

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### How tough can this be?

Oregon public meetings law is quite specific about how far in advance agencies must notify the press and the public about meetings. In this area, lately, it seems to have either been ignored or considered as difficult to understand as advanced calculus.

There have been times when public officials just plain didn't want scrutiny, but that doesn't apply in these instances. They've just blown it!

The transportation committee that has been studying public transit in Columbia County recently had a special meeting. A "special" meeting requires only 24 hours notice, unlike the 14 day notice of a "regular" meeting. Seems easy enough, since it can be done by phone, fax or email. Nope, notice arrived by fax 2-1/2 hours before the meeting.

We were assured that it wouldn't happen again.

It didn't. Notice of the next regular meeting arrived two days in advance. Hey, they missed by only 12 days!

Vernonia had a similar problem. Notice of a public hearing, which requires publication, went out in a timely fashion, no problem there. Oops, the date was wrong!

There have been a couple of meetings here, too, where notification was timely and the date was right, but the time was wrong!

Hey, folks, can we get this together?

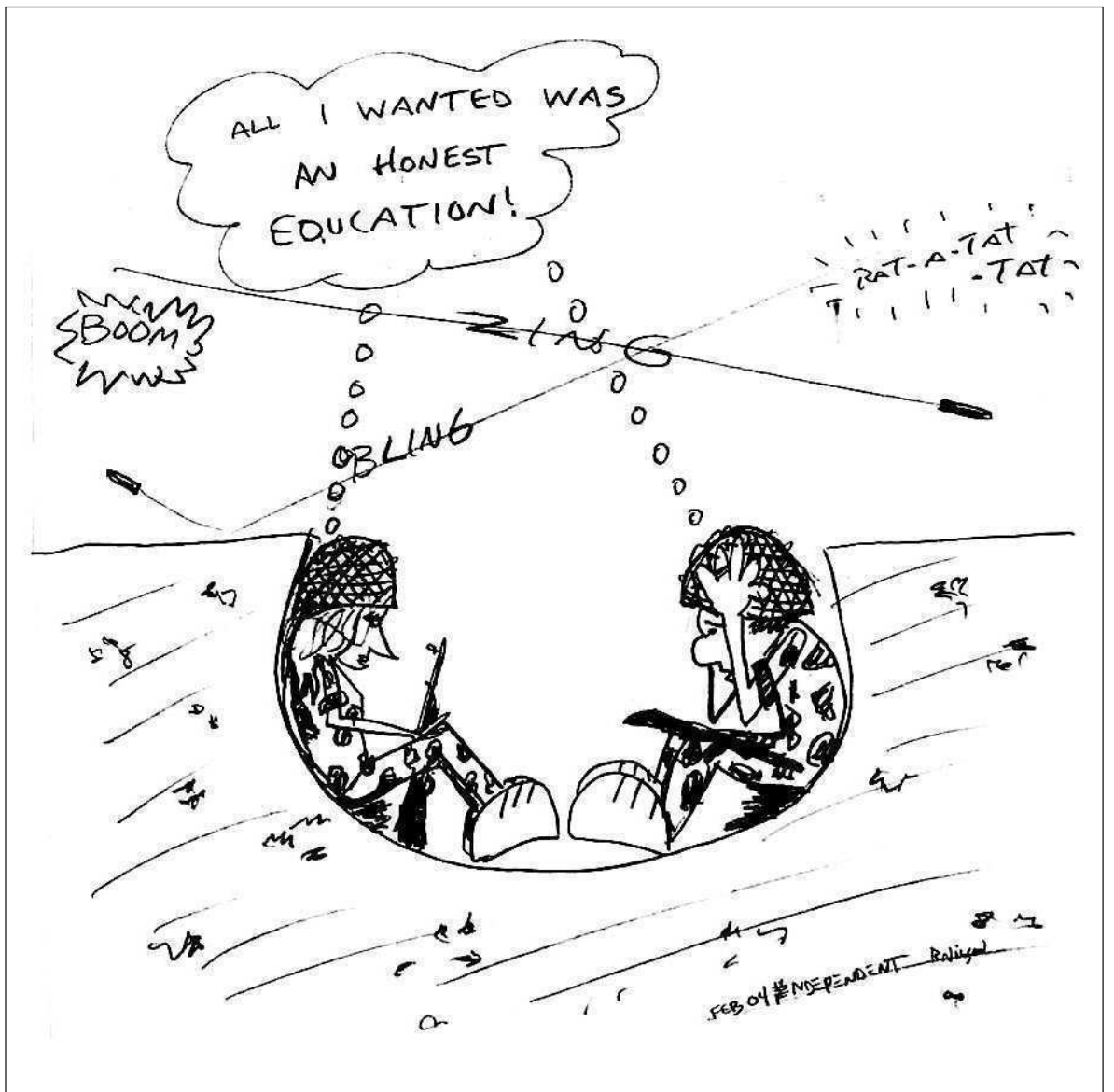
### Speaking of meetings...

