

Can Clatsop County improve accountability?

What we thought years ago needs refreshing

GUEST COLUMN
LIANNE THOMPSON



As you read this, we've already learned the results of the November general election. Most of us are glad it's over, whether we "won" or "lost." Politics is a game of winners and losers, and it's like contact sports, a kind of mixed martial arts.

What comes after the political battles is the governing — finding the courage and generosity to consider the common good, the common ground, and an equitable distribution of costs and benefits through public policies and programs.

Like the rest of our culture, politics has become a game of constant, never-ending warfare. We never get to the governing part, the part where we put down our weapons and put our heads together in a positive way. We need to stop butting heads and start using more of our heads for their brains, to generate and execute solutions.

It's not that we're doing everything wrong. We are definitely doing things right. But there's a body of challenges that we're not addressing effectively as a team. We can do better.

But we need a process. And we need to be willing to be capable, which means we're willing to try, make mistakes, learn from them, and then try again.

I think we can learn from the last 20 years' experience with volunteer commissioners, as provided under the home rule charter in effect in Clatsop County.

Taxpayers work hard to earn the money that government spends to provide services for the public. Without a dedicated elected governing body that can spend the time and effort to understand what it takes to earn the money and how to wisely spend that money, there is no effective public accountability.

In my experience, volunteer commissioners are usually part-time, especially if they have to earn a living doing some other job. They may be too eager to accept "advice" from a lobbyist or a bureaucrat, neither of whom is elected by the public or accountable to the public.

However well-meaning or self-serving the advice, how is a part-

time elected official to weigh and sift the truth to arrive at the best path to the common good? How are transparency and accountability served, except with dedicated and capable elected public officials?

Dedicated and capable elected public officials need to do planning and evaluation, I think, and they need to do it strategically. Other Clatsop County boards of commissioners have done real and substantive strategic planning.

In 2011, in an open competitive bidding process, my firm won a contract to provide strategic planning facilitation to the sitting board of commissioners in Clatsop County. As a result of that strategic planning, the board committed to follow a new form of clear and empowering accountability and developed board rules to implement the new way of operating.

That included a series of listening sessions in 2014. Vision 2030 community input sessions were held in seven locations all over Clatsop County, and people showed up to voice their vision.

What was supposed to happen after that was a statement of the board's mission and measures of effectiveness in achieving progress toward achieving that mission. It didn't happen. It needs to happen,

now more than ever.

If a volunteer board cannot achieve the statement of mission that expresses the will of the people in this county and the dimensions along which it should evaluate its employee, the county manager, we're in trouble.

I do see trouble. I see the churn of both elected and appointed leaders, the Clatsop County commissioners and the county manager. Our rate of turnover is alarming. It's a waste of time, talent, and treasure. It's costly in money spent and opportunities lost.

We can and must do better. I hope the new board that takes office in January 2019 will do better.

Where do we go from here? Back to listening to the people, and then moving forward to refine and define the county's mission, what kind of difference we want to make and how we intend to make that difference, for ourselves and for the county manager — whom we both hire and hold accountable.

And it is, I think, the board's job to hold the county manager accountable for results achieved in realizing the county's mission. The voters, the people, elect their representatives on the governing body and hold those representatives accountable. If staff isn't held accountable to

the members of the governing body, there is no other way to do it. Voters certainly have no other direct impact than their votes.

But the board of county commissioners can, should, and must be accountable to the people. The best way I see to do that is to listen again to the people. What we thought years ago needs refreshing. The housing and opioid crises are much worse now, for example.

After listening to the people, the board should define and refine community input into a compelling mission. Then comes another interesting part — translating the mission into focus areas, such as housing, economic development, community physical and mental health, public safety, and the arts.

From those focus areas come logical action steps, with analysis and planning to evaluate needs, methods, and results or outcomes.

The details remain to be worked out. But the operative word here is "worked." The time has passed for a board that does not perform the essential work of thoughtfully proceeding to answer the question, "Where do we go from here?"

Lianne Thompson represents District 5 — South County — on the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

Hunkering down with hot tea and a great holiday read

This Saturday two festive community events — the annual Cannon Beach Library Holiday Tea and, across Hemlock St. from the library, the annual Lamp Lighting Ceremony in Sandpiper Square — open the season in Cannon Beach and offer an opportunity for friends, neighbors and visitors to meet and share conversations and exquisite holiday treats.

At the Holiday Tea hot mulled cider, tea and a plethora of holiday cookies and candies, homemade by library members and volunteers, will tempt one and all Saturday, Dec. 1, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the library, 131 N. Hemlock St. The library's drawing for a hand-stitched, vintage grandmother's flower garden quilt will occur at 3 p.m. during the Holiday Tea. So, come

AT THE LIBRARY
JOSEPH BERNT



to the library for warmth, conversation and nourishment before crossing Hemlock for the Lamp Lighting Ceremony at 4 p.m. Both traditional events are free and open to the public.

Cannon Beach Reads

December is the perfect time to consider joining Cannon Beach Reads, which meets the third Wednesday of every month to discuss important fiction or nonfiction books by Pacific Northwest, U.S. and international authors.

