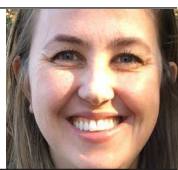


November election spurs candidate to redouble efforts

I cried on Election Night last fall. Reeling from the affront to our Democracy, I was disappointed to see the Republican message go on the attack, calling the millions of voices that rose up “crybabies.” It was so sexist, so banal, so over — assuming and uninformed. Yes, I cried, but I also committed to stay active, stay informed, and stay involved.

On Jan. 9, I was one of over 3 million people, the so-called “crybabies,” that marched against misogyny and in support of human rights, flexing the abused muscles

GUEST COLUMN
A.J. WAHL



of our democracy. I saw the faces of women who have marched before, and through decades of setbacks and insults, they have seen progress. One woman, in her 70s, wearing a suffragette outfit and a calm, determined smile, will live forever in my memory. She reminded me of my grandmother, who wrote letters

to her elected officials while on her lunch break as an elementary teacher. These women, and so many women before, have improved the world for me and the girls following in our footsteps.

Now it is my responsibility to lead. I’ve put my legal career, business career, and political career on hold in order to raise my two daughters. Along with my husband, we live in a town of about 6,000 people on the coast of Oregon. Given the state of our country, I can’t be completely on hold any longer. I watch my daughters sleep and play

in the innocence of youth, and I feel a duty to protect them. To serve them. To lead them.

I mobilized. I called my local Democratic Party, and I ran for local school board. I announced my candidacy with my two-year old daughter on my shoulders. As she played with my hair and slapped me on the head, I declared to a room of new faces that I was dedicated to my community, ready to get involved, and I asked for their vote. It was terrifying, but invigorating. I am now a part of something much larger than myself, and together with the millions of em-

powered men and women across the country, we can correct this course.

I just lost my election, but I didn’t cry. My opponent was a mother and business owner in the community. We had six candidates running for four positions on the local school board, and of those candidates, four of them were women. Compared to the special election two years ago, voter participation increased 12 percent. I may have lost this race, but I’m not done. And I’m not the only one. Yesterday, we marched. Today, we run. Crybabies? Ha. Just watch what happens next.

LETTERS

Vacation rental owners sustain Gearhart

The City of Gearhart was historically advertised as a “Destination Resort City.” Its residents (full-timers) has always been fewer than its number of property owners (part-timers). In the Gearhart Comprehensive Plan of Goals and Policies of 1994 and the draft revision of 2016, both full time residents and property owners are consistently mentioned in the same sentence conveying the intent of “equality” in city matters. In Jeanne Mark’s letter posted on May 26 (Seaside Signal), she refers to David Townsend repeatedly throughout her letter as “not a resident” of Gearhart inferring that he is of a lower status because of that. The Clatsop County property tax record for the fiscal year 2016 shows Mr. Townsend paid property taxes of \$11,830.11 of which \$1,760.53 went directly to the city of Gearhart. Ms. Mark paid a total property tax debt for the same period of \$4,066.53 of which \$605.19 went directly to Gearhart. Thus, Mr. Townsend, as only a “property owner” paid nearly three times more money directly to Gearhart than full time resident Ms. Mark. The “property owners” are the goose who lays the golden egg for the full-time residents of Gearhart.

In my immediate neighborhood in Gearhart, there are 22 homes, of which six are occupied by full time residents, the remaining are second homes to those who reside in other cities, states and countries at least part of the time. This ratio exceeds 3.5 times more part time households paying for full time city “services.” Services they enjoy only occasionally. This additional contribution of funds going directly to Gearhart has allowed all full-time city employees to enjoy a “Cadillac health coverage plan” (the term used by City Manager Chad Sweet). It also includes, paid health coverage for each of their family members. Many of these employees are not residents of Gearhart and don’t contribute through property tax channels to their income lifestyle. It’s easy to see that our “lifestyle cost” as residents and our city employees have part time resident property owners to thank.

Without part time, property owners dollars, the extravagant spending by our city would fall directly back on full time residents. These extra tax dollars, and now short-term rental license fees required from some of these people, has created an insulating financial cushion for Gearhart to work with.

So where has this extra money gone besides City salaries and benefits? Records show that we had a savings as a city a decade ago when we had less bias against factions with different views (Ms. Mark’s letter is a recent example). Gearhart doesn’t publish a timely treasurer’s report, either on its web

site or on its blog. We have incurred exorbitant legal costs and no city in Oregon has higher name familiarity with the Land Use Board of Appeals than Gearhart. A costly distinction. How could this have happened without strong, local bias geared against genuine local conflict resolution?

Gearhart has just held an emergency meeting to instill a tax to fix our roads, implying we don’t have the money saved for these expenses. Now is the time for more fiscal responsibility and restraint, shed bias and work toward restoring the harmony Gearhart used to have.

Harold T. Gable, DMD
Gearhart

Time for reality check

Seaside is considering forming another urban renewal area. The area would consist of approximately 25 percent of the city of Seaside and would include property located generally east of the Necanicum River in the central portion of the city. Urban renewal is not a new tax it just rearranges property tax revenues so that a kitty is formed over time to allow projects to be funded which will encourage the elimination of “blight” and increase the speed and intensity of development. The kitty will not come from some “angel in the sky.” It will come from reducing and redirecting the level of school instruction funds and public safety funding that we are now receiving.

