

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### What is City Hall up to?

Last issue's Opinion piece might have left more questions than it answered. Here's what happened.

The City Council packet handed out at the March 5 meeting contained a draft copy of minutes from the Vernonia Community Learning Center (VCLC) Committee meeting of February 7. In those minutes, *The Independent* was listed as Old Business and it stated that *The Independent* had a clear bias against the Learning Center. *The Independent* went and spoke to City Administrator M.R. "Dick" Kline, who told us there would have to be a retraction and that the Learning Center needed to learn to court, not alienate, the media. The March VCLC meeting was cancelled. *The Independent* went to the April VCLC meeting, where the minutes had been changed and no longer mentioned *The Independent* at all. This is a violation of ORS 192.650(1)(a) which states that the law requires that minutes shall include at least the substance of any discussion on any matter.

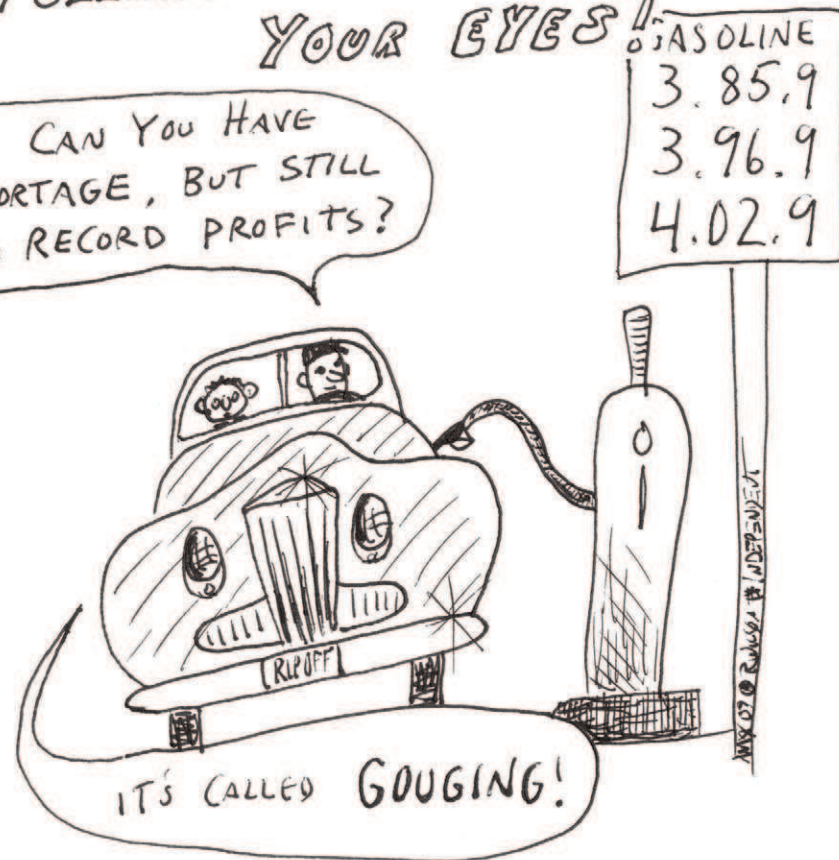
Later, when asked why the minutes were changed and *The Independent* was no longer mentioned, City Recorder Kate Conley said, "I only do what I'm told." At the VCLC meeting in April, Mayor Sally Harrison made an eloquent speech about how they needed to be 'big' enough to apologize, and the committee voted unanimously to apologize. However, the apology *The Independent* received 'apologized' for the clerical error of including unapproved minutes in the March 5 City Council packet, not for the bias statement. Since the committee was unable to document that bias, that's defamation of character.

Since that time, *The Independent* has been trying to get copies of the VCLC minutes where we were New Business (January). VCLC Director Jesse Jones told us that she was having trouble with her computer and someone else told us that another committee member took minutes in January and City Hall tells us that it turned out there was no meeting in January. At our meeting with Kline, he also said he'd get the New Business minutes for us. When neither he nor Jones came up with minutes based on *The Independent's* verbal requests, a formal public information request was submitted. Kline's response was to chastise *The Independent* for using too many city resources on a simple request.

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A NEW  
ADVENTURE IN -  
PULLING THE WOOL OVER  
YOUR EYES!

HOW CAN YOU HAVE  
A SHORTAGE, BUT STILL  
MAKE RECORD PROFITS?



### Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member  
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



Recently, I took a trip to Eastern Oregon to go sage rat hunting. I won't bore you with the hunt, but let me assure you, there are plenty of these fuzzy little critters and they are wreaking havoc on the farmers' alfalfa fields. These rodents burrow into the fields and push up mounds of dirt in the process, then come out and eat the alfalfa to rub it into the farmers' noses. Well, the farmers invite people over to help in keeping the population in check. I thought long and hard about the shooting of these pests and the ramifications of what would happen if hunters did not assist the farmers. What would the farmers do if the population of sage rats went unchecked? The alternative most often used is to strew poisoned oats into the fields, which creates another problem: the predators that eat the dead sage rats are in turn poisoned. This is not a good thing. Hunting them is a better alternative, although not extremely effective.

While on my trip I met several of the farmers/ranchers, the hard working people who are making a living with their hands off of the land. Raising alfalfa during the spring and summer and feeding cattle in the winter, is not an easy life, but a life tied to the change of seasons. I would ven-

ture to guess it is a slower-paced life than we city slickers lead. They may have found one of the rare ways to make time slow down.

When you are way out in Eastern Oregon, the rules are a little more distant than what we west-siders are used to. After spending five days hunting and meeting the people making their livings off the land, I came away with a little better perspective of who these people are and the beliefs they hold. I think we need to be cautious when we propose new rules and regulations here on the Westside and then try to force them on the people of the Eastside of our great state. It is different and the effects on people making a living from the land can have a far greater impact than those of us who just live on the land. Don't get me wrong, I still believe there are things that we need to do on the Eastside environmentally, but we really need to invite the people who will be most affected by our decisions to the table and hear their concerns and ideas.

Back to Vernonia: There have been several cougar sightings in the immediate area, one of which occurred on the Sword place, which sits right next to town. I called Bill after hearing about the sighting and tried to call the cougar in with my predator call. The cougar was a no show. As the deer population in the surrounding units continues to shrink, the prospect of more cougar sightings is realistic.

Hair Loss Syndrome (HLS) made a pretty significant appearance in late spring this year, both locally and in other areas. An oddity that I had

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