At the group's November meeting, Elizabeth Becker's "Overbooked: The Exploding Business of Travel and Tourism" elicited the most intense discussion of the year as the author's critique of tourism industry practices brought comparisons with tourism marketing, practices and effects on the North Coast. One conclusion: Cannon Beach residents, city council members, planners and chamber members should read "Overbooked."

Cannon Beach Reads will discuss Yuval Noah Harari's "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind" Wednesday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m., at the library. Consider joining the discussion of this beautifully crafted history of, and predictions for, our species. These sessions are free, open to

the public and offer coffee and refreshments.

Also, at the November meeting current CB readers selected five fiction and seven nonfiction books to read and discuss next year. The monthly discussion schedule and discussants, beginning in January, will be posted in the library and at the Cannon Beach Book Company in early December. The five fiction titles, all classics, for next year include: "The Wind in the Willows" by Kenneth Grahame, "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" by Betty Smith, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by James Joyce and "Cannery Row" by John Steinbeck.

Next year Cannon Beach Reads will focus on seven, recently pub-

lished, nonfiction titles: "Fascism: A Warning" by Madeleine Albright, "The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest" by Timothy Egan, "The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Remaking of the Civilized World," by Jeff Goodall, "Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics," by Stephen Greenblatt, "Lab Girl," by Jahren Hope, "Barracoon: The Story of the Last 'Black Cargo,'" by Zora Neale Hurston and "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis," by J.D. Vance.

Sponsored by the Friends of Haystack Rock, Samantha Zeman, research assistant at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport, will present "Zooplankton: Indicators of Ocean Change," Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m., at the library.

MUNICIPAL MEMO

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION
MAYOR: Sam Steidel
COUNCILORS: Mike Benefield, Nancy McCarthy, Brandon Ogilvie and George Vetter
CITY MANAGER: Bruce St. Denis

MEETINGS DECEMBER 2018

3	City Council Retreat/Goal Setting-Tolovana Hall	9:00 a.m.
4	City Council Regular Meeting	7:00 p.m.
11	City Council Work Session	5:30 p.m.
20	Design Review Board	6:00 p.m.
27	Planning Commission	6:00 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING, November 6, 2018

- Police Chief Schermerhorn introduced new Police Department Officers Joshua Uteley and Christian Salinas; Mayor Steidel swore them in;
- Introduced new Community Development Director Jeff Adams who replaces Mark Barnes;
- SRG Partnership, Inc. Principal, Lisa Petterson presented an update on the City Hall building project;
- Jeff Adams was appointed to represent Cannon Beach on the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce; CREST;
- Council approved the contract for bond counsel for the proposed May 2019 Government Obligation (GO) Bond referral for the City Hall project;
- Council approved the contract with a financial advisors for the proposed May 2019 GO Bond referral for the City Hall project.

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION, November 14, 2018

- Pacific Power advised the Council of the upcoming scheduled power outages needed to make repairs;
- Council and staff discussed a request for paving on Ross Lane. They discussed paving in general.
- Council discussed a request from Coaster Properties to be reimbursed for fees assessed in the construction of the Sea Lark Apartments. The consensus was to use the money building up from the Construction Excise Tax to reimburse after the City and Coaster Properties come to an agreement. This agreement will be the basis of granting incentives to other developers to build affordable/workforce housing.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

The Design Review Board did not meet in October. They met November 15th for a work session to discuss the Warren Way intersection.

PLANNING COMMISSION -

The Planning Commission met October 25, 2018 and discussed:

SR 18-04 Request by Scott Laird for a Setback Reduction in Conjunction with the construction of a garage on the vacant lot West of 211 E. Surfcrest Ave. **Approved with Conditions.**

ZO 18-01 and **CP 18-01** Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan Text Amendments Updating the City's Foreddune Management Plan. Continued to 11/20/18.

ZO 18-03 City of Cannon Beach Request for Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments to Chapter 17.70 Tree Removal. Continued to 11/20/18.

Postponed the work session to discuss amendments related to the Short Term Rentals until the 1/24/2019 meeting.

The Planning Commission met November 20, 2018 and discussed:

V18-06 Request by David Vonada for a Setback Reduction and Parking Variance in Conjunction with the Remodel of an Existing Home at 235 W. Siuslaw. Approved Variance, Denied Setback Reduction.

SR 18-06 Request by David Vonada for a Setback Reduction in Conjunction with the Remodel of a home at 187 E. Madison. Approved with Conditions.

ZO 18-01 and **CP 18-01** Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan Text Amendments Updating the City's Foreddune Management Plan. Approved Recommendation to City Council.

ZO 18-03 City of Cannon Beach Request for Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments to Chapter 17.70 Tree Removal. Continued to 12/27/18

Of Interest...

City Hall will be Closed:

Monday/Tuesday December 24th & 25th in observance of Christmas Holiday

Monday & Tuesday December 31st & January 1st, 2019 in observance of the New Year Holiday

November 6, 2018 General Election News

The results are in:

Mayor Position:

Sam Steidel

2 Councilor Positions:

Mike Benefield (incumbent)
Robin Risley

They will be sworn in to service at the January 8th, 2019 City Council Meeting.

Thank you for voting!

Beach Volunteers Wanted!

Do you enjoy being outside and sharing your love of Haystack Rock? No experience necessary - we train! Families welcome.

Please contact:

Lisa Habecker
Education & Volunteer Coordinator
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habecker@ci.cannon-beach.or.us