

OPINION FORUM

Opinion

EDITORIAL

City Hall sits on offer made to City Manager

When Mayor Deborah Stinson and the City Council announced their top pick for City Manager had signed and returned Port Townsend's job offer letter, we thought Port Townsend taxpayers would be interested to read it and asked for a copy.

City Hall said no. We trust our elected officials to do their job, but citizens do not give up the right to verify what's being done with our money and in our name. Democratic government relies on the consent of the governed, which presumes informed consent, not blind fealty.

It's not just us saying it. In case after case, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the public's right to know what government is up to.

Washington's good open government law (RCW 42.30.110) gives elected officials leeway (not a requirement) to evaluate candidates in secret. Once a selection is made, salaries, wages and other working conditions are emphatically the public's business.

We provided that citation July 10, but Mayor Stinson and Acting City Manager Nora Mitchell still refused to let any taxpayer read the offer letter and in six days of stalling and delaying, neither Stinson nor Mitchell produced a single citation to support the delay.

Instead, Mitchell, with Mayor Stinson's full knowledge, asserted powers and privileges that don't exist in law and that make a mockery of the comprehensive plan, which declares Port Townsend is devoted to "engagement" and other bedrock principles of responsive government.

Instad, Mitchell conjured a new extra-legal principle: Citizen review would be "premature" Mitchell wrote in response to our request. She'll send us a copy later when City Hall feels the time is right.

In other words, City Hall wants citizen input when it's too late to make any difference, a point we emphasized several times in demanding public access to public documents.

Monday night, City Hall, having consulted

with City Attorney Heidi Greenwood, cited a section of Washington Law that allows them to "deliberate" in private.

So we asked if a correction is in order. After all, we reported last week the decision had been made and the offer accepted (signed) by the new City Manager.

That doesn't sound like evaluation or deliberation. That sounds like an all-but-done deal.

Mitchell has advanced the idea that releasing the letter will harm the citizenry by hampering the city's ability to drive a hard bargain.

Nonsense. City officials have read the letter.

And so has the gentleman offered the job.

So whose prying eyes are Stinson and Mitchell worried about?

Yours. This would have been an excellent time for interested citizens to take a look at the city's offer and provide informed consent or dissent.

What's the worst that could happen?

City Hall might not get rave reviews for its work.

The new City Manager might have to explain why he wants more money or time off than was offered.

Too bad.

Democracy, as Sir. Winston Churchill often said during messy debates or slow deliberations, is the worst possible form of government...except when you consider the alternatives.

We understand caution, but in erring, why not err on the side of the public's right to know?

Opacity leads to distrust and our fine public officials will serve the public best with a policy of openness and engagement, not secrecy.

-DEAN MILLER

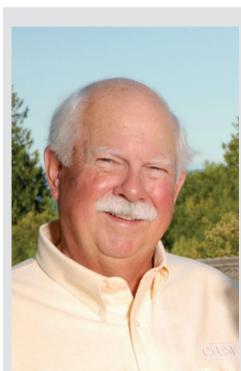
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My Best Sea Story

NED LUCE, SPECIAL TO THE LEADER

They left fifty years ago yesterday and arrived fifty years ago this Saturday and most of us of a certain age remember where we were when it happened. In addition, any of us who were in the military have stories to tell about unusual events that happened while we were serving our country that could not have been experienced outside of the military. The following is a story, probably embellished by the years, of where I was and what happened when the US astronauts landed on the moon.

The USS Belmont was a "spy" ship, sister to the USS Liberty shot up by the Israelis during the 1967 Israeli/Arab war. The Belmont was bigger than but similar to the captured Pueblo, still commissioned and in the hands of North Korea. In June of 1969 the Belmont set sail from Norfolk, Virginia headed for the Mediterranean Sea. BJ was left on the dock waving goodbye and wanting to know when I would return. There were no cell phones or internet or other means of personally communicating from the ship so I called her from a pay phone in Piraeus, Greece one day and talked for forty-five minutes for the paltry sum of \$100. It was the height of the Cold



Ned Luce LIFE IN LUDLOW

War and the mission of the Belmont was to follow and monitor the Russian carrier Moskva.

In 1961 President John Kennedy said, "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth." The only thing he didn't say was that he really wanted to beat the Russians! So, over \$400 billion dollars later with the help of over

400,000 people, we got it done. Revisiting that time it is obvious that all those people spending all that money had but that one goal in mind. I remember talk about the scientific knowledge we would gain and the products that were developed (who doesn't like Tang or Velcro?). But, let's be honest the Russians were beating us up in space with more missions and more cosmonauts than we. Poverty, civil rights and the Viet Nam War be damned, we were going to get to the moon first.

