

## Letters . . . From page 3

### Local government is bastion of democracy

To the Editor:

What is the point of local government?

As a child I was taught that we live in the greatest country in the world because of the freedoms we enjoyed. And that our type of government, democracy, was the best a group of citizens could hope to have.

The Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines democracy as "government by the people; especially: rule of the majority b: a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections."

Well, as most of us old enough to vote know, on a national level we do not live in a true democracy. The Electoral College decides our president for us. And in many instances, special interest groups and lobbyists control a senator's or representative's vote.

This can occur at the state and city level, too. But it is at these levels, especially the city level, that an individual can truly have a voice that is listened to, even if the final vote doesn't go their way.

I feel the major role of an elected official, and also city staff, is to try and find equitable solutions to issues that affect the constituency they represent. When issues arise that could potentially have an adverse effect on the city's citizens, they need to be heard so an informed decision may be realized for all parties involved.

This is why public hearings are held. It is a fact and opinion seeking process by the governing body. It is also a forum to take the "pulse of the community," so decisions made will reflect the majority's desire.

In my tenure on the city council, there have been more Public Hearings held than I can remember. We do this because we WANT the public's input before we make decisions that will affect their lives, whether financially or aesthetically.

There are exceptions, but overall, I have seen few issues that were "No Brainers." Each of us has a different perspective regarding an issue. Many times

our opinions on how to deal with an issue do not agree. It is the responsibility of the council to listen to differing opinions, and taking into account the facts of an issue, decide on a course of action that will benefit the city as a whole.

With that said, it was a good decision to hold a Public Hearing regarding POTENTIAL changes at the Transfer Station.

This was obviously an important issue to the citizens of Vernonia and the surrounding area, based on the turnout at the public hearing. As I have used the transfer station only once, I had no idea what the situation was in regards to its operation and management. It was quite informative to me, listening to people who use it on a regular basis. (FYI, the transfer station is not a part of the city's franchise agreement with WM. And when the last contract was negotiated WM said they would keep it open as a separate service to the community).

I must say that I do not recall ever hearing or discussing the idea of THE CITY closing down the transfer station, except when I tried to dispel rumors to that effect.

As soon as city staff learned about WM's desire to close the transfer station they began, and are still, looking at alternatives in case WASTE MANAGEMENT decides to leave. I would agree with Mr. Akers that the city council "bungled this one" IF we just said okay to WM and didn't seek alternatives or replacements for this service.

Holding a public hearing regarding such a "No Brainer" issue was beneficial, as issues regarding accounting practices, non-local users and, most importantly, recycling, were discussed. Hopefully, the information provided increased public awareness of the situation.

I thoroughly agree (based on the public's input) that the accounting practices used by WM at the transfer station are lacking and need to be addressed. But I would not have known that without the public hearing. Also because of public input from consistent users of the transfer station I learned that the rates charged are lower than any other transfer station in the surrounding area.

I know from past experience, that if we had not held a public

hearing, and just said to WM, "go ahead and raise your rates," that a future council meeting would have been overflowing with irate citizens accusing the city of not including them in a decision that adversely affected their pocketbooks.

One other note is a reminder for Mr. Akers. When those of us on the council received the information that he also received from WM, there was a glaring difference. Our documents had the word CONFIDENTIAL stamped in red on them.

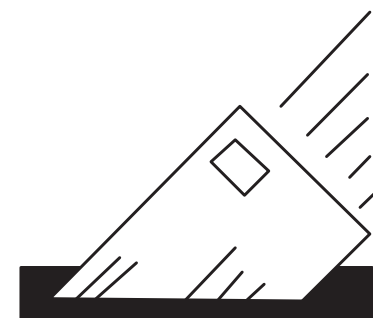
The fact that one of WM's employees provided him with this information non-confidentially is wonderful. (Although based on the WM representative's reaction at the public hearing, I think there is some disciplinary action in your WM contact's future).

