No one was happy when the John Day City Council decided to suspend the operations of the city's police force in mid-October. But we have watched with growing dismay as the weeks have passed with no visible progress on the question of how to pay for law enforcement services in the city limits.

So we were gratified to be able to report that, at long last, city and county officials have begun to talk to each other about how to do just that. As you can read in this week's Eagle, City Councilor Gregg Haberly and County Commissioner Sam Palmer, in consultation with Sheriff Todd McKinley, have initiated discussions about what it would take for the Grant County Sheriff's Office to fill the void left by the suspension of the John Day Police Department — and who's going to pay for it.

It's hard to dispute the unanimous judgment of the City Council that John Day is just too small to support a professional police force any longer. The department's budget exceeded the city's general fund revenues by at least 50%. After low voter turnout doomed an operating levy in August, the department's fate was effectively sealed.

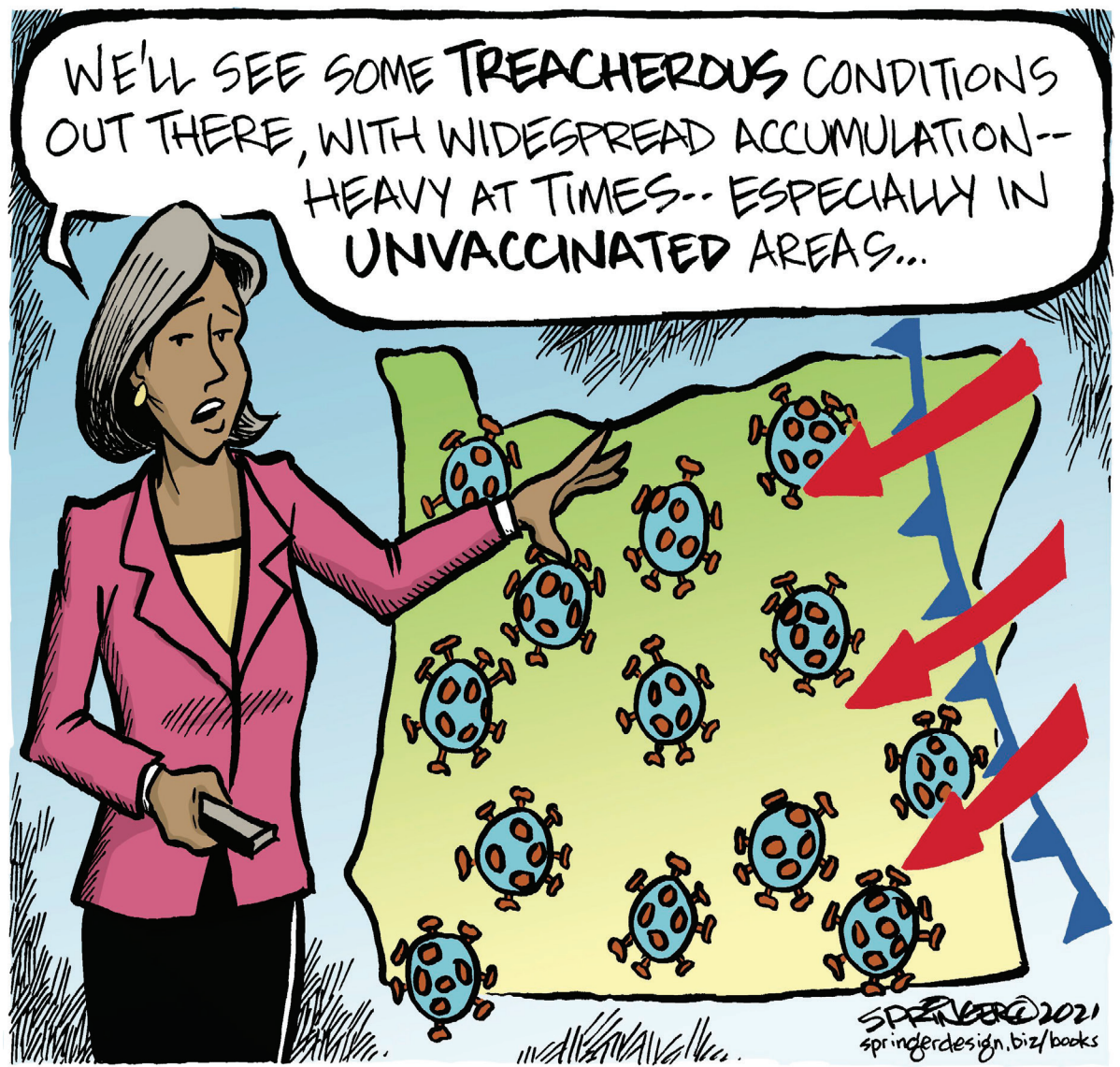
But McKinley's office has been unfairly forced to shoulder the burden of providing law enforcement coverage for John Day residents since the Police Department shut down — a heavy load for an agency that has just four patrol deputies to police Oregon's seventh-largest county. It is only reasonable to expect that the city should provide some funding to help the Sheriff's Office hire more deputies.

