

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Arrogant administration, lazy oversight committee make travesty of system

An editorial opinion is rarely written in the first person singular – “I” instead of “we” or “you” – but this one is personal.

When starting The INDEPENDENT, 19 years ago, I had to learn Oregon’s governmental systems – legislative, administrative, fiscal, etc. – on the municipal, county, special district and state levels, because my journalistic and governmental experience was in another state.

One of the things I learned is that Oregon has a very good system for keeping citizens involved in making decisions about local government budgets. The system requires a budget committee composed of the district’s elected governing board and an equal number of appointed community volunteers.

When the budget committee receives a proposed budget, which has been prepared by whomever is charged with that duty, it is then responsible for reviewing the budget and understanding it sufficiently to feel comfortable that it meets the district’s needs as well as possible within the anticipated revenues. Once that is done, they pass the budget on to the governing board.

As the page one article explains, that didn’t happen with the Vernonia School District budget.

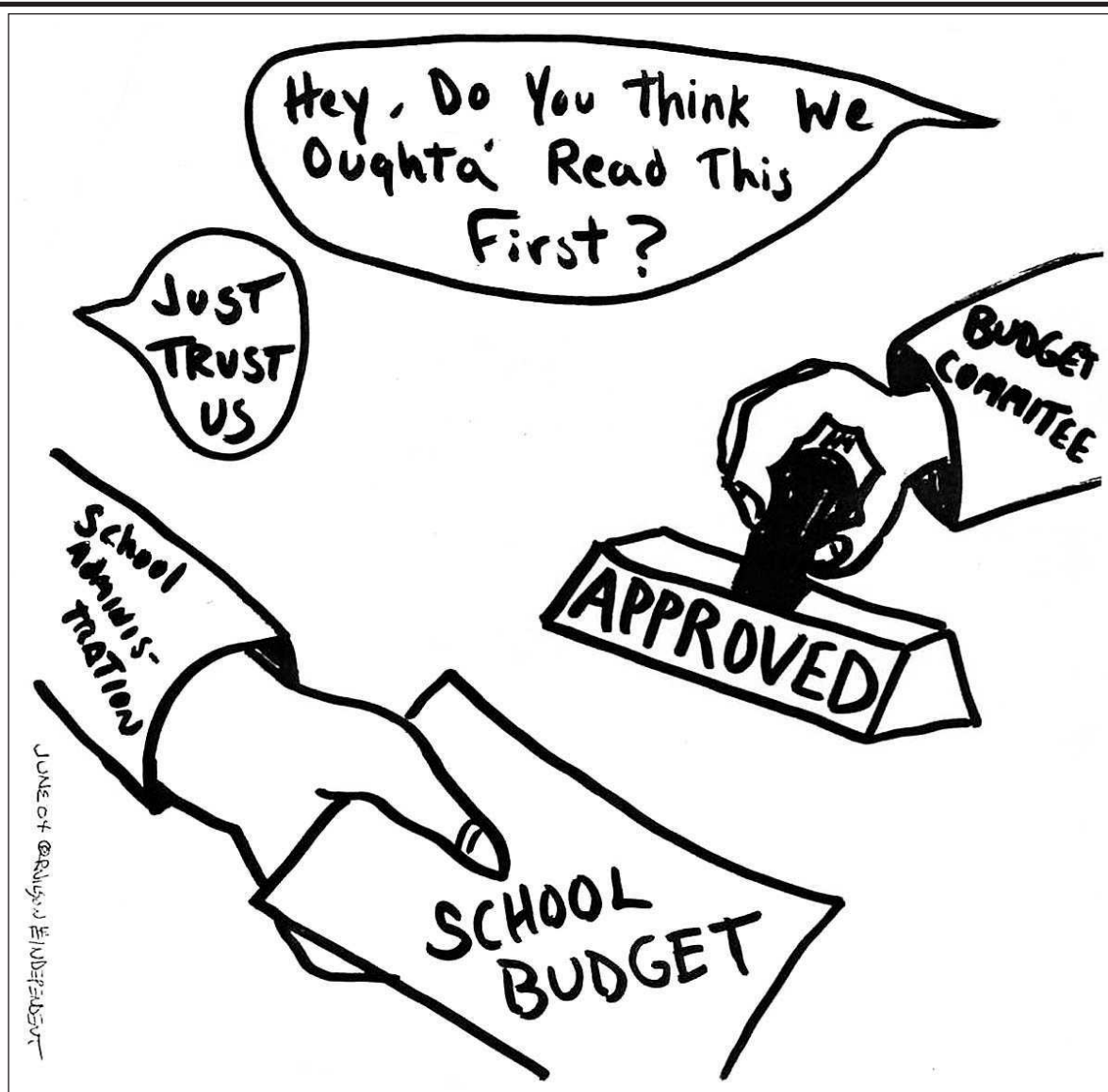
A few committee members met with the administration to help develop the budget; that part is good. Then the 44 page bundle of numbers, with a \$5.3 million general fund, was brought to the whole committee, which was asked to approve it without any review other than what the superintendent presented. A majority on the committee agreed.