But I represent the City of Vernonia as an elected official, so my actions, both positive and negative, have a direct effect on our wonderful city. When I see CONFIDENTIAL stamped in red on a document I receive relating to city business, I know what it means. And if I were to discuss publicly this CONFIDENTIAL information without authorization from the source, I would be exposing the city to potential litigation, and thereby not performing my sworn duty as a councilperson to the city of Vernonia and the people who elected me.

To all of the citizens who attended the public hearing regarding the transfer station, and any of the past public hearings over the years, I offer my sincere thanks.

It is obvious that in Vernonia, we still believe in a democratic form of government, and practice it wholeheartedly. It is a wonderful example of what makes our city a shining example, and it is just one of many reasons that this town is so special and has found a warm spot in many hearts far and wide.

**Glen Purvee  
Vernonia**



### Difficult to discover quality of physicians

To the Editor:

Did you know it is easier to check the background on a contractor remodeling your kitchen than it is to find out if your surgeon has a history of negligence? Well, it's true. It is almost impossible to find out if your doctor has a history of reckless or negligent behavior.

If we want to improve patient safety we should crack down on reckless and negligent doctors. Measure 35 won't do anything to improve patient safety and it will hurt Oregonians. Before we amend the Constitution we should try something less drastic. Voters should reject Measure 35.

**Eileen Strain  
Seaside**

### "Security" depends on view of nation's needs

*An open letter to President George W. Bush*

Dear President Bush,

You must be pleased with the most recent polls indicating that women have put you ahead of John Kerry because of concerns about security.

Do you think these ratings are accurate? I am asking because I believe such reporting may misguide you.

Do you realize that women like myself, a mother and grandmother, are offended by the attitude that because we are female we must depend on your kind of "security"?

Are you aware that there are millions of intelligent, strong women who are independent, self sufficient and informed, with little belief in your political agendas?

Are you aware of growing opposition to your policies by large groups of women in organizations such as Code Pink? Code Pink named itself in derision of the Homeland Security color alert system while signifying extreme danger to the values held by nurturing, caring and compassionate women, and men, in our country?

Do you realize that these young and old women communicate online, over cell phones and through person-to-person contacts which are unavailable to pollster inquiry. Have you heard of the Feminist Majority

Foundation, the Brennan Center for Justice, the International Occupation Watch Center in Baghdad? These are a few of many organizations powered by passionate and outraged women!

Do you understand that strong women work hard to provide for their children? Women whose strength enables them to sacrifice their health, their time, and their very lives, if necessary, to provide for their families – without your kind of security.

Have you any idea of the credibility problem you have with promoting yourself as the great defender when your form of security leaves out children whose schools have been closed because you and congress have deleted over 20 billion dollars from promised funding? A funding loss which resulted in one of many phrases of voter discontent like "Leave no Billionaire Behind!"

Is it not your kind of "security" that provides great profits for companies like AT&T, Boeing, Consolidated Edison, Lehman Brothers, Marriott International, Pepco Holdings, Reebok, Time Warner and others, by giving them rebates totaling \$5.4 billion? Are you oblivious to the report by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy that those corporate giveaways could have provided Head Start for every eligible child, or covered every uninsured child in America with comprehensive health care for the next decade, or helped close the gap in affordable housing for extremely low income families?

Is your kind of "security" found in Iraq where infiltrators from other countries retaliate against the U.S. occupation of Iraq with murder and brutality? Do you think Jack Hensley's mother felt secure when she was told her son had been beheaded on his BIRTHDAY?

Was security the reason you ordered a stop to U.S. special forces' pursuit of al Qaeda in the mountains of Afghanistan when they had the potential to capture Osama Bin Laden in 2002?

Your credibility, Mr. Bush, is rapidly diminishing at home and on the war front. The front where real soldiers are bearing the brunt of your ineptitude and inattention. Where the answer to the question of "are we winning?" is a resounding NO!

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