At a recent public meeting, the city identified potential projects within the new redevelopment area. The city stated that the projects that are the most important are those that provide utilities and roads in support of the consolidated school project.

City consultants were on hand to explain that this is not a bond and that the process is incremental and it takes a number of years to build up kitty funds before projects can be funded. But the consolidated schools project is on a three to four year construction schedule. There is no possible way to successfully open the new schools without having the roads and utilities built to support this opening. This redeveloped financing is completely unsuitable for providing the necessary infrastructure in a timely manner for opening the schools in three to four years.

The city also identified that redevelopment financing would support the seismic improvements of our bridges in this area, which would allow residents, and visitors to escape to safety should a Cascadia event occur. These improvements are required now and not 20 to 30 years down the road when and if the kitty is big enough.

The most important piece of infrastructure in this new redevelopment area is Highway 101. Improvement of the highway is funded by the state of Oregon. Many of us, including Oregon Department of Transportation, certainly

remember that the citizens of Seaside turned down ODOT’s plan for \$50 million worth of roadway changes. Business development and redevelopment along Highway 101 is the key to making redevelopment financing perform in this area. The state is unlikely to propose another highway improvement plan after it was forced to waste \$5 million of your tax money on the last one. Also, population growth of Seaside is zero and much of local and regional business development is relocating to Warrenton. Without population and business growth and highway improvement, there will be nothing to make a redevelopment project successful in this area.

But near term financing is absolutely necessary for school infrastructure and bridge improvements. In my opinion, the key to solving this problem is in the hands of the school district. They have been presented with an alternative plan for our school project that saves you \$50 million, meets all of the kid’s schooling and safety requirements and eliminates the need for additional millions of this road and utility improvement that you the taxpayers are now being required to spend over and above the \$100 million school bond.

I hope they have the guts to remake their plan to one that achieves success for the kids while living with reality.

John Dunzer
Seaside

Support city’s stand

One hundred years ago, Gearhart Park rejected its role as a short-term destination resort and declared itself the city of Gearhart, a true community of permanent and seasonal homeowners and long-term renters.

This month, that strategy for reducing STRs and increasing the availability of permanent housing received approval from the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. For the first time in this state, and perhaps in the nation, a city’s stand against destruction of its community through profit-taking exploitation of its single-family dwellings was successfully defended at the state level.

While this was a great victory for the city of Gearhart, it wasn’t the final battle. Even though the city’s law, carefully crafted by the planning commission and city council with tons of public input over a three-year period, is already working with resounding success, a new threat looms on the horizon in the form of a petition to repeal and replace that law.

Sponsored by California political strategist David Townsend, and circulated by Gearhart residents Sarah Nebeker and Joy Sigler, the petition contains window-dressing details (registration fee,

telephone contacts, safety inspections, etc.) that make it appear similar to the city ordinance — though, unlike the city ordinance, with no penalties for violations.

Permitted occupation is vastly increased, and the septic requirements of the city ordinance are eliminated; vacation rentals will be free to pollute the community’s groundwater and make a municipal sewer inevitable.

Its core provision, however, undermines the main thing that the city’s ordinance achieves: the repeal and replace petition permits unlimited short-term rentals, regardless of sale of property, thus providing boundless opportunities for Vacasa, Airbnb, and other speculators already hungrily circling our community, eager to transform it back into the destination resort it had been before 1918.

But the petitioners need a required number of signatures in order to put this initiative on the ballot. If you’ve already signed it by mistake, you’re entitled to ask them to remove your name. If you haven’t signed, they’ll be knocking on your door, and when they do, they won’t show you the details; instead, they’ll ask for your signatures, whether you’re for it or against it, “just to make sure the people get to vote.”

At that point, ask yourselves, “Should the destruction of the Gearhart community as we know it become a ballot measure, just so the people get to vote on it?”

Bill Berg
Kent Smith
Gearhart

Gearhart vote requested

All we are asking for is a vote. The question is, does the ordinance restricting short-term rentals in Gearhart, that was pushed through by the city council, represent the wishes of the majority of Gearhart residents, or a minority of residents exerting their personal agenda?

The ordinance represents dramatic and far-reaching impact on personal property rights and value, and deserves to be voted on by the people of Gearhart, not just decided on by a city council.

Rental properties have been an integral part of Gearhart for generations; they are crucial to the economy and health of this community. They provide jobs, tax revenue and support local businesses that could not survive without them.

We recognize that there are issues with overcrowding, loud parties and septic, but these should be handled on an individual basis, not by passing broad brush, onerous legislation that eventually eliminates these rentals by disallowing their rental status after a sale.

We all want Gearhart to remain the wonderful place that it is today. Rentals have been characterized as being bad for the community, but in fact they bring a diversity and richness of character that has

been the backbone of Gearhart for many generations.

Let’s put it to a vote; let the people of Gearhart decide what’s best.

Lori and Bob Breslauer
Gearhart

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