

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### What's your council doing?

At the February 1 Vernonia City Council meeting, Mayor Sally Harrison said she liked, in fact she said she'd frame, our January 21 editorial. That was the last nice thing she said about *The Independent* or Clark McGaugh, the publisher. Now someone recently told us that "All government is corrupt." That being the case, it should come as no surprise to see the council using their, and their audience's, precious time to take potshots at the newspaper.

What is a surprise is that council would, once again, appear to believe that name calling and saying nasty or even crude things will somehow make us be nice and write what amounts to the "Vernonia City Council" party line. They've tried it before and apparently it didn't pan out so why not try again. This is the second time the Mayor has stepped down from the podium to 'blast away' at the paper.

Albert Einstein, noted physicist, gave this definition of insanity, "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Perhaps council and city staff could try a new idea, cooperating with us and giving us information so we can do our job of "holding government accountable" without the need for all their drama.

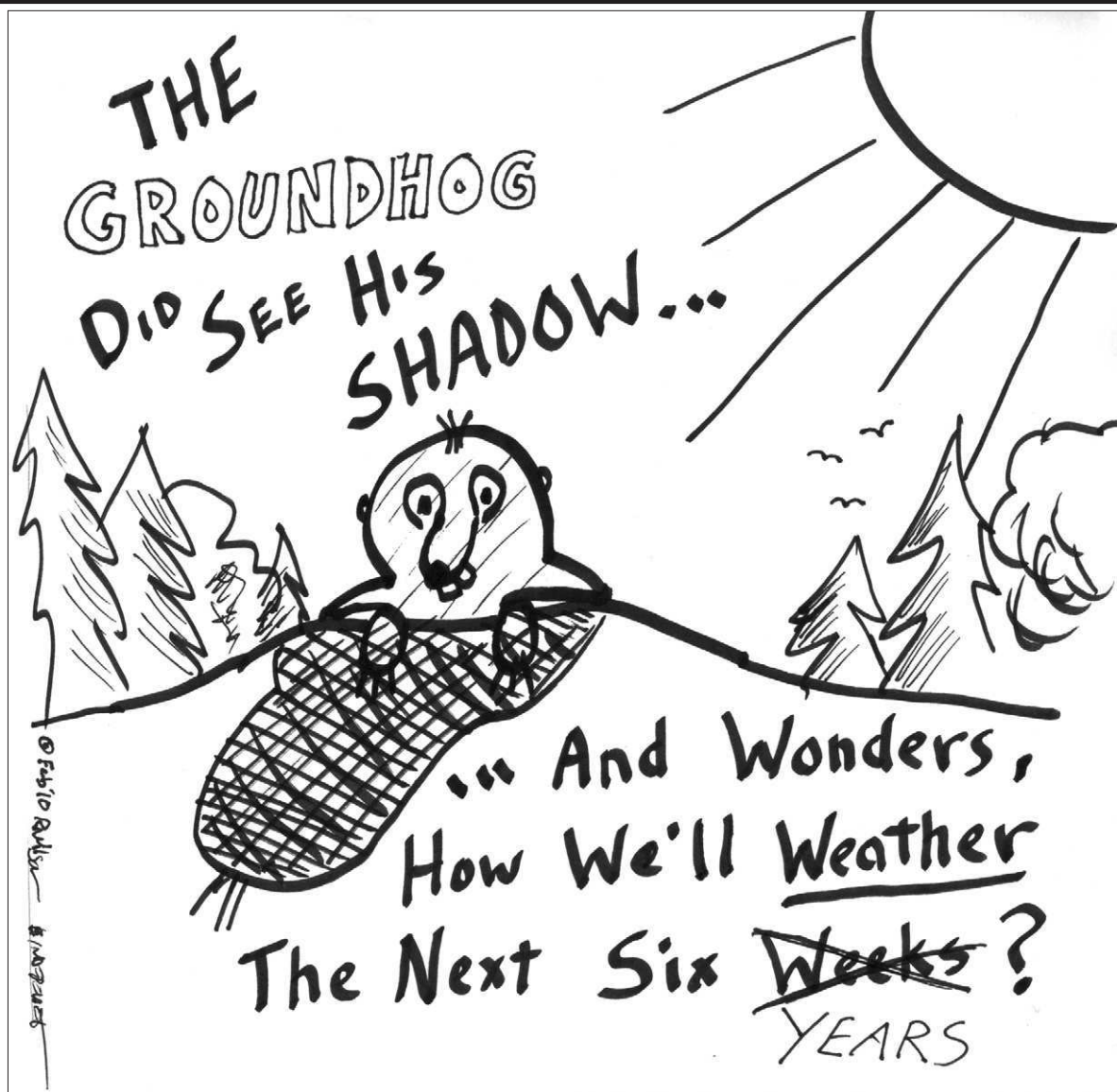
### And Planning Commission?

