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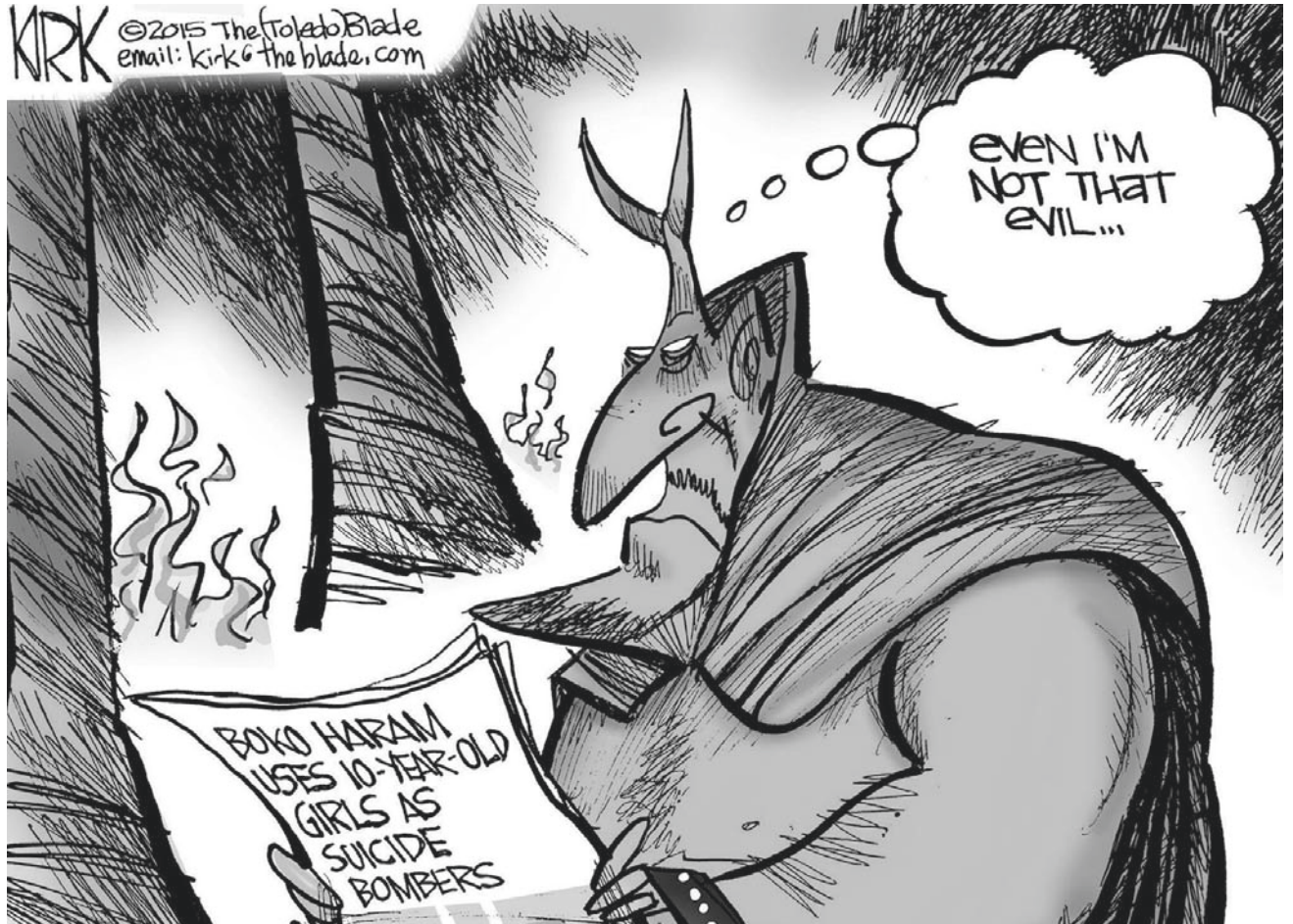
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Putting suspicions to rest

Before Hermiston City Council members direct city staff to prepare documents to revise the city charter, they should first have an earnest discussion about the merits of appointing the municipal court judge versus having residents continue to elect that position.

