

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### New year and new council

It is definitely a new year, with positive changes at the latest Vernonia City Council meeting. Before the regular meeting, council held a work session to define procedures so less time is wasted and more work gets accomplished. They also discussed holding work sessions on complex issues, instead of making snap decisions on issues that require more information, focus and discussion.

Mayor Josette Mitchell deserves credit for running the meeting in a proper and business-like fashion. In past meetings, councilors often spoke over one another and there often was more than one conversation going on at once. Mitchell made it evident that she will not tolerate inappropriate behavior, when she told Councilor Kevin Hudson to stop interrupting and that his behavior was rude. Being told once should have been enough, but she had to tell him twice before the council was able to get to the first agenda item (see council story on page 4).

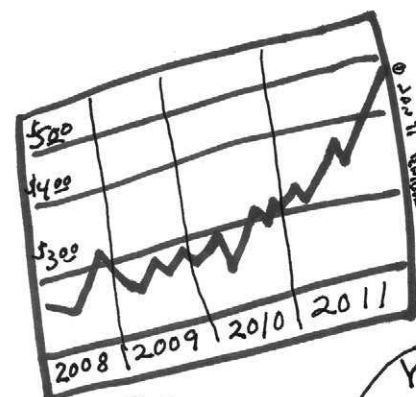
Mitchell also took the opportunity to retrain Hudson on the rights, responsibilities and privileges of his council position. Hudson was reminded that no individual councilor has any power. A quorum of the council (at least three) is needed to make policy or requests of city staff. Mitchell also helped clarify that councilors have no authority to micro-manage the work of city staff or contractors.

Good job, Mayor.

We also want to add that new Councilors Willow Burch and Marilyn Nicks have already made valuable contributions. Burch spoke in the work session to stress the importance of citizens continuing to have a voice at meetings (those wishing to address council still need to fill out a form and hand it to Recorder Joann Glass). Nicks added value with her comments and questions each time she spoke. Both Burch and Nicks are paying attention and were well-prepared for the meeting.

Hudson was angry, demanding, complaining, and simply rude because of his concern over the renewal of Vernonia Police Sergeant Mike Kay's K9 contract. We don't know what the City is doing about the contract; we do know what we received when we asked the City for information on the K9's activities – nothing. We asked for training documentation and records of any arrests, tracking of lost or hiding persons, drug searches or drug seizures. We were told that the City did not compile these records. The lack of such information should concern all citizens and city officials.

# JUST WHAT WE NEEDED EH? A 6¢ A gallon gasoline TAX HIRE!

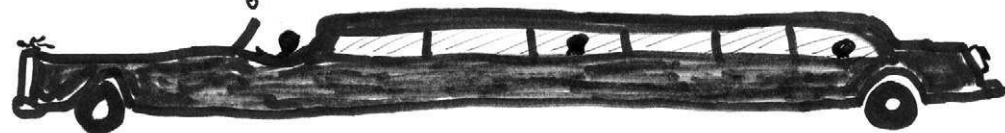


on Top of a steady rising cost of Fuel...

Maybe I'll be driving a HORSE and BUGGY SOON!

Yes Dear I just LOVE smooth roads, improved Tunnels, New approaches and Safe Bridges Too!

I don't mind the new TAX at all... gotta keep the ROADS SAFE AND IN GOOD REPAIR!



### Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



Since the shootings in Tucson, there has been a lot of talk about toning down political and social discourse to reduce what is often violent imagery. Whether that would reduce the amount of violence in the United States may be unanswerable.

But it would be worth a try.

To recap the tragedy, a man shot and killed six people and wounded 13 others at a public event held by Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to meet with constituents. It seems most likely that the shooter is mentally ill.

This column is not about blame or inadequate mental health care. It is about language and images that imply approval of violent behavior, or which use demeaning, dehumanizing terms, when it is known that some people consider violent speech a call to action.

This last election exposed some of the most violent political language I can recall hearing, and I've been listening for a lo-o-o-ng time. The words of Senate candidate Sharron Angle that called for "taking out" her opponent, and that if Washington doesn't change, we might need "Second Amendment remedies", could be misunderstood only if her opponent was a Papa John's pizza, and the Second Amendment referred to something other than the ownership of guns.

When asked, she denied any intent to encourage violence. So...why use language that encourages violence?

Sarah Palin's "target" list, with the crosshairs of a gunsight on a map of each Congressional district where she wanted to defeat the incumbent, included Giffords' district. Giffords' opponent followed up by inviting people to a fund raiser to "Get on Target for Victory in November. Help remove Gabrielle Giffords from office. Shoot a fully automatic M16 with Jesse Kelly." Of course they deny any intent to encourage violence. So, if they don't mean what they say, why use imagery that implies approval of violence?

Most people would not consider those graphic or word images to be invitations to violence. Unfortunately, some people are unable to control their responses to violent imagery. Others are teetering on the edge and hear language such as "baby killer" as justification for harming or killing those who provide legal abortions.

Arizona Rep. Trent Franks, on a "Meet the Press" show about using more civil speech, said we should "treat others as fellow children of God." Before that phrase, however, he called the Tucson shooter a "deranged lunatic who had no respect for this nation," and an "evil person." He used words to dehumanize a person, which makes that person so much easier to hate.

If people did not respond to words or images, there would be no quotations from Shakespeare, Hitler, Will Rogers or the Bible; there would be no beer ads, Nike logo or American flag.

The language we use tells more about us than about others.