

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

What is the proper role of the media in government?

At the last council meeting, *The Independent* and it's publisher, Clark McGaugh, were assaulted with name calling, accusations, and complaints of lies, rumors and negativity in *The Independent*, while never giving any specifics of the alleged lies, rumors or bad behaviors. Councilor Shirlee Daughtry stated during the council's improper executive session (see story page 1) on October 15, "He just doesn't get it," referring to publisher Clark McGaugh.

What the accusers and complainers don't seem to "get" is the role and responsibilities of *The Independent*.

While we would prefer not to have any negative news or information in our paper, our first responsibility is to the citizens of our community. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom...of the press." This provision now protects the press from all government, whether local, state or federal.

The founders of the United States enacted the First Amendment to distinguish their new government from that of England, which had long censored the press and prosecuted persons who dared to criticize the British Crown. As Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart explained in a 1974 speech, the "primary purpose" of the First Amendment was "to create a fourth institution outside the government as an additional check on the three official branches" (executive, legislative and judicial).

The U.S. media today is frequently known as the Fourth Estate, an appellation that suggests the press shares equal stature with the three branches of government created by the Constitution.

What's that mean? It means it is our job is to be a watchdog for the public over the government. In addition to providing useful information to the public, we are responsible for making sure your local government (City Hall) is doing business legally and in the best interests of the public. Oregon has open government laws that say that the running of government should be open, public and transparent. That's why we request information and let you, the public, know when we don't "get" it. Just doing our job!

HEY BUDDY!
HALLOWEENS OVER
YOU CAN TAKE OFF THAT
COSTUME NOW.

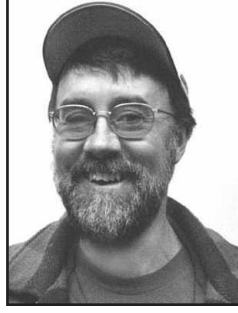


IT'S NO COSTUME, ITS BODY ARMOR
THE CITY POLICE GAVE ME TO
WEAR AFTER THAT LAST
CITY COUNCIL MEETING!

Nov 1, 07 @ Alan McGAUGH

Ike Says . . .

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



Recently I came across an article written in the Vernonia Freedom, November 20, 1980. The article was about the Vernonia sewage lagoons and why the state DEQ had placed a building moratorium on new construction in town. I remember the moratorium back then, because I was in line to get one of the new sewer permits when it was lifted. The article basically noted the lagoon system was not big enough to handle all the sewage and that during the winter, raw sewage was being dumped into the Nehalem River. During the summer months the lagoons would go anaerobic and that's when we would get the great smell. What I found really interesting was a few interesting statements to the reporter by Larry Burright, a member of the sewer committee, who said "The solution is a second lagoon, to be built next to the present one. The reason for another lagoon, is to further treat the sewage and expand the capacity another 800 hookups. According to the Vernonia Comprehensive Plan, that should last us another 20 years." The article continued with, "Burright doesn't blame the council for their inaction in the past three years. The council had been waiting for International Paper, who owns that land, to

donate it. I'm not saying they are wrong. If this was a profitable year, I'm sure International Paper would have given it to us in a minute as a tax write-off. But this isn't a good year. The city should either buy the land at the assessed value of \$1,800 an acre or condemn it and buy it through the courts." The real eye opener in the whole article though was the following statement: "The sooner we get the new lagoon, the sooner we can build again. Once the city acquires the land it will take 30 days to complete the lagoon. We have a great deal with the construction contract, too. The whole works will be taken care of by Randall and Sons of Estacada for \$38,000." Gee, I wish we had had a little more vision back then for, at the prices we were paying for things, the debt we are currently faced with would have been paid off a long time ago. The question now is, do we have that vision today or is another building moratorium going to be needed to spur us along? What do they say about history repeating itself?

I was recently approached by Fred Oviatt, who is a security officer for Weyerhaeuser and Hancock timberlands. As you all know the surrounding timberland owners are gracious enough to allow motorized access onto their lands during certain hunting seasons when the fire danger is low. While access has been more restrictive in recent years, access is still allowed. During this year's deer rifle season Weyerhaeuser and Hancock have allowed weekend motor vehicle access and, hopefully, during elk

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