

OUR READERS' OPINIONS

UB 4-10-19

Don't base annexation on social, economic justice

I would like to respond to Walla Walla City Council member Riley Clubb's recent letter to your paper regarding the proposed annexation/development located between Kendall and Cottonwood roads.

The annexation of this large parcel should not be based on a desire for social and economic justice (laudable as that may be) but rather on current facts and facts that may come forth in the application for development that will proceed annexation concurrent with a desire to achieve what is best for the people of Walla Walla.

The city's own 2040 Master Plan recommends development proceed with caution on the southside due to flooding danger. The 2006 geotechnical study confirmed problems and the 2017 study showed additional problems.

Drainage is a major concern and should not be dismissed. It has also been pointed out in other letters to the editor that in addition to drainage concerns there are concerns with traffic, traffic safety near schools, density and the overall aesthetic of our community.

All of these things need to be considered along with needs for affordable housing.

City Development Services Director Elizabeth Chamberlain by her own admission says that the city can lose 15-20 percent on every dollar it spends on residential annexations. This is a very large development for our city.

The impact on the city with up to a 20 percent loss on every dollar it spends for this project will most likely impact other pressing needs. Needs like street repair, sidewalks, homeless shelters, etc. In addition, can the city take on the liability to current and future home owners in this area?

I have always known the Bachtold property would be developed. What many others and I object to is how the city is proceeding and some attitudes that seem to ignore valid concerns as noted over the need to pursue a social agenda.

I urge all the City Council members to carefully review any and all applications for development to make sure that those living now and in the future on the southside of Walla Walla have all the issues (drainage, traffic, traffic safety, density, esthetics, economic costs) addressed satisfactorily.

Jonathan A. Bruhn
Walla Walla