

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Ignorance isn't bliss, it's harmful rumoring

A legitimate, detailed study has been on-going regarding present and future needs for a municipal building ("City Hall") in Vernonia. A committee composed of local residents has been in charge of the study, with the aid of a project director, architect/planner and timber consultant. All of their recommendations have gone to the Vernonia City Council, which has ultimate responsibility for decisions regarding the building.

In the process, committee members have recommended a site, a preliminary design and preliminary financing methods. The city council has accepted the recommendations, with some adjustments, and has directed staff to follow through with the required procedures.

All of this has been done in public meetings.

Now, one person who obviously knows nothing about the study, is asking how the residents of Vernonia will repay a \$1.5 million loan...and even asks why the city doesn't "rent or buy one of the vacant buildings in town"!

Anyone who has followed the progress of financial considerations for the building knows that there has never been any intent to borrow \$1.5 million. The council reduced the total amount to \$1 million and approved logging city-owned timberland for part of the financing. Additionally, it is seeking other funding mechanisms, including grants. There will be a loan, yes, but nowhere near \$1.5 million.

Anyone who has attended the meetings knows that space requirements for all of the city functions—offices, police department, justice court, library and council, plus parking for all of those functions—cannot be met with any existing building in town. City hall is already in an inadequate building, why should it seek another inadequate building?

Whether you approve or disapprove of the project, falsehoods are both invalid and harmful.

Jamboree is in jeopardy

If the Vernonia Friendship Jamboree is going to continue, then someone must turn out to do the work.

People are needed to help with vendors, the parade, Port-A-Potties, and many more activities. It isn't all fun and it often is hard work.

Many events are handled by groups that have been taking care of them for years. The need is for people to handle the functions for which the Jamboree committee is responsible.

If you can help, call Treasa at 429-4006. If you don't care, plan on this being the last year for the Vernonia Friendship Jamboree.

Council needs more public input

The Vernonia City Council was elected to make decisions. Their duties are unpaid, time-consuming and often controversial. Nevertheless, when a problem such as the Scout Cabin needs a solution, it should include a lot more public comment than was allowed prior to this decision. Consensus building has value.



The Josi Report

By Rep. Tim Josi
Oregon Representative, Dist. 2

When a legislative session nears closure, the pace picks up rapidly and the hours become much longer. Most committees close down and legislators spend the majority of their time on the floor voting on bills. The capitol building becomes a beehive of activity and then suddenly it's all over. Most often the legislature adjourns in the middle of the night. The next day the halls of the capitol are like a ghost town. It's an interesting phenomenon.

This is also a time to move legislation which has been stuck in committee. Senior legislators have learned to take full advantage of this opportunity. The days ahead will be challenging for me and should be fruitful.

HB 2469 is a bill of mine which is now finally moving again after being referred from the House Education Committee to the Ways and Means Committee. This bill, in its original form, provides that residents of Washington who are admitted to Columbia Gorge Community College and Clatsop Community College shall be considered as residents of Oregon for tuition rates.

Currently, there is a reciprocity agreement between the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education and the Oregon State Board of Education. The agreement allows a certain amount of Washington and Oregon residents to pay in-state tuition rates at certain schools in Oregon and Washington. For out-of-state students paying in-state tuition rates, the host state pays the balance of the expenses to the community college. Oregon students paying Oregon tuition rates don't cover the complete cost of their education; the balance is paid by the state through income tax revenue. Clatsop Community College and Columbia Gorge Community College have always struggled because of their rural base. The passage of Measures 5 and 47 places these two community colleges in an even tighter financial squeeze. This legislation, if passed, will go a long way in keeping budgetary cuts to a minimum.

Both colleges serve isolated, rural Oregon

communities. Their student populations, from both sides of the state line, tend to be lower income, adult students who cannot afford high out-of-state tuition. Many students in these rural communities are site-bound because of jobs and family, and traveling to larger institutions in the Willamette Valley is not an option. These community colleges make post-secondary education more affordable for their community residents, since students avoid relocation costs and tuition is less than half that of Oregon's higher education institutions.

Serving Washington students helps these colleges achieve a critical mass in selected programs so that they may be available to Oregon students.

The members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee have decided to amend the bill. They reasoned that if a reciprocity agreement was good for Columbia Gorge Community College and Clatsop Community College then all Oregon Community Colleges should have the same agreement. The amended bill would consider students of all Oregon community colleges, who are residents of Idaho, Washington, California and Nevada as residents of Oregon for tuition rates.

Last week HB 2469 was heard by the Ways and Means Education Sub-Committee. Committee members passed the bill and referred it back to the full Ways and Means Committee for consideration. If all goes well, the bill should be on the House Floor later this week. Then it will go to the Senate floor for final consideration before going to the Governor. I will be there every step of the way.

Ed. note: Since Rep. Josi submitted this column, HB2469 received approval from both the House and the Senate. It has been sent to the Governor John Kitzhaber for signature.

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