

## ~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10.

**Some remarks require a response**

To the Editor,

I hoped to avoid having to make any public comment regarding this election and Lexington's Town Council, but the candidate's assertions in the Gazette over the past couple of weeks leave me no choice. Some of those remarks require a response.

A couple of years ago, Lexington elected an excellent and effective council. When the new Ethics Commission rules went into effect last April, all four council members resigned. I don't blame them one bit. The rules are obnoxiously intrusive, and I would have resigned with the rest of them if it hadn't meant leaving the town completely without an operating government. Instead, I scrambled around and "conscripted" two people whom I knew would help out, at least temporarily, on short notice - Sam Martin and Ruth Haskett.

Both of them had previously told me "If there's ever anything I can do to help..." I'm pretty sure they both were thinking of helping on building projects, or something of that nature, but I was also pretty sure that neither of them would bite my head off when I told them what I did want. They both swallowed hard two or three times, but they finally agreed to serve, commission rules or no commission rules. So the last act of the former council was to confirm the appointments of Martin and Haskett, effective 48 hours later. We were hoping at the time that the state would get reasonable and the rules would become more amenable to small-town realities. That has not happened. So "temporary" has turned into a more extended commitment, but it's one which both of these former-Council's appointees have accepted.

Note that I refer to Mr. Martin and Ms. Haskett as appointees of the former council. This is as our charter requires: the mayor nominates a potential appointee, but the Council must vote to confirm before the appointment becomes effective. Despite Ms. Kemp's comment, the mayor is not empowered to seat a council member in his/her sole discretion. Ms. Kemp should remember this. In 2004, after she was selected by coin-toss (an innovative approach implemented by former Mayor Edwards), she assumed a seat on the council without the council's confirmation. After two months of active participation - including proposing and voting on money issues - she vacated the council seat when the town's attorney was forced to intervene, explaining as gently as he could that allowing unauthorized persons to commandeer public offices is unlawful.

I freely admit that there have, indeed, been some changes over the last three years. For one thing, our books now balance each and every month and right down to the last penny. That first year, the one I got "shanghaied" into after Mayor Edward's recall, I spent two solid months working until 2 and 3 a.m. night after night in order to get the accounts in sufficient order to submit them to the auditor. I struggled to reconcile the money accounts while Jean Brazell completed the individual department reports - a huge task for which I will be eternally grateful. That year, the records didn't go to the auditor until November - we had to file an extension with the state. This year, the records went to the auditor as soon as the June bank statements came in and we got an "A": our accounts are perfect. Because of this, and a state rule change, next year we can (if we choose - no decision has been made yet) send our filings directly to the state and will not have to have them pre-audited - which would save the town about \$3,500 annually.

Another change: Comment from the community is always welcome - there's a special agenda item for "community input" at every Council meeting - but it is confined to its place on the agenda rather than being fielded throughout the meeting. Consequently, the meetings run, on average, about an hour and a half instead of three and a half hours. The meetings are also much quieter than they used to be.

Third change: Since John Ripple became our Budget Committee chairman three years ago (a position that is his for life, as far as I'm concerned) the annual budget preparation process that used to be an agonizing exercise requiring six or seven or more meetings strung out over three months now wraps up in two meetings about 30 days apart. Nothing gets ignored and nothing gets left out. But the thing gets done, and it gets done promptly.

It is true that we are not launching out in new directions. What we are doing is keeping our nose above water. (Incidentally, the total sum of the delinquent water accounts last month amounted to - zero.) And what attention the current council allots to "livability issues" is pretty much focused on just three things: the water system, the water system, the water system.

The newest Council appointees, Billee Owen and Charma Marquardt, have proved to be sensible, dependable, and able to maintain their poise in the face of provocation. (An all-too-frequent side-affect stemming from that "community input" agenda item.) As council Members, they grasp these basic town priorities: pay the bills and keep the water running through the pipes. Just for the record, we weren't exactly swamped with volunteers to fill vacant council positions following the April resignations. After three or four months of limping along with a bare quorum, I went to the Owen home intending to park myself in their living room and beg, badger or bamboozle until I got either Billee or Ira to "agree" to serve. Discovering that we needed two more members to fill council positions, Billee cheerfully dragged her sister Charma into the project as well. A good turn for the town, as it develops, and one I am more than happy to try to secure for the town via election.

