

Looking ahead to 2016’s biggest Statehouse battle

There was a rumbling of the earth on the North Coast last month, but it wasn’t the Cascadia quake.

Instead it was a chamber of commerce presentation in Seaside. Local members, including Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Court Carrier, heard from state business leaders warning of a likely 2016 state ballot measure, Initiative Petition 28.

Some people call it the “gross receipts tax,” others call it “an alternative to the minimum corporate tax to the largest corporations doing business in Oregon.”

You might not even pay much attention to it, unless you’re a \$25 million corporation.

These could be taxed on 2.5 percent of their gross Oregon sales. Proponents say it will add \$5.3 billion over two years to the state’s general fund, and help fund education and infrastructure.

“We feel that this is important because our schools are underfunded,” Melanni Rosales of Our Oregon said last week from Portland.

Because of funding gaps, schools are laying off teachers, trimming school days and class-sizes are swelling. “We have the third-largest class size in the country and fourth-lowest graduation rate,” Rosales said. “There are clear examples of why we need to do things to bring revenue back, and raising the minimum taxes for the biggest corporations doing business in the state is the most viable solution.”

CANNON SHOTS

By
R.J.
MARX



Money is needed in Salem, but who should pay?

Their opponents, like the pro-business group Grow Oregon NOW, call this an “extreme proposal” that would “force local businesses to pass on the costs of the tax in the form of higher prices for everyday items.”

From Salem to Seaside

At the November meeting, local chamber members heard a representative of Grow Oregon NOW call the initiative “the largest tax increase in state history,” with damage to our economy, job losses and higher prices for Oregon businesses and consumers.”

“This is highly polarized,” Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scapoose, said last week. “I think the business community will come out in

unified opposition to the gross receipts tax. I think the unions that are under Our Oregon will support it. I have publicly said I think it’s bad for Oregon.”

Johnson said she fears the tax will drive Oregon businesses to neighboring states.

“When do we load up the existing businesses with such a burden that we kill the golden goose?” Johnson asked. “We haven’t had a business correction in some time, and if the cyclical nature of recessions holds true, we’re going to be due for an adjustment here shortly.”

It could become “impossible to recruit” new corporations to Oregon in the future, she said.

The state spent “all this money to recruit Intel, with all kinds of tax incentives, and now we treat them like a chew toy, a punching bag for more tax revenue.”

Johnson acknowledged that the funds are much needed in Salem.

“Absolutely, but do we need \$5 billion in taxes sucked out of businesses right now?” Johnson asked. “And what would really be done with that \$5.2 billion? Would we perhaps be better off designating where that should go rather than just be stuffing it back in the general fund? Would it really go to the things we need: emergency bridge and building upgrades for people in the tsunami zone, quality education initiatives that would improve our graduation rates and competitive edge?”

‘A scary deal’

“It’s a scary deal, when you look at the impact it will have on Oregon,” said Court Carrier at last Wednesday’s Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce coffee meeting. “There will be about a \$5 billion impact flowing into the coffers of the general fund, and there’s no designated way for them to spend it. Let’s say Safeway gets hit with a \$25 million plus tax, are they going to do sit back and absorb it? No, they’re going to pass it along to everyone in their chain of supply, including the consumers. If the wholesale food supplier Cisco gets hit for food and beverage, we’ll all get hit.”

Along with an increased minimum wage proposal, Carrier said, smaller hotels like many in Cannon Beach would be forced to scale back their staffing and minimize employees, hiring less and doing more with the staff they do have.

The Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, which is not affiliated with the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce, is prohibited from taking political stances. Carrier said Initiative Petition 28 could change everything. He plans a review of chamber bylaws at the Dec. 15 Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce meeting.

“We’re already advocating for schools and affordable housing,” Carrier said. “We’re a business organization. I understand why we shouldn’t use clout to advocate for political offices, but when it comes

to business and livability issues in general, that’s something where we have to have a place in the table.

“We will share this information with members,” he added. “We will not tell them how to vote.”

Averting a ‘train wreck’

Whether the proposed initiative is a sincere attempt to bolster the state’s quality of education or a partisan political battle writ large, it’s not quite clear.

It’s unlikely that multimillion-dollar corporations are going to desert Oregon. It’s also uncertain whether this is most sensible way to raise \$5 billion. Right now, millions are headed just for the legislative fight, and it’s guaranteed to be bruising.

“I think the left is getting leftier and the right is getting rightier,” Johnson said. “The place in the middle where most thoughtful Oregonians are is disappearing. It’s been my experience growing up as a native Oregonian, most Oregonians are laissez-faire on the social stuff, I don’t care who you sleep with, I just don’t want to hear about it. We’re pretty fiscally conservative, we want to create an environment where business flourishes. Business has been portrayed as the enemy and fair game for raising taxes.

“If I were queen, your editorial would be a clarion call to the governor to use her convening power to see if we can stop this train wreck,” Johnson added.

Tsunami anyone?

Boac’s Bird Notes

SUSAN BOAC

A hot spot for birding everyone should experience

When going for a Big Year in birding, like I am this year, one should probably chase around trying to see the rarities that other birders in the area are seeing. This is made easy these days with wonderful websites like ebird.com, the Oregon Birders Online website and many more.

And since, I am this year going for a Big Year as a way to challenge myself to bird more, I have been chasing rarities, vagrants and lost birds.