At Monday night's City Council meeting, City Manager Byron Smith will report on recent presentations to various service organizations on the matter and the feedback he received. According to the council agenda, he will then recommend that the municipal court judge position be appointed, with the provision that this person be an attorney.

Before any vote is taken, Smith and/or the council should address some of the questions that have, thus far, not been satisfactorily answered, such as why it is in Hermiston residents' best



JESSICA KELLER
HERMISTON HERALD
Editor

interests that the municipal court judge be appointed and not elected. Hopefully, an explanation will include solid, unambiguous rationale, as well as examples of why the current system is not working and how appointing a judge would solve these problems or, at least, improve upon them.

This is reasonable and no less than what Hermiston residents deserve, presuming, of course, city officials are not pursuing this course of action arbitrarily. As the old adage goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," so, logically speaking, there must be something wrong with the current system that warrants such a change. If so, what is it? Not only do residents deserve a good answer, providing one

would allow city officials to avoid accusations that they are doing this arbitrarily; or because they don't trust residents' ability to elect a municipal court judge based on past choices; or because they don't like the current municipal court judge.

Perhaps these suspicions are unfounded and not the case at all. Of course, nobody can really know for sure based on city officials' explanations given so far regarding the change. After all, "popularity contest" has been thrown out there as a reason for not electing the municipal court judge; not to mention, in the proposed charter's language, there is no guarantee that current Municipal Court Judge Thomas Creasing — who was recently reelected — would even get to serve out the remainder of his term. The proposed charter just says the current judge will serve until a new judge is appointed.

No explanation has been provided for this, either, so perhaps "popularity contest" is accurate after all, but not for the same reasons previously posed.

The point is, currently, city officials are leaving numerous blanks for suspicious minds to fill in themselves.

Regardless, the best solution could be the one council members have disregarded before: letting residents decide for themselves if they want the municipal court judge to be elected or appointed when they vote on the charter in May.

Not only is this the most democratic approach, it would excuse city officials from having to explain themselves, something, thus far, they have not been inclined to do.

— Jessica Keller is the editor of the Hermiston Herald. She can be reached at jkeller@hermistonherald.com

The return of satire

Decades after being dismissed by George S. Kaufman as a genre that "closes on Saturday night," satire, like the measles and mumps, is making a comeback. And in many quarters, remains the most feared of the three conditions.

Some experts hold to a strict definition: "Satire portrays a viewpoint, while intending something different." The most famous example being Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," the essay in which he advised Ireland's poor to alleviate their poverty by selling their babies as food for the rich. At least we assume he was kidding. Hopefully no besotted chefs replicated his ingredients list.

Another example is the CIA's assertion that "we don't torture anybody," when obviously what they meant was "yeah, we've been torturing people since way before we assured you we weren't. And we've gotten pretty good at it." You could say the CIA is America's only straight up satirical organization. Proof that satire can exist without laughs.

Modern satirically has loosened up to embrace many forms of humor: sarcasm, cynicism, scorn, contempt, bile, ridicule and recently, an endless fascination with body parts and fluids. Anything to spotlight perceived injustice. Tweak the nose of pomposity. Kick arrogance in the groin.

Seth Rogen and his stoner buddy, that darn Franco guy, first thrust funny onto the front pages with their movie, "The Interview," a farce about assassinating the President of North Korea. Which you could say, the President of North Korea did not find amusing. You could also say armadillo snouts make inferior shot glasses.

Despots and extremists have the sense of humor of asphalt. With the emphasis on the first syllable. And yes, that's an example of using a body part as humor. So, in response, North Korea orchestrated a monumental hack of the studio releasing the film. Doing damage to the economy and scaring the bejesus out of Wall Street.



WILL DURST
RAGING MODERATE
Cagle columnist

We know this happened because the CIA said it didn't.

The fracas was exacerbated when Hollywood celebrities went to the mats defending free speech while imploring the public to boycott websites exhibiting their pilfered emails, revealing them to be petty snarks. This is known as irony, a brother to satire.