It is also true that the council did not take an official position regarding Ms. Kemp's Neighborhood Watch proposal. What the council did do was listen with interest to the presentation Sheriff Matlack was kind enough to

arrange and we reviewed the national "rules", which were available on the internet. Both sources were perfectly clear: the Neighborhood Watch program is designed to establish a direct link between the citizens of the community and law enforcement. Local government - i.e. the town council - isn't part of the loop. It wasn't that the council refused to do anything, it's that, under this particular system, there isn't anything for a council to do. The sheriff was ready and willing to do his part - the rest is up to the individual neighborhood.

As for Ms. Kemp's contention that "the mayor runs the town without any opposition...." Good grief. It appears that a basic civics lesson is in order. The mayor doesn't "run" the town. The mayor doesn't even have a vote, except to break a tie. The council "runs" the town. The mayor runs the meetings, and this mayor tries to do so in a manner that allows the council to function expeditiously and from a well-informed perspective. If that annoys folks who would prefer to make a shambles of the agenda and a battleground of town hall - well, so be it.

The ugly fact is that in 2004, the town's government was almost completely dysfunctional. The council meetings were wild free-for-alls, marked by contention, criticism and personal attack. The financial records were a disaster. Things have changed. I would be pleased to take credit for the turn-around, but the truth is all I did was "clear the decks" and keep the peace so the council and our staff could do their jobs. The real credit goes to Dee Burch and Dan Marshall, who very competently manage the town's daily affairs, and to people like Jean Brazell, Bev Steagall, Mike Orwick, Jim Nelson, Tony Clement, Mindy Wilson, Jay Papineau, Dwyla Yokom, Dale Wilson, Ruth Haskett, Sam Martin, John Ripple, Lorene Montgomery, Duane Disque, Billee June Owen, and Charma Marquardt - people who serve, or have served, on the council or the budget committee over the past three years. Many of these folks had not assumed "leadership roles" before, but when asked (maybe "pestered" is a more accurate word), they stepped up. Others are individuals with valuable prior experience who were persuaded to become involved again when they received some assurance that they would be able to conduct business in an atmosphere unpolluted by irrelevant strife. And nobody - but nobody - gutted out the "bad old days" with more perseverance and dedication than Jean Brazell - or took more abuse for it. If you truly wish to know what it was like when the Town's government was in the hands of the Edwards-Taylor-Kemp faction - ask Jean.

One final observation. We don't have newspaper reporters coming to the council meetings any more, hoping to glean some tidbit to give their readers another laugh at Lexington's expense. We have achieved the ultimate success: we have become boring. For a lot of us that is the most welcome change of all.

Val Doherty  
Mayor of Lexington

**A win, win vote**

Letter to the Editor:

As always in every election, there is a certain subject that goes unnoticed, or is not heard by all citizens during a campaign by the delegates who are running for that position.

There is one, among many issues that caught my attention, and a lot of other voters that I know, and that is Larry Sample's intent to reestablish the D.A.R.E program in our Morrow County Schools. As an employee of Morrow County School District for 10 years, I can tell you, early prevention is essential! I feel that the number one problem with our children today, is the lack of education and prevention of drugs and alcohol.

This program was in effect when I was hired as a custodian in 1997. I have not seen it in our district for the past 8-10 years. This is a subject that needs to be addressed, and that is Larry Sample's priority! This program has been proven to be effective nationwide at an 80% rate. It works.

With two children of my own, I'm concerned about their awareness of these dangerous and potentially deadly drugs that plague our community nationwide, and more in ours daily!

Knowing Larry Sample for the last 38 years, he is committed to making a difference in our society. He is dedicated to helping all of the community equally and without prejudice. I ask all parents with children in Morrow County School District to join me in electing Larry Sample for Morrow County Sheriff. This is a win, win vote!

Jeff Toms

Boardman

**Matlack is doing a good job**

To the Editor:

We have been in Irrigon for many years. We have seen the good and the bad. Ken Matlack is a big change for Morrow County.

We see him at a lot of the public gatherings and going down the highway regularly. We feel he is doing a good job. Let's keep him and his officers working to keep Morrow County safe.