The City Council has expressed support for the idea of transferring a three-year, \$375,000 federal grant to the county for that purpose, although it's not yet clear if the grant rules will allow that. That's not enough to pay for the three extra deputies McKinley says he needs, at a minimum, to provide adequate law enforcement protection.

The city has already proposed giving the county \$300,000 a year from its general fund — 100% of John Day's annual property tax revenues — for law enforcement. But that offer came with a catch: in exchange, the city wants an equal amount from the county road fund for street improvements in John Day.

That offer appears to be a nonstarter. As Palmer put it, "The policing and roads that (City Manager Nick Green) asked for are two different things, and we're going to keep them two different things."

All of these things are matters for negotiation. The important point here is that, after a two-month standoff, the city and county are talking about a matter of vital importance not only to the citizens of John Day but all Grant County residents. We commend Gregg Haberly and Sam Palmer for their leadership in getting these long-delayed talks started.



THE FARMER'S FATE

Unanswered bedtime prayers

Pushing his plate away after supper, my husband yawned and sing-songed:

"Now I lay me down to sleep... I pray my wife will rub my feet..."

I snorted and made an exaggerated smirk:

"and if I don't, make no mistake..." I frantically searched the rhyming drawers of my brain, but to no avail. Give and take, backache, deep fake, disk brake, bull snake... "OK, you got me. I've got nothing!"

He pushed his hands behind his head, gloating in being able to best me on a wordplay. I kept racking my brain furtively for some kind of a reply — but I still had nothing. I am usually really good at thinking on my feet, but right now, if my brains were dynamite, there wouldn't be a big enough explosion to blow off my hat.

I shrugged and gave my best "whatever" look.

The next night, while getting ready for bed, my husband quietly repeated his "prayer." Followed by something mumbled about hoping it's answered this time...

"Maybe you should take a lesson from Garth Brooks and be thankful for unanswered prayers?"

He rolled his eyes at me, and muttered some disparaging remark. But I couldn't hear him, because my mind was furiously rewriting lyrics. I drifted off to sleep that night while the parody swirled round and round my head:

It wasn't quite the foot rub, that I had pictured in my dreams



Brianna Walker

There was no time for ointments, no balms, salves, liniments or creams.

Instead out came the grinder, the belt sander and the Dremel tool

She flashed a wicked grin as I pushed away the footstool!

And as she walked away, I looked at my toes still tired and sore, callused and achy, but intact I suppose.

Sometimes I'm thankful, for unanswered prayers

just think what might have happened, with my feet in her crosshairs?

So just because my prayers weren't answered, doesn't mean she don't care...

Some of my wife's greatest gifts — are unanswered prayers.

I always keep a notepad on the nightstand next to the bed, in case inspiration hits in the night.

The next morning I was very excited to sing the midnight lyrics to my husband. To say he wasn't impressed would be an understatement. Regardless, I was quite pleased with myself, and caught myself humming the song jauntily throughout the day. I should have remembered that pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall — but instead I went blissfully throughout the day, feeling like I had come out on top of our word match.

Later that night, after having gotten the last of the bedtime sto-

ries, teeth brushing and last minute glasses of water taken care of, I headed to bed — and to my prideful destruction.

The nightstand lamp was on and my husband was sitting at the foot of the bed with a foot sander and lotion. I raised an eyebrow, expecting a second verse that would outdo mine. Instead he smiled with innocent mischief:

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my wife will rub my feet. But if she doesn't it's OK Marriage is a give and take. Her feet are sore, they work all day

I'll rub hers first, mine can wait.

If this was a Hallmark movie, I would have been moved to tears, picked up the lotion and the credits would have rolled while he finally got his long-awaited foot massage.

