

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

47J board should face Bacona issue

The Vernonia School Board has yet to be heard from regarding the proposed Bacona landfill, though there are questions of legitimate concern to the district. Two of the questions are "What will happen to property values if the dump is sited at Bacona?" and "Will Hamill Observatory be built?"

The board has indicated they don't want to get involved with the dump arguments because it's a "political" question, not educational.

Dwight Griswold, chairman of the board of directors in the Banks School District, testified at the Environmental Quality Commission hearing in Banks that studies show a 10% devaluation in property near landfills. The Banks and North Plains school boards are opposing the Bacona dump because any decline in property values means taxpayers would have to pay more per thousand dollars of valuation just to maintain current school financing. Griswold testified because his concern for taxpayers and students required him to act "political."

The Oregon Education Association Board of Directors voted to oppose the dump because it would prevent the building of Hamill Observatory, which they consider an exciting educational opportunity. Susan Wilcoxon, a teacher at Jewell School who represents Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook Counties on OEA's Board of Directors, testified at the EQC hearing because her concern for students required her to act "political."

The school board is political - or members wouldn't have to be elected - so it's too late to avoid politics. It's also too late to avoid the dump issue. It's time to study the issue, take a stand, make your stand public, and be political **because** of your concern for education.

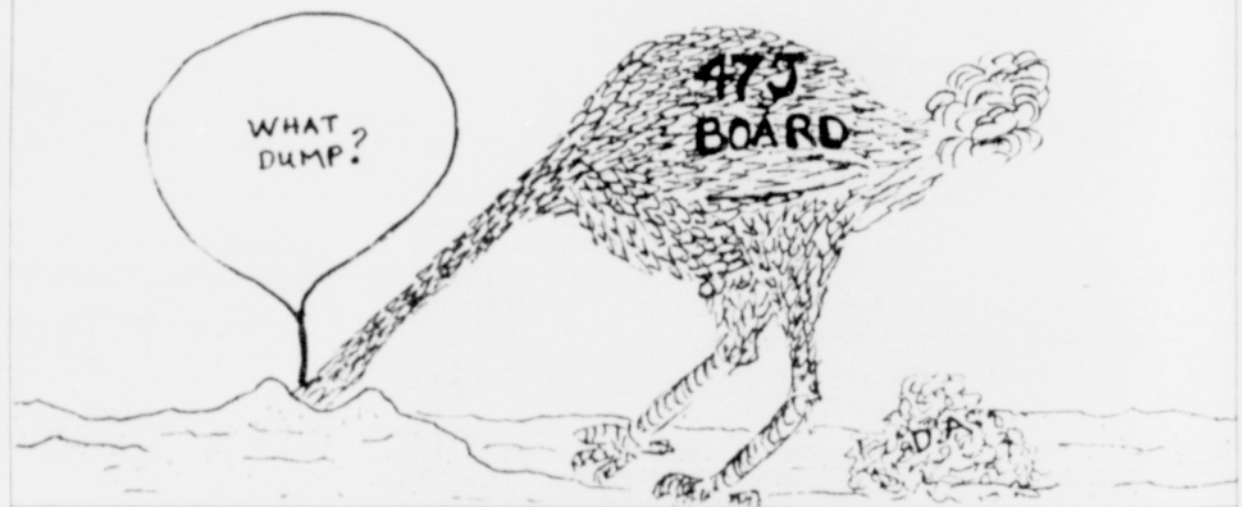
King earns thanks

The Community Health Fair has been a positive activity, with many segments of the community helping make it successful.

One person, however, has been the spearhead for this endeavor - Marsha King. As health teacher at Vernonia High, King could have been satisfied to simply do her daytime job. Instead she put in many extra hours making phone calls, writing letters, organizing, working with volunteers, and doing whatever was needed to provide this service to the community.

King will be leaving Vernonia at the end of the school year, but she's leaving behind a fine legacy, and an organization so others can continue the effort.

We just want to say: "Marsha King, thank you!"



Letters to the Editor

The following two letters were sent to the Environmental Quality Commission which asked for comment regarding Bacona Road as a possible dump for the Metropolitan Services District.

Dear Environmental Quality Commission,

First, let me say I am not mad at D.E.Q. They had the impossible task of siting a dump in only one year, which implies that they had to rely on the fatally flawed studies already on hand.

That said, I would like to complain about the three final sites chosen. Low, medium or high, none would provide a permanent solution. Low, Ramsey Lake, which would probably not pass Environmental Impact Study because of the wetlands, would have tried to put a plastic bag with megatons of garbage in a swamp. Medium, Wildwood, since and rightfully dropped, would have tried to put it on an unstable slope. High, Bacona, which would put all that potential pollution at the headwaters of two major rivers.

Now, as anyone who has carried a plastic sack of garbage from the kitchen to the can knows, plastic sacks leak; sometimes they break! When mine breaks, I clean it up - a new sack, pick up the ten pounds, sweep, mop.... When yours breaks you cannot pick up the hundreds of millions of pounds. Nobody in his right mind expects a plastic liner to last forever. Nobody in his right mind even thinks it can be patched.

I have read the blithe statements about a "leachate warning system". When the alarm goes off - beep - beep,

red light flashing - "LEACHATE!" what are we going to do? Rush in a D-9, push 20 million tons of rotting garbage out of the way, patch the leak and push it all back again? Maybe we have a radar directed mechanical mole which digs under the pile and squirts self-hardening liquid patch?

No, my friends, when the alarm goes off, whoever is in charge will do the only thing he can do, turn off the alarm and go back to sleep.

There are alternatives: Talk to Columbia County about a burner. Talk to Waste Management and others about transporting it to a site where the rainfall is measured in inches, rather than yards.

Between us, you and me and a couple of million other Oregonians, we should be able to solve this problem rather than burying it.

Frazier Rohm, Ph.D.
Vernonia

To The O.E.Q.C.:

I have serious concerns with the effects of a landfill in the Bacona Road area, and believe D.E.Q. and E.Q.C. should and do have similar concerns.

There follows an outline of some thoughts regarding the impact of a landfill in our area:

1) The area potentially affected by the proposed landfill is not in the M.S.D. nor by our choice under D.E.Q. This should not even give M.S.D. the right to dump in our area.

2) Without D.E.Q. control (i.e., - no vehicle emission inspection) we have clean air and other high quality environmental conditions, closer to Portland than any other usable for a high tech observatory. Help us preserve, not ruin, that environment!

environment!

3) The Hamill Observatory can have technical impact that will enhance our knowledge of the entire world. If the landfill is approved, we'll have no observatory.

4) Our water shed areas are already fragile, but are being constantly reconstructed (replanted). If this landfill is permitted, we will undoubtedly never recover the involved watershed (s).

5) It is time E.Q.C. and D.E.Q. looked at disposal of garbage by means other than "landfills". Other less environmentally harmful methods are currently available and in use. No matter what it is called, a garbage dump is still a garbage dump with all the filth and disease-ridden side effects and other damaging effects only some of which have been mentioned here.

Marion D. Peterson
Vernonia

To the Editor:

If we are so concerned about having a dump on Bacona Road, tell me why so much garbage is dumped on Hwy. 47. Surely it is not all tourists and out-of-towners that put it there.

It takes very little effort to keep your garbage in your car and dispose of it when you reach your destination.

Now that some effort has been made to clean up Hwy. 47 and the city streets, let us keep it that way. How our town looks reflects the attitude of all of us. Take pride in Vernonia; you live here.

Rebecca Jensen
Age 12
Vernonia

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