

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Does Council know best?

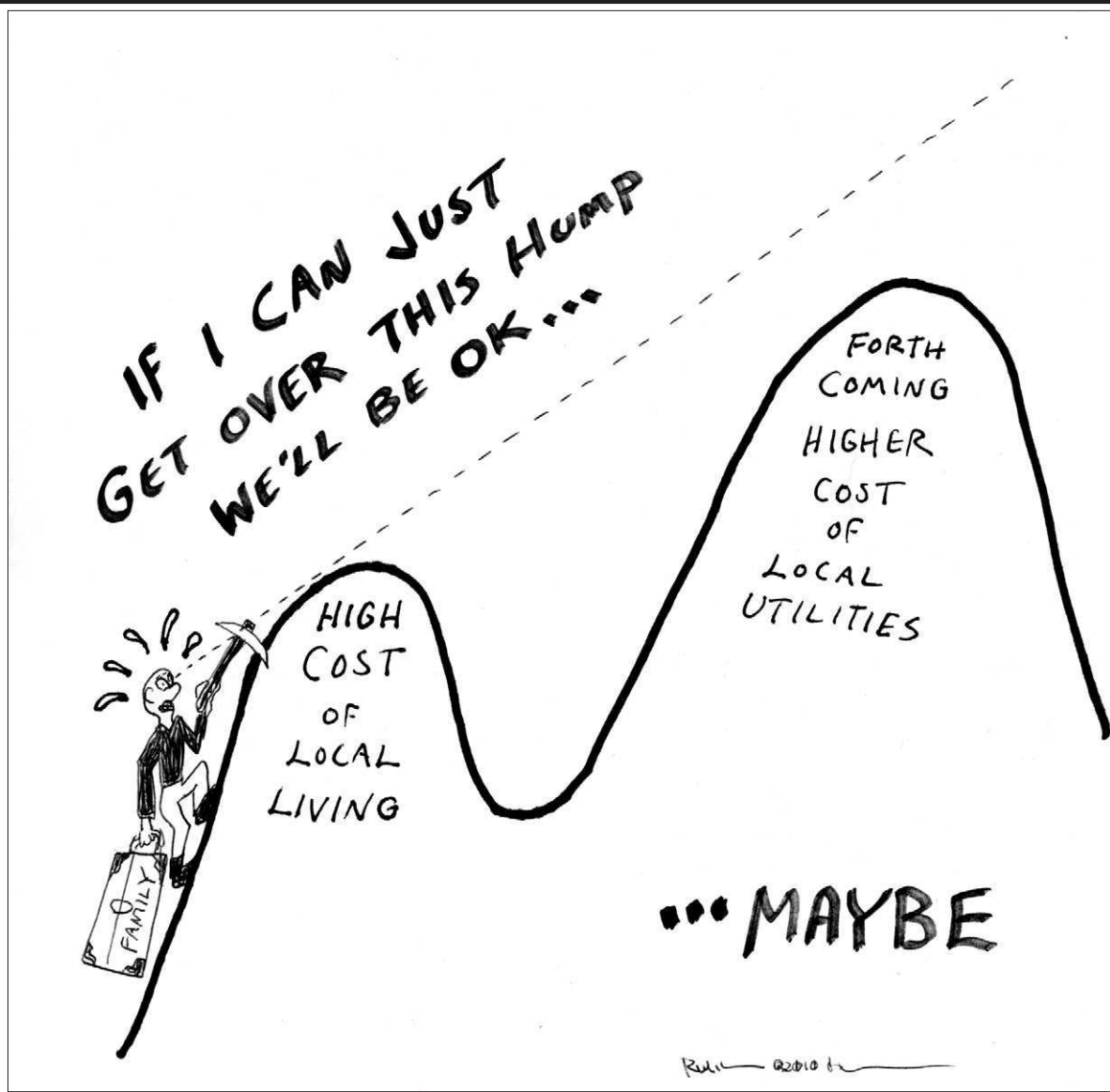
Part of the April 1 Opinion (no fooling on that page) was about the 'visioning' process that city staff, the mayor, councilor Kevin Hudson, committee/commission members, business owners and community members recently took part in. It looked like a good plan and had community support. After the visioning process, there was to be a look-through by the whole council on April 5, before adopting the plan at the April 19 meeting. On April 5, everything was progressing, though Hudson said he liked the 1997 plan better because the new one didn't have costs lined out. Since it was to be a 20-year plan, it shouldn't include costs. How could costs be assigned to plan elements that might not be addressed until 2025? Many of the elements, such as improved community relations, don't require money to be effective.