It seems to be pervasive. The Vernonia Planning Commission worked on a sign ordinance. When they had it the way they wanted it to be, they held a public hearing and nobody came. Later, most people said they didn't know about it; they were busy that night; they had no idea that something 'big' was on the agenda, etc. So, Planning Commission sends the ordinance to Vernonia City Council for their public hearing and vote. At that public hearing, held February 19, over 20 business people appear and clearly state that now that they are aware of the ordinance, they have big problems with it. Council holds the hearing open to let the planners look at it again.

At the Planning Commission's January 21 meeting, the business owners were called "spoiled children". Statements made included, "If they want to play games, we'll just start enforcing the current code," and that the business owners, "have no respect for the Planning Commission." The meeting was tape recorded. Not everyone made rude comments, though Planning Commission Chair Dan Brown and Commissioner Sharon Parrow did. Commissioners Nancy Dailey and Alan MacComb weren't there. No rude comments at all from Commissioner Grant Williams. The question that must come to mind is, "Really, who is behaving like spoiled children?"

Does it sound to you, the citizens of Vernonia, like you are being well represented in council and commission?

What can be done? Attend meetings, write letters to the editor, vote, tell council how you want them to SERVE you.



### Ike Says . . .

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



The ODF&W Commission has directed its staff to present data and proposals to deal with hunting accidents. While this sounds like a good cause, we need to step back and examine the facts. What is driving the recent review was the fatal hunting accident in December of 2009, when 15-year-old Matthew Gretzon was shot by his uncle while hunting for elk near Grande Ronde. The victim was not wearing Hunter Orange (H.O.). It was not clear from the accident report that H.O. would have made a difference, since the uncle was shooting at an elk and did not see his nephew due to brush. It is a sad affair and, logically, one would think that pursuing every avenue available is needed to help reduce such needless deaths.

Taken from the Mark Freeman article in the Dec. 17, 2009 issue of the *Medford Mail Tribune*:

"I've hunted in several other states where orange is required, and I've never understood why it wasn't required here," says commissioner Dan Edge, who initiated the discussion surrounding Gretzon's death during a commission meeting Dec. 10 in Salem.

"We should go through the public process to see what the hunters think about it," Edge says. "But it's a pretty compelling argument: Almost everyone

killed out there isn't wearing hunter orange."

Looking at ODF&W stats for hunting accidents in Oregon since 1998, there have been 68 hunting accidents involving firearms, 48 of those were what are called two-party incidents where one person shoots another, 20 were self-inflicted. Of that total, 14 accidents were fatal. Sounds ghastly doesn't it, shot with a firearm and dying? All but one of the victims was not wearing H.O. Digging deeper into each incident, though, the picture becomes more clouded: Three incidents point out that wearing H.O. would have definitely made a difference; in seven deaths it was debatable whether or not wearing H.O. would have made a difference; in three cases H.O. would not have helped.

40 states require some form of H.O. Nationally, the accident rate involving firearms during hunting is 52 people per 1,000,000 hunters, and the death rate is five per million. Oregon stacks up pretty close to this at 32 accidents per million hunters, and a death rate of 6.6 per million, slightly higher than the national rate.

So what do sportspeople think of the possibility of mandated H.O.? They are pretty well split on the issue, with some viewing mandated H.O. as a minor inconvenience, and others viewing the mandate as an intrusion into personal freedom. One interesting comment I read is "The state is not my mother, I don't need them to tell me what to wear." The comment that stirred my questioning mind, though, was, "This appears to be a solution looking for a problem." With that

Please see page 21