Because I’m stubborn, I read the budget and, guess what...found errors. Then there were two hours with the superintendent and finance officer as we discussed problems in the budget software, and items that were allocated to the wrong place. Incidentally, closing Lincoln won’t save \$30,000, as claimed.

In 18 years of service on budget committees – nine with the county and nine with the school district – this is the first time I have been asked to approve a budget without being given time to read it. Even worse, it’s the first time that I have seen a majority of budget committee members publicly express such lack of concern.

Some of them complain about how their taxes are spent, but this action says, “Here, help yourself to my bank account, it’s too much work to go through all these numbers!”

Oregon’s system is good, but it works only when it is used.



Ike Says . . .

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

Did you get out and fish for cutthroat trout yet? The season opened on May 22 and I observed a few rigs parked along the Nehalem River on my way to work. I haven’t gotten any reports on how the fishing was, but I would expect it to be average. The river level was quite low and made for some bumpy boating. It seems each year that a few people don’t know when the season opens or they just want to get a jumpstart on everybody else. I have seen numerous people fishing out of season while kayaking and while driving along the river. In fact I saw two young gentlemen the week before the opener fishing right below the Green Bridge here in town. I know one of the two young men — and he knows when the season opens, since he is an avid fisherman. But he has now discredited himself as being an ethical fisherman.

The reason the season opens late is to provide protection to out-migrating steelhead and salmon smolts. There is not much sense in catching hundreds of these smolts and inflicting mortal wounds when all we have to do is wait until they have migrated down the river to the bay. If the indications that I have observed this year hold true for smolts, then there were many of them. I have been amazed this year at all the fish fry and fingerlings I have seen while kayaking. On a recent trip, after the fishing season opener, from Anderson Park to Big Eddy Park, I observed thousands of fish. Most were chinook fingerlings, but I also saw numerous bigger fish

scurrying from the sight of my boat. I don’t remember seeing this many fish in the river, but it must be good news.

Speaking of good news, while reviewing ODF&W’s proposed angling regulations, I noticed a staff proposal to allow a two cutthroat limit for North Coast streams, which would include the Nehalem. It appears that timing for the season would remain as it is now and two cutthroat trout over eight inches in length would be allowed. If you favor this proposal you should write a letter of support to ODF&W by September third. There are people who oppose this proposal, so your support could be critical if it is to be adopted. The main reason for curtailing cutthroat trout harvest on Oregon’s coastal streams was because of concern about sea-run cutthroat trout.

It was believed that the sea-runs had suffered significant population declines in the past, yet this variant of the resident cutthroat trout was not fully understood by biologists. The reason for the new proposal is better information about sea-run cutthroats. Genetic studies have found very little difference between sea-runs and resident fish in river basins. In fact, the study found more genetic differences between cutthroats from adjacent basins than among the three distinctive life histories found within a single basin. With this knowledge, it has been decided that a limited-consumption fishery will have no significant effect on sea-run cutthroat trout. It’s amazing what a little good science will do. In talking with

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