On April 19 Administrator Bob Young said, "This plan we're asking you to adopt is a good plan for the next 20 years. The next step is to review yearly for areas we can work on." Consultant Paul Koch said, "It's a road map, not an action plan. You clearly are in a position to move forward." Mayor Sally Harrison declared, rather petulantly (she all but stamped her foot), "I don't like it." Really? That was news to just about everyone.

She liked it fine when she was part of the group designing it. She was fine with it on April 5. But come time to adopt it, she throws out most of the work done, ignores community support for the plan and decides she doesn't like it so let's not do it. Hudson, in usual fashion, leans back in his chair with his hands clasped over his middle and begins to pontificate... "At a fundamental level, this doesn't feel right to me." What a touchy-feely guy. When the smoke cleared, the plan was sent back to staff to try to incorporate parts (Who decided which parts?) of the new plan with the 1997 plan (which the community group did not like) and bring it back to council on May 3. On May 3, the two (Harrison and Hudson) overruled the community, then, in lockstep as usual, council voted unanimously to adopt the pieced-together mess.

Next act, the same song and dance routine when it was time to approve the demolition contractor selected by the committee that actually knows what is needed. Harrison and Hudson both said they wanted it awarded to local contractor Bud Dow, though they both voted on the criteria used and didn't suggest a preference for local contractors. Councilor Cindy Ball at least mentioned that it's not good to give advisory committees jobs, then pay no attention to their advice. The others do not seem to care. They know best, that's that.

Finally, our experienced councilors and mayor (five or more years), who have done job reviews on four different administrators, decided to pay \$2,000 to Jim Johnson (one of the former administrators they reviewed, using his template) to design a review process to evaluate Bob Young in June when his first year is up. Are they lazy, incompetent or just trying to help Johnson with his retirement fund?



Ike Says . . .

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



Big game hunters, it is time to get those controlled hunt applications in. The deadline is May 15th and I hear that ODF&W will stick to the deadline this year.

I attended the last Nehalem Watershed Council meeting and listened to a good presentation by ODF&W north coast district fish biologist Chris Knutsen. Chris gave a power point presentation on the Nehalem River Coho and Chinook salmon runs and fielded many questions from the audience. You may remember I wrote several articles last year saying that ODF&W should hold off on a Coho salmon season on native Nehalem Coho. This fishery was a first for the Nehalem since they were listed under the ESA. The biologists looked at the projections and, with what looked like a very strong run of fish, proposed a conservative fishery of 1,000 fish for the Nehalem bay area. ODF&W's contention was that the Coho run was strong enough to absorb this new harvest and still have sufficient numbers of fish returning to the available habitat to fully seed the area streams. Well, things didn't quite turn out as planned and the spawning bed escapement fell about 1,000 fish short. Chris admitted that this was a lesson learned.

He then went on to talk about the Nehalem River Coho run projection for this fall, saying that it was projected to fall under the level that would support another fishery. So don't plan on a repeat of last year's Coho bay fishery.

Nehalem River Fall Chinook was the next topic for discussion. Last year the Fall Chinook fishery was closed in the Nehalem system. The Chinook return was projected to be very low and ODF&W is really concerned with this run of fish. This year's Fall Chinook run is projected to be better, but still not great. The run size is still below the spawning escapement size needed to fully stock the available habitat, but ODF&W believes that a very conservative fishery (still to be decided on) will offer a limited fishery and still escape enough fish at a level that will be slightly below what would reach the spawning grounds if no fishery were to occur. I don't agree with strategies that allow fisheries on stocks that are below the level needed to seed all available habitats. When put into the context of the number of fish that will return this year compared to the historical run size of the past, these fish are far more numerous than their Coho cousins. Let's just hope the projections are accurate and that the fishery option chosen is accurate in regards to harvest.

The Oregon Department of Forestry Board has decided to up the harvest of timber off the lands that it administers. This includes the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests in our area. This has been a contentious issue for years, with

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