

IN OUR OPINION

Contrasting road projects shows city’s priorities askew

Something is amiss in Oak Harbor when it comes to spending priorities. Construction is still a couple of years away for an important road safety and improvement project in a low-income area of the city. Plans to rebuild Northeast Seventh Avenue have been on the books for well over a decade. The city actually had grant funding to rebuild the road in 2011, but the project was cut because city leaders felt they couldn’t afford matching funds due to unexpected costs associated with inadvertently digging up Native American remains on Pioneer Way. It turned out the city

didn’t do the necessary archaeological and communication work ahead of time. A busy neighborhood suffered the consequences. Work is still badly needed on the section of Seventh Avenue, which lacks sidewalks, lighting and bike lanes. In warm months, it’s not uncommon to see parents pushing strollers and kids riding Big Wheels on the gravelly shoulder of the road, which links highway commercial areas and high-density housing. In contrast, it looks like city officials will move forward with building a \$700,000 access road off Fakkema Road just to serve the new

U-Haul business being built. Developers are normally required to pay for any infrastructure improvements, but the city is picking up the tab for the giant national corporation in this case. The short road is needed because access isn’t allowed to the property from Highway 20 due to safety concerns. Because of this complication, city officials have long been worried that the high-visibility property wouldn’t develop. Originally, the idea was to pay for the work with a Rural Counties Economic Development Fund grant, but Island County commissioners refused to hand over the cash since the project would ben-

efit so few. During a council meeting, the interim city attorney warned against pulling the plug on the road project because U-Haul expected the road to be built for them and “they could very likely file a lawsuit against the city.” It’s funny. Nobody worried about people living in trailers and apartments suing the city when the Northeast Seventh Avenue project was cancelled. A common complaint about city leaders in recent years is that they are beholden to developers. Mayor Bob Severns even cited his concern about the influence of developers on city politics as his reason

for endorsing candidates in the last election. Yet now it’s Severns’ administration that has been encouraging council members to gift U-Haul with the road. The council hasn’t made any final decisions about actually building the access road, though a couple of members said they would like to see the company fund some portion of the cost — the estimate has inflated from \$450,000 to \$700,000 in a short time span. Better yet, the council could simply accelerate the Seventh Avenue project and delay U-Haul’s access project.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feedback

‘Mega-donor’ label is overly broad

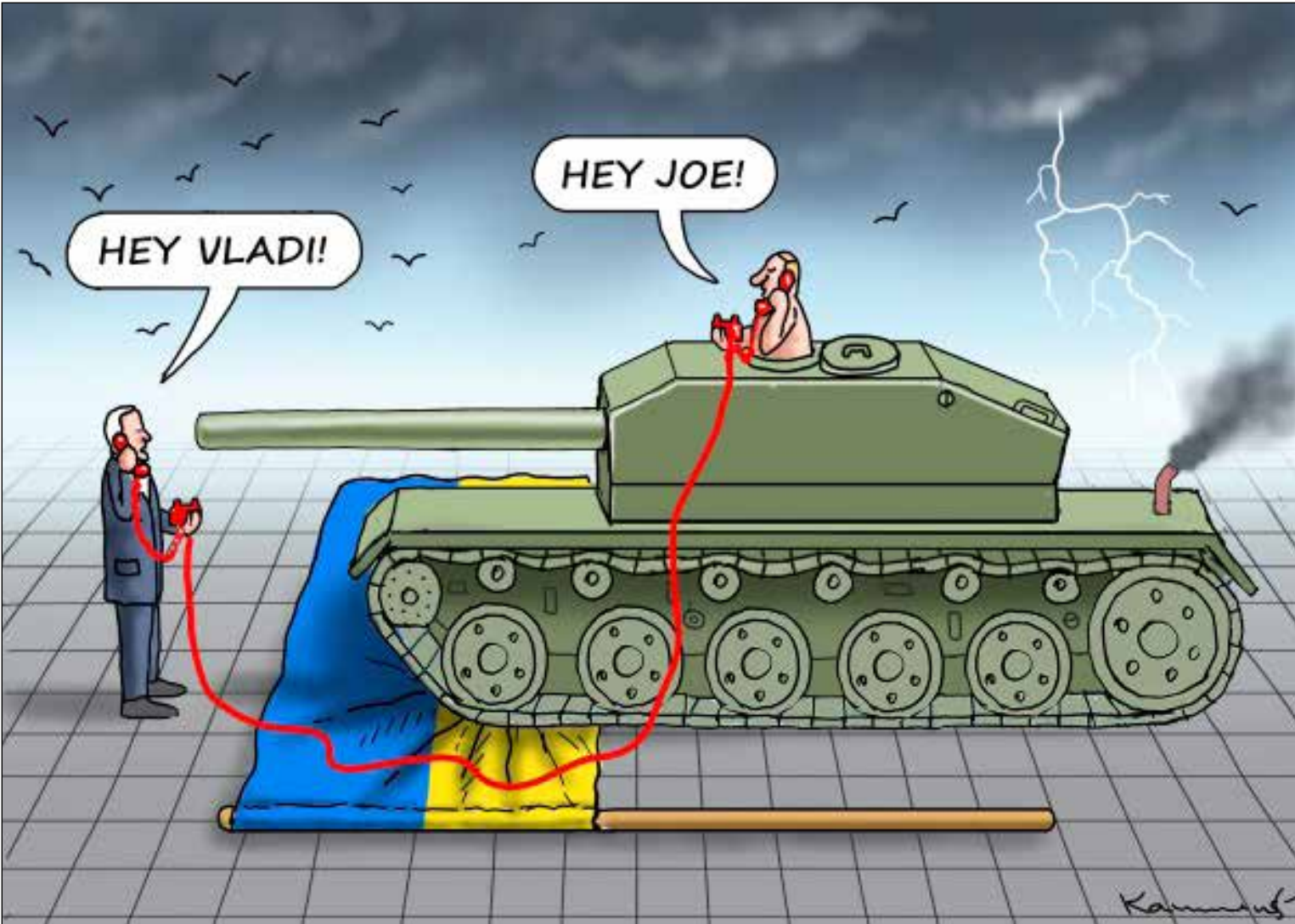
Editor, I found Scott Smith’s recent letter concerning Nancy Nordoff’s campaign contributions of some interest. I believe, however, that Mr. Smith’s definition of a “mega-donor” is just a bit broad. When I think of a mega-donor, I think of people like the late casino mogul and Republican mega-donor Sheldon Adelson who pumped \$218 million into Republican candidates during the 2020 election cycle alone. Considering that the average senate campaign now runs about \$100 million per election cycle, I seriously doubt that Ms. Nordoff’s \$12,300 contribution to Sen. Murray’s campaign bought her much influence.