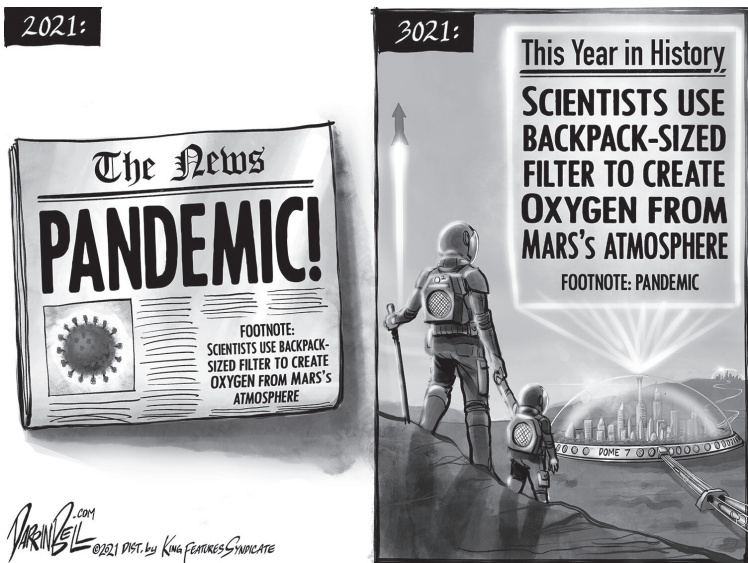
But this was more of a Robin Williams-style movie — so I pulled off my socks and flopped happily across the bed to enjoy the foot massage he'd been asking for all week. I assuaged the twinge of guilt that kept tickling, by telling myself he'd end up with a nice tub of Working Feet cream in his stocking — better than the coal in mine.

Now as we each lay down to sleep

which spouse will rub the other's feet? Which one will ease the other's stress?

I'd like to say me — but he's the best. Amen.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



Blue Mountain EAGLE USPS 226-340
 Grant County's Weekly Newspaper
 Email: www.MyEagleNews.com John Day, Oregon
 Phone: 541-575-0710

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

EDITOR Bennett Hall, bhall@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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opposing the pool, different take on 'miser'

To the editor:
 In the Dec. 22 issue of the BME I found two unfortunate statements.

On page A2, the fourth paragraph mentions that "Morris was the lone person to speak in opposition to the project at the (John Day) Planning Commission's Nov. 9 public hearing."

I applaud his courage to stand in opposition of this railroading by the city manager/City Council and the passive acceptance of the Planning Commission. Shame on me for not being in attendance at this meeting where everyone who gave testimony were pro this big-city pool. The nay-sayer was not allowed to speak. Democracy in action, John Day style!

Grant County communities that were asked to support a taxing district to pay for the pool said no. Yet here we are. It seems as if we don't have much say. Or any say, for that matter.

As a former small town with appeal, it seems as if we are trying to be like Bend. We need to attend City Council meetings and voice our opinions. We voted these people in; make them do their job of listening to us and moving in the direction we want!

Also, BME, your "Out of the Past" history articles would be great if they were correct. The "75 years ago" article, which was written in 1946, spoke of a "miner" who was a "miser." He

was neither.

His census records put him in Susanville in 1900 to 1940. He owned a farm/ranch and was called a "stock rancher" in one census. I believe he lived by his brother Nelson (Nels). Both had immigrated to the U.S. in 1881 from Sweden.

He had likely saved up for the stocks and bonds he had in his possession and rather than being miserly, he took the box with him, unsure if he would ever be able to return home. They were his money in the bank, so to speak. He died at the Fletcher home in Mt. Vernon in February 1949 and is buried at the Canyon City Cemetery. The reporter was overboard back in the day!

Marsha Christensen
 John Day

John Day projects cause for concern

To the editor:

First off, I would like to thank all the readers locally and in Burns who believe the city of John Day has gone awry in its financial responsibility as well as the failure to provide the needs of its citizens. The Dec. 14 City Council meeting was no exception.

First off is the parking lot area to relieve Main Street of larger vehicles. The city management chose to make yet another purpose for it (with-out going to council) in the naming of it and other amenities added other than parking. The whole concept was

changed and one council member and the president of the Chamber of Commerce give the lecture of a lifetime to the leaders.

Just like all the mayor's projects, it was never designed before they started construction, the designs just keep changing without the permission of the councilors. Most of the times the councilors just accept the eye candy projects and a lust for free money as to the funding.

Regarding a loan application from Business Oregon for the URA program, I noticed in the estimated cost for the 100 house development projects. In the explanation for discussion was the line: "Additional funding received from the loan will be for contingency and debt service." This \$2.3 million will be repaid in part by withholding money from other taxing districts in the county.

Some of this money will be used for debt service. That is the definition of living beyond your means and should not even happen. This money is provided to private contractors, of course after the city's management fees.

Finally, the question come up from the city asking their auditor: Is there any money being set aside for a slush fund? (paraphrasing) What the question should have been, "Is there any money being moved on a regular occasion to cover shortfalls". Also, I believe the community development fund is a slush fund they have created.

Bob Pereira
 John Day