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# OPINIONS

## Publishers:

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The Beacon is published on Mondays and Thursdays to serve the communities of West Volusia.

This page reflects this newspaper's commitment to providing an open forum for the opinions of the people of West Volusia. We do not censor opinions with which we do not agree. The opinions expressed on this page — except in our own Editorials — are those of the columnists, letter-writers and cartoonists. They are not necessarily the opinions of the editors of The Beacon.

## GET INVOLVED

West Volusia  
government  
meetings  
July 8-11

MONDAY,  
JULY 8

### Deltona City Commission Workshop

8:30 a.m. at City Hall,  
City Commission Cham-  
bers, 2345 Providence Blvd.  
Topic: draft of proposed an-  
nual budget for fiscal year  
2013-14. Call 386-878-8100.

### DeLand City Commission Budget Workshop

5:30 p.m. at City Hall,  
City Commission Cham-  
bers, 120 S. Florida Ave.  
Call 386-626-7000.

TUESDAY,  
JULY 9

### Deltona City Commission Workshop

8:30 a.m. at City Hall,  
City Commission Cham-  
bers, 2345 Providence Blvd.  
Topic: draft of proposed an-  
nual budget for fiscal year  
2013-14. Call 386-878-8100.

### Volusia County Planning and Land Development Regulation Commission

9 a.m. in the Thomas C.  
Kelly Administration Center,  
County Council Chambers,  
123 W. Indiana Ave., DeLand.  
Call Yolanda Somers at  
386-943-7059, ext. 12777.

### DeLand City Commission Budget Workshop

5:30 p.m. at City Hall,  
City Commission Cham-  
bers, 120 S. Florida Ave.  
Call 386-626-7000.

### Orange City Council

7 p.m. at Town Hall Annex,  
City Council Chambers, 201 N.  
Holly Ave. Call 386-775-5404.

### Pierson Town Council

7:30 p.m. at Town Hall, 106 N.  
Center St. Call 386-749-2661.

WEDNESDAY,  
JULY 10

### Volusia Soil and Water Conservation District Board

3:30 p.m. at 101 Heaven's  
Gate Road, Suite F, DeLand.  
Call 386-985-4037, ext. 3.

### DeLand City Commission Budget Workshop

5:30 p.m. at City Hall,  
City Commission Cham-  
bers, 120 S. Florida Ave.  
Call 386-626-7000.

THURSDAY,  
JULY 11

### Volusia County Council

9 a.m. in the Thomas C.  
Kelly Administration Center,  
County Council Chambers,  
123 W. Indiana Ave., DeLand.  
Call Marcy Zimmerman at  
386-736-5920, ext. 12398.

### DeLand City Commission Budget Workshop

5:30 p.m. at City Hall,  
City Commission Cham-  
bers, 120 S. Florida Ave.  
Call 386-626-7000.

### Lake Helen City Commission

7 p.m. at City Hall,  
327 S. Lakeview Drive.  
Call 386-228-2121.

## Fire fee targets wrong group

By Morgan B. Gilreath Jr.

A letter from James L. McDonald published in the June 25 *Wall Street Journal*, titled "Constitutional Threats Trump Terror," states, "... as Abraham Lincoln once warned: 'If destruction be our lot, we ourselves must be its author and finisher. As a nation of free men, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.'

"If we allow ourselves to shrug off an unconstitutional NSA intrusion into American life, we are cutting our own throats. If we are willing to surrender our constitutional rights in order to gain a little security, we are deserving of neither."

This Lincoln quote directly correlates to the recent local-government discussions about changing the way we pay for Fire Services from the property tax to

## Guest Commentary

a "fee" charged to all property owners.

While it is true that moving those costs from the property tax to a fee structure will lower millage rates, it will also increase costs to citizens who currently have constitutional exemptions from paying (some or all) property taxes. "Getting money from those not paying property taxes" has been stated as one of the reasons to create this fee structure.

A prime example would be the newly enacted "Low-Income Seniors Exemption" on which a number of cities and counties are voting. If that were approved

along with the creation of fire fees, a jurisdiction would be voting to give their low-income seniors a tax break — with great fanfare about caring for them — and then, at the same time, creating a new fee structure that will require them to pay more taxes. (I refer to all payments to government as "taxes.")

Making low-income seniors, veterans disabled in combat, blind people and others with legitimate exemptions pay flat fees because they legitimately pay less than others in property taxes is just plain disturbing to me.

In addition to the constitutional issues, the regressive

nature of fees (taxes that cost poor people a higher percentage of their income than percentage taxes, like the property tax) adds another dimension to the problem.

Those targeted in this "fee versus tax" discussion (our blind, disabled veterans, newly exempted low-income seniors, etc.) belong to a protected species under our state constitution. Let's don't include them in the hunt for tax money.

In other words, protect the protected. In my opinion, the "fee versus tax" discussion needs a lot of research and public scrutiny before we put it in the oven.

— *Gilreath is the Volusia County property appraiser. His office sets the taxable value of property in the county and administers various property-tax exemptions.*

## Celebrating our tribalism



VERITAS  
William C.  
Hall

Our July Fourth holiday is a celebration of national tribalism. It is the nature of our species, perhaps of all creatures, to compete and ultimately to dominate. Collaboration is tolerated only in the context of enhancing group competitiveness, and thus tribalism is a formation predicated on fear, avarice, revenge and triumphalism. Even the family tribe has internal divisions as siblings compete for parental attention and favor.

Religions are also a form of tribal organization and identity. Just as political parties separate friends and family into competing groups, so it is among denominations, within as well as between, the primary religious organizations. Ultimately, do-

minion is the endgame.

Nevertheless, collaboration is the means by which "civilization" advances. The foundations of agriculture are based on collaboration. The hunting and gathering of primitive man was a brutal competition for food and shelter, with the constant migration to find new hunting grounds. Eventually humans embraced agriculture as a better way to manage food and water resources, but the consequent territorial issues advanced still other formations with intra-tribal as well as intertribal strife.

Thus, when we are not murdering our fellow human beings, we are subjugating them in various ways, dependence being one of the more effective devices. The controller of access to food and water wields great power, and thus political culture was born when agriculture enabled group interaction, ultimately leading to territorial and political structures headed by kings, pharaohs and other exalted manipulators — most

claiming divine authority.

It was Thomas Hobbes, one of the fathers of modern political philosophy, who defined "the state of nature" as the ultimate "liberty" in a life that was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In the absence of consensual law and order, everyone would have unlimited "freedoms," including the freedom to pillage, rape, and murder within an endless "war of all against all." To avoid this, we consent to the "social contract" wherein a civil society obtains a degree of security in return for the surrender of our absolute freedom of action. What Hobbes (and all of his successors) failed to address is the inherently selfish nature of man and the endless competition to dominate all in exchange for some "safety."

Of course, much of our tribalism is expressed in nonlethal competitions that we call entertainments (sports and other benign contests). However, it should be self-evident that collaboration is not a widely practiced ethos. Christianity endorses

collaboration over competition, but few Christians fully embrace altruism, choosing instead to focus on the promise of divine forgiveness.

Ironically, the charitable ethos of Marxist theory ("From each according to his ability to each according to his need") is today demonized by self-proclaimed Christians, whose faith foundations were totally communal (see the Book of Acts).

The reality is that we are hard-wired to cherish competition over self-sacrifice and compassion. Therefore, we honor the sacrifices of the warrior but seldom laud the sacrifices of the benevolent. Indeed, we esteem the triumph of ruthless competition in commerce above the collaborative efforts of benevolence (subsidizing "moochers").

On a planet of 