Dr. Bernd Fischer
Oak Harbor

Nature

Invasive ivy needs to be controlled

Editor, I do not understand why so many people on beautiful Whidbey Island have planted or allowed to grow English ivy. This Ivy is one of the worst, most invasive, non-native species. This greedy, infernal plant never stops growing. It will climb 50 or more feet anywhere it can. It will smother any type of plant or tree it attaches itself to. It makes me so sad to see it freely growing in the



Coupeville city park, on Madrona Way, on Broadway and in so many other places around the town. By the way, ivy is a good habitat for rodents, snails and slugs. Please, if you care for our poor native plants, cut that ivy at the base of the plants and/or spray it with Crossbow and KleenUp. Trust me, it will eventually kill it. Give our beautiful natives a chance.

Luie Ferrer
Coupeville

COVID
Omicron may be a blessing in disguise

Editor, Allen McPheeters thinks “badder” is a bad word, but he’s correct to note that the Omnicron variant of Covid-19 is less of a threat. The real “badder” news is that it is more contagious but significantly less harmful, while leaving immu-

nity in its wake. But isn’t that what vaccines do? Being highly contagious, Omnicron may be a blessing in disguise. It could bring the herd immunity we need, do it with no appointments required, no politics involved, no objections considered, and best of all without a deficit-swelling, inflation-generating, government-tax price tag. Of course, the national news media will probably take a hit. Alarm bell ringing talk shows and prognosticators won’t have much to talk about.

But then health insurers won’t be able to use it to increase premiums. Already the prophets of gloom and doom have shifted from talking about “death rates” to “case rates” in order to make things sound serious. But will they ever admit that high rates of Omnicron could make Covid slide silently into history? The best “badder” news is that the day may come when we can kiss masks goodbye.

Al Williams
Oak Harbor

THE STAFF

PUBLISHER
RJ Benner
ronald.benner@whidbeynewsgroup.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Kim Winjum
kwinjum@whidbeynewsgroup.com

EDITOR
Jessie Stensland
jstensland@whidbeynewsgroup.com

REPORTERS
Kira Erickson
kerickson@whidbeynewsgroup.com

Karina Andrew
karina.andrew@whidbeynewsgroup.com

MARKETING REPRESENTATIVES
Nora Durand
ndurand@whidbeynewsgroup.com

Fernando Durand
fernando.durand@whidbeynewsgroup.com

PROOFREADER
Harry Anderson

WHIDBEY News-Times

Published each Wednesday & Saturday at 800 S.E. Barrington Drive
Oak Harbor, WA 98277
(360) 675-6611 • (360) 679-2695 fax
Mailing address: P.O. Box 2520, Oak Harbor, WA 98277
www.whidbeynewstimes.com • www.southwhidbeyrecord.com

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Editor, Whidbey News Group
P.O. Box 2520, Oak Harbor, WA 98277
or email to editor@whidbeynewsgroup.com