Columbia County held a very interesting informational meeting in Mist a week ago to let people know what was going on in regard to using depleted gas wells for natural gas storage.

In the 1930s, when the great depression caused an epidemic of tax foreclosures, the county ended up with lots of land they didn't want. When they eventually sold it, however, they retained the mineral rights. Over the years, the county has earned rents and royalties from the gas fields.

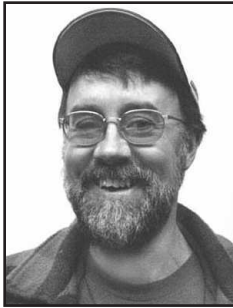
Private landowners also own mineral rights in the gas fields and can utilize the county's negotiations to stay on top of price fluctuations. But the meeting was interesting because it is rare to see any county government take staff, consultants and information to the people without charge.

Columbia County earned a big bouquet.



### Ike Says...

By Dale E. Webb, Member  
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



A month ago you may have noticed a man on the Rock Creek bridge, Hanging a metal contraption over the side. I happened to be there that day and a couple of us were having fun with the locals when they asked, "What's he doing?" We had several people going with, "He's fishing" and "He's counting fish."

Actually, he was from the Oregon Water Resources Department and was measuring the stream flow because actual, physical measurements are needed to verify and/or calibrate the new gauge that was installed last summer on Rock Creek.

Checking stream flows in the winter is no easy task. It requires a mechanism that can hang a heavy weight (60 pounds) into the stream, with a device that can accurately measure the depth of the weight in the water. The weight is torpedo shaped, with fins so it does not spin in the water; attached to the weight is a measuring device that looks like a wind anemometer. Within the cable that suspends the weight is an electrical wire that transmits an electrical pulse back to the operator, which he hears as a click each time the cupped device makes a revolution. The operator counts the clicks and the time. These numbers are written down, along with at least 20 more measurements across the stream, to come up with a measurement of how many Cubic Feet

per Second (CFS) of water is flowing by.

Jim Buxton and I found out just how complicated this procedure is when we took a lesson from Greg Beaman, our District Watermaster. Greg taught us how to use a hand-held flow-measuring device that was purchased along with the new gauging station on Rock Creek. The hand-held device will be used during low flow periods to verify measurements at the gauging station and also to take readings in tributary streams in our area.

We did our lesson in Bear Creek at City Hall and, as we walked up to the stream, I joked to Nehalem Watershed Coordinator Maggie Peyton that we would probably see a salmon. Well, we did - in fact, we saw four of them! While I was standing in Bear Creek with the measuring device, with Jim standing at water's edge, a Coho salmon swam right between my legs and stopped just in front of us. Maggie was scrambling to get her digital camera operating while Greg stood there in awe at seeing a salmon in such a small stream. Within ten minutes, three more salmon passed by us as we continued to take measurements. This was a rare treat indeed. Maggie was quite pleased because just a week earlier she had people from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and ODF&W in town viewing Bear Creek and several comments were made by officials who questioned whether Bear Creek was a salmon bearing stream. Well, Maggie's got pictures now!

Preliminary indications are that this year's Coho run was very good, with fish reaching up very high into the tributaries, due to good stream flows. These stream flows have stayed high due

Please see page 20