Ival and Ruth Sullivan

Irrigon

**The correct representation**

To the Editor:

The Gazette recently published a letter of support from myself for Ken Matlack for sheriff. I signed the note as John Sebastian, Principal at AC Houghton Elementary. I should've signed it as John Sebastian private citizen. That would've been the correct representation.

John Sebastian

Irrigon

**Why change?**

Letter to the editor:

Following is my submission for supporting Ken Matlack for sheriff of Morrow County. Vote for Ken Matlack. I did. Briefly my reasons are:

1. His operational concepts are excellent.
2. He has years of valuable experience.
3. He's a hard working sheriff who does his share of field work.
4. His undersheriff, Steve Myren, is exceptionally well qualified and helpful.
5. His deputies that I have met are very personable and participate in community activities.
6. His office staff members are cheerfully helpful and courteous.
7. He's doing a good job.
8. Why change?

John L. Bristow

Ione

**Support for health district levy**

To the Editor:

Recently I was a rehab patient in Pioneer Memorial Hospital for 20 days. The care was outstanding from all the employees. I was assisted through the hospital in being transferred from Portland, admitted and received excellent medical care. If it was not for the staff I would have been far from home, family and caring friends. Having a staff who encouraged me in my recovery and visitors who kept my spirits up during the extended stay helped make it bearable while healing.

This was not my first experience with the quality of care received through Pioneer Memorial Hospital. My in-laws spent approximately 18 years at the hospital nursing home. We never had a complaint about the care given them.

As residents of Morrow County, we need to be aware of how essential Pioneer Memorial Hospital and the district's medical facilities are to our families. For many of us these are an absolute necessity in an emergency. The extra 30 to 45 minutes of more could be the difference in survival.

The health district has an excellent hospital, clinic and transport system which have served us for many years. I would ask that you cast your vote in support for the health district levy. You won't be sorry that you did.

June M. Crowell

Ione

**Join in voting for Sample**

To the Editor:

If you feel like I do and are getting tired of the negative campaigning, I agree. However, I feel the need to make the following statement. There are a lot of negative ads coming out with fluffed up information. They seem to forget that I worked there for two years before I decided I'd had enough.

So according to the website of the current administration, they say that prior to his becoming sheriff the calls for service were 4,500. The year after he took sheriff it was 15,084, more than triple the calls. Does this mean the crime rate has tripled in Morrow County? I believe the citizens of Morrow County need to demand a true accounting of these numbers and know what these numbers are representing. They state that both the sheriff and undersheriff take up to a 1,000 calls a year, but do not state what these calls represent. For instance, do the numbers represent a traffic stop, an arrest (not just a traffic citation) crime report, a criminal court appearance, and how many convictions have they received, or how many are related to animal control (dogs, cats, or chickens), an area check, or just show up on a call and then just turn it over to a deputy. They say they are out there helping the deputies with the call load. So they should have the numbers to show how many actual cases they have taken, how many arrests they have made, and how many convictions they have. The only thing I've heard is that all the calls they have taken appears to be very deceitful.

If you have still not made up your mind about who the best man for the job is, then join me in voting for Larry Sample for your sheriff. He will bring back integrity and true accountability that is needed in the sheriff's office.

Phil Morris

Ione

**I have already voted, have you?**

To the Editor:

To my amazement when I opened up my ballot I found that all the Heppner City elite were on the ballot for reelection. Being new to here I was unaware of this and as their was no articles about this in the paper or TV channel.

Last time Mr. Bowels was appointed, I had placed my name in for the position but the city manager called me and said that the city elite did not know me so I wasn't being considered. Well, I don't know who they are. In the two years we have been here, the only ones I have met was the city manager and the sheriff.

Neither of the sheriff contestants have been by my house. Too late now. I have already voted. Have you?

The area we moved from was run by The Good Old Boys System, is that what we have here?

I did not bother to vote for them or the judges as one vote and they are back in. This is democracy in action.

Please note not everyone watches TV channel 3. Lot of us get the paper in the mail on Thursday so please give your notices a week in advance of publishing. I hate finding out the event was on Wednesday or Thursday morning before I can get my mail.

Donald R. McCallister

Heppner