

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### What public hearing?

Did you hear about the public hearing held before the Vernonia Planning Commission on June 7 about parking? Neither did we. The only places the city now posts notices about their public hearings is on their website, in the window at city hall, and in the window at the Vernonia Community Learning Center.

The council was talking Monday night about a city goal to improve communication with the public, but failed to identify a very simple mechanism that was used effectively for 20 years...putting their public notices in this paper.

A public hearing on the parking change will be held before the city council at their July 16 meeting. I guess we'll find out what it's about then, just before they vote.

### Police car costs add up

Vernonia police have been commuting in city police cars home for a long time. Chief Conner told us that only he would be taking home a car (as he'd be on call) after new Officers Brady and Thompson finished their training. When they got out of their state training, we asked about the car issue and Conner said once they were done with their Vernonia-specific training. We asked again in May, and he said that would be over by the first of July. Monday night, he told council that the cars going home would stop after Jamboree. We're not sure why it's been such a moving target, but we know it's costing the city. Estimate the cost at 15 miles per gallon with Brady and Carnahan each living about 35 miles away and gas at \$3.99 a gallon, the money is adding up. There's also the cost of maintenance needed for the extra miles; oil changes, filters, tires and other wear and tear. Plus the additional risk of accidents to city owned vehicles during those commuter trips. We wonder if they really will stop commuting in city cars after Jamboree?

### Have a safe 4th of July

We hope everyone has a safe and happy 4th of July. Our commemoration of independence has become a great summer celebration, so have a barbeque and enjoy the fireworks. Don't use illegal fireworks, though, people can be hurt and fires can be started. Enjoy the great, legal fireworks displays. Be sure your pets stay home and stay safe. And, please don't drink and drive.



### Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



It has been a little over two years since five U.S. Supreme Court Justices decided, in *Citizens United v. FEC*, that corporations can funnel unlimited sums of money into political campaigns. These five overturned decades of bipartisan law that had slowly, and with great consideration, developed some limits on political donations. And they did so with the stunning declaration that corporations are "people" and money is "speech". Their decision also removed limitations for rich people, although the rest of us have limitations imposed by economic reality.

Last year, there wasn't a lot of time for the big money groups to develop their strategies, though they made their presence known in some Oregon elections, primarily in attempts to defeat Congressman Peter DeFazio and Congressional candidate Suzanne Bonamici.

Now they are in full swing with Super-Pacs (PAC is an acronym for "political action committee."), which grew out of *Citizens United*, and we're beginning to see how much money it takes to buy an election.

If the corrupting potential of unlimited political spending isn't sufficiently disturbing, add this to the recipe: The biggest spenders are organizations that hide behind the IRS 501(c)(4) designation of social welfare organizations (ie., U.S.

Chamber of Commerce, Crossroads GPS and Americans for Prosperity), and don't have to identify their donors.

As a result of the Supreme Court's decision, all corporations, including 501(c)(4) corporations, may pay for independent expenditures that encourage the public to support or oppose federal and state candidates. An independent expenditure is any communication that is not coordinated or made with the cooperation, consultation, or at the request of a candidate or political party. Anybody who believes there is no "coordination, consultation or cooperation" between superpacs and candidates lives in fantasyland.

Last month in a recall election, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker spent \$30.5 million to beat Tom Barrett, who personally raised \$3.9 million. Adding superpac spending, the race generated about \$63.5 million.

There's no denying that the court's decision opened the floodgates for campaign contributions to help Walker. *Forbes* estimates that 14 billionaires donated to Walker; one of them lives in Wisconsin.

Earlier this year, \$12.5 million went into campaigns for Iowa's Republican caucuses. That was about \$102.50 for each of the 122,000 votes.

This month's California primary election included a ballot measure to increase the state tax on cigarettes by \$1.00 to \$1.67 per pack, to fund cancer research and smoking cessation. In March, polls showed 67% approval for the increase. After the tobacco industry spent \$47 million

Please see page 13