On a pleasant Sunday afternoon in the U.S., July 20, 1969, two U.S. astronauts landed and walked on the moon. In the middle of the Mediterranean it was late evening and dark. We couldn't even see the moon so it was really dark, the kind of dark that precludes seeing your hand in front of your face. The Moskva and a couple Russian

support ships had running lights visible a few miles away and we were in a festive mood given our success. Consequently we put up the much larger holiday U.S. flag, shone spotlights on it and shot off several flares. If you didn't know any better it could have been World War III. Since our friends on the Russian ships probably had not been fully informed of this significant "one giant leap for mankind" we sent them a message graciously letting them know. Expecting some kind of congratulatory response and not getting one led our crew to tell them again that we had landed on the moon. After noting some communication between the Russian ships, probably trying to construct an appropriate congratulatory communication, they finally responded. They may have been a little sarcastic when they said, "Go to bed Yankees." My friends, these are the moments you only get in the military and given the fact that you have given this time for service to your country, you have also earned the right to embellish this or any other story!

Don't forget what Janet Turpin Myers noted. "Everybody knows, a humongous thing happened on Sunday, July 20, 1969 at exactly 4:17 EDT. The "Eagle" has landed. Bingo. Just like that. Man became an alien."

Love a curmudgeon and have a great week!

(Ned Luce, a retired IBM executive, writes from Port Ludlow, where he may be the only person who thinks he is a curmudgeon.)



Week of July 17-24, 2019

DATE	HIGH	LOW
17 Wed	63	54
18 Thu	63	52
19 Fri	64	52
20 Sat	66	53
21 Sun	67	55
22 Mon	68	56
23 Tue	68	55

PORT TOWNSEND TIDES

DATE	HIGH		LOW		SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
	A.M. ft.	P.M. ft.	A.M. ft.	P.M. ft.			
17 Wed	3:49 7.5	7:20 8.7	10:58 -1.6	11:57 6.2	5:28	9:06	☉
18 Thu	4:32 7.3	7:51 8.6	11:35 -1.4		5:29	9:05	☉
19 Fri	5:16 6.9	8:18 8.5	12:42 5.9	12:13 -1	5:30	9:04	☉
20 Sat	6:04 6.6	8:43 8.4	1:29 5.5	12:51 -0.4	5:31	9:03	☉
21 Sun	6:56 6.1	9:09 8.4	2:18 5	1:30 0.3	5:32	9:02	☉
22 Mon	7:53 5.7	9:35 8.3	3:10 4.5	2:08 1.1	5:34	9:01	☉
23 Tue	8:59 5.2	10:03 8.2	4:01 3.8	2:48 2.2	5:35	8:59	☉
24 Wed	10:19 4.9	10:33 8.1	4:49 3	3:31 3.3	5:36	8:58	☉

DISCOVERY BAY TIDES

DATE	HIGH		LOW		SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
	A.M. ft.	P.M. ft.	A.M. ft.	P.M. ft.			
17 Wed	3:02 7.1	6:33 8.2	10:41 -1.5	11:40 5.8	5:28	9:06	☉
18 Thu	3:45 6.8	7:04 8.1	11:18 -1.3		5:29	9:05	☉
19 Fri	4:29 6.5	7:31 8	12:25 5.5	11:56 -0.9	5:30	9:04	☉
20 Sat	5:17 6.2	7:56 7.9	1:12 5.2	12:34 -0.4	5:31	9:03	☉
21 Sun	6:09 5.8	8:22 7.9	2:01 4.7	1:13 0.3	5:32	9:02	☉
22 Mon	7:06 5.3	8:48 7.8	2:53 4.2	1:51 1.1	5:34	9:01	☉
23 Tue	8:12 4.9	9:16 7.7	3:44 3.5	2:31 2	5:35	8:59	☉
24 Wed	9:32 4.6	9:46 7.6	4:32 2.8	3:14 3.1	5:36	8:58	☉

PORT LUDLOW TIDES

DATE	HIGH		LOW		SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
	A.M. ft.	P.M. ft.	A.M. ft.	P.M. ft.			
17 Wed	4:44 8.7	7:20 10.1	12:12 6.6	11:42 -1.7	5:28	9:02	☉
18 Thu	5:26 8.4	7:46 10.1	12:51 6.3	12:19 -1.4	5:29	9:01	☉
19 Fri	6:09 8.2	8:13 10	1:28 6.1	12:56 -1	5:30	9:00	☉
20 Sat	6:53 7.9	8:42 10	2:05 5.7	1:33 -0.4	5:32	8:59	☉
21 Sun	7:41 7.5	9:14 10	2:44 5.2	2:10 0.4	5:33	8:58	☉
22 Mon	8:34 7.1	9:47 9.9	3:27 4.7	2:49 1.4	5:34	8:57	☉
23 Tue	9:35 6.7	10:22 9.7	4:12 4	3:29 2.6	5:35	8:56	☉
24 Wed	10:46 6.5	10:59 9.5	5:01 3.3	4:15 3.9	5:36	8:55	☉