A greater tragedy is the thousands of Americans tricked into watching this cinematic opus under the guise of nationalistic pride. "Laugh, or the terrorists win."

Then in January, the world witnessed the ghastly murders of French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo staffers by lunatic Muslim assassins. Who claimed to be offended by a cartoon. Which confused many US citizens. France has satirical magazines. America has Spongebob. It's a trade-off.

It's sad. Call yourself a satirist in America today and folks think you have goat legs. And play the pan flute. Especially when you consider the grand tradition of American political humorists—Twain, Bierce, Mencken, Rogers, Bruce, Krassner, Trudeau, Carlin, Hannity and the Cheneys.

The teachable moment here is how imperative it is we encourage artists to stay on the offensive. To mock and scoff and taunt for the sake of democracy. They should be stopped on the street and thanked for their service. Laugh, or the terrorists win.

Patriots on both sides of the political spectrum need to rally and support our brave perpetrators of mockery and scoffsome taunting. And to do it even after the CIA says it's okay to stop. Especially then. Je Suis Charlie. Je Suis Hebdo.

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Let voters choose municipal court judge

Editor,
I read your insightful column and wanted let you know that it also left me wondering what the administration of Hermiston was doing. I was present when Mr. Byron Smith presented the issue of ideas for updating Hermiston's City Charter. The issue regarding the appointment of judges to the City of Hermiston struck me as strange. I have voted in every local, state and national election since earning the right to vote at the ripe young age of 18. I am now 62. I take pride in researching the issues and candidates to make the best, not necessarily the most popular, decision when it comes to elections. The good people of Hermiston deserve to continue a tried-and-true system of electing their officials, whether it be the mayor, city councilors or the municipal judge. It is not a popularity contest. I as a voter want the best-qualified and most objective person in the office of municipal judge, chosen by as many citizens that care to exercise their right. Credit needs to be given to the individuals wanting to update the charter. It is appreciated that some one person or group of persons would like to make it easier for the citizenry and themselves with regard to choosing judges. My answer is no thanks, I will continue to bear the

burden. I hope a majority of people out there will also agree. Let the voters do the choosing. Let the administration serve the people they were elected to serve. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

CHARLES E. CLUPNY
FORMER CITY COUNCILOR OF STANFIELD
HERMISTON-AREA RESIDENT

Hermiston a good place to live for Harkenriders

Editor,
Unlike my husband, I was not born in Hermiston, nor did I grow up or attend school here. I moved to Hermiston in 1953 with my parents. I was born in Missouri and grew up in Colorado, where my father was in the newspaper business. Because of World War II, the shortages and inability to get supplies made it impossible to continue his newspaper, so the Tri County Herald was closed, and my Dad went to work for the government as an ammunition inspector. His first assignment was in Sidney, Nebraska, the second on the island of Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, the third to Rid River Arsenal, Texarkana, Texas and finally to Umatilla Ordnance Depot, "somewhere in the sand-blown desert area" of eastern Oregon. Hermiston was quite a culture shock. I was very lonely at the

time in my life when people my age were either off to college or already married. I was neither "fish nor fowl." However, I made friends at the U.S. National Bank, where I went to work, and at the Methodist Church, where I enjoyed teaching Sunday school and singing in the choir.

Being in a small town with my desk located at the front counter, the new girl in town caught the attention of Frank Harkenrider, a Hermiston native recently returned from his stint in the service and college. Eight months later, we were married in a double wedding with my sister and her fiancé, Harold Braswell from Texarkana, Arkansas. Now, 60 years later, to coin a phrase, "the rest is history." Frank and his dad owned and operated the Union Oil Dealership. I quit the bank to raise our three girls. When they became school age, I went to work as bookkeeper for the Sanitary Disposal Service, where I worked for 28 years. Frank sold the dealership, and I retired from SDI. We both took on other part-time jobs, Frank deeply involved in city politics. Now, after serving on the City Council, with 10 years as mayor, for more than 50 years, Frank has retired. We have enjoyed a comfortable life and many good times and friendships here. Thank you. Thank you Hermiston for just being Hermiston.

BEVERLY BELLUS HARKENRIDER
HERMISTON

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