One morning I was in Astoria with an hour before

I had an appointment to get my oil changed. I glanced at my phone, it’s a smartie phone, and up pops an email about an exotic bird that had just been spotted. And yes, I am on THAT email list and I do get insider info! Lucky me!

I headed straight out to Wireless Road, the hot spot all birders in the area should know about! Here I met up with Steve Warner, who is the great birder who first spotted the bird. He is waving me over and pointing at some tires in the back of a derelict vehicle. And yep, there



SUSAN BOAC

it was, the common ground dove. A Big Year AND Life List bird! This picture was taken several days later, when I saw it again!

But it is not always that easy. On the same road, a white-throated sparrow and tropical kingbird had been seen. While not as rare as the dove, I still need them on my list. I have been up and down the road, at all hours of the day, albeit there is not a lot of hours of daylight right now, and they evade me.

By the way, I have my personal best year going with 232 species identified, among those 14 species that I had not previously seen in my life and therefore go on my Life List.

Breaking news! Just before going to print, I have now seen the sparrow several times. Still searching for the kingbird.

I hope you will join a group of people for our own birding adventures in the Cannon Beach area. We meet the first Sunday of the month at the Lagoon Trail parking lot on Second Street at 9 a.m. As a group, we decide where the best birding is and bird until about 11. Bring binoculars and wear appropriate clothing. Everyone is welcome! Upcoming dates are Dec. 6 and Jan. 3.

Susan has spent her life enjoying the great outdoors from the lakes and woods of northern Minnesota, Mount Adams in Washington and now the Oregon beach environs. After spending many pleasurable hours driving her avid birder parents around, she has taken up birding as a passion, to the mixed emotions of her husband Scott. The Boacs reside on the Neawanna Creek in Seaside where their backyard is a birder’s paradise.

LETTERS

A thank-you from Lindsey’s friends

All the friends of Prof. Peter Lindsey thank Nancy McCarthy for her “Impressions” in The Daily Astorian and articles in Coast Weekend and Cannon Beach Gazette, which drew attention to the fundraiser for Lindsey at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 10. This fundraiser drew a packed house where donations towards the re-publication of Lindsey’s storyteller’s history of Cannon Beach “Comin’ in Over the Rock” raised enough money to print more copies of the book than had been anticipated. Much credit goes to McCarthy for her articles about Lindsey, which showed what an extraordinary person he is, and how much the citizens of our area love him. Therefore, all of Peter Lindsey’s friends applaud Nancy McCarthy for reminding the public that we are blessed with not only a fine storyteller but with a man who fully inhabits the stories he tells. She, in turn, told his story well.

Rex Amos
Cannon Beach

Author thanks community

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who attended the benefit event held on Nov. 10 at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce Community Hall on behalf of my book “Comin’ in Over the Rock.” Your generosity humbles me and exceeds my expectations by many leagues.

As a consequence, we will begin the process of re-printing the second edi-

tion in early December. Portland State University’s press has agreed to take on the project, and the revised and expanded edition should be available in the near future.

All this would have been inconceivable without your collective kindness. I am touched and moved by the response from all of you in my community and beyond.

Peter M. Lindsey
Cannon Beach

Chief Balzer is ‘a heck of a guy’

I don’t know the reasons for his termination, nor do I understand the way his termination happened. But what I do know is that Mike Balzer is one heck of a guy. I’ve known Mike and his family for more than 20 years, 19 of those I’ve been a fellow firefighter.

I’ve fought fire with Mike, trained with him, and taught firefighting classes with him. Mike is one of the most knowledgeable, highly trained emergency services providers in our county. Thirty years of dedication to his community does mean something.

Mike and his family made huge sacrifices for their community. Cannon Beach, and the rural fire protection district are better because of them. Hold your heads up, be proud of what you’ve given to this community. May this issue be resolved, and you find yourselves in a better place.

Thank you for your service, Chief Balzer. And to his family, thank you for supporting Mike for the last 30-plus years. I tip my helmet to you.

Chad Sweet
Warrenton

Intrepid on land and sea!



PATRICK NOFIELD PHOTO/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Elk crossing in Cannon Beach.

Grants awarded to help special education, at-risk students

EO Media Group

The Northwest Regional Education Service District Foundation awarded \$19,152 in grants for special education and at-risk student programs. More than \$7,500 of that went to programs in Clatsop County:

• Meredith McGrath, with Seaside School District’s early childhood special education program, received \$200 to refurbish an abandoned garden bed to teach children about nutrition, colors, counting and qualitative and quantitative concepts.

• Cindy Sapp, an educator at Astoria Middle School, received \$398 for wiggly seats and exercise balls to use as alternative seating in the school’s special education resource room.

• Whitney Randall in the special programs office of Astoria School District received \$1,875 to purchase an established vending machine route to provide students in the county’s high-needs consortium classroom a way to develop vocational and applied academic skills.

• Stacie Peeler, who works with autistic students in the Northwest Regional Education Service District, received \$1,800 to build skills for families in the county with autistic children up to 21 years old.

• Jackie Bergerson, who also works with autistic students, received \$1,000 to establish a sensory equipment library to help teachers and parents in the county check out trial materials for students who struggle with sensory differences.

• Angie Harrington, with the regional early learning

council, received \$1,800 to provide early literacy education for parents and caregivers throughout the county.

• Paulette Rubio, a regional speech language therapist, received \$225 to provide enrichment opportunities for speech-language students in the Warrenton-Hammond School District through National Geographic science exploration curriculum.

• Kathleen Adams from Warrenton High School received \$300 to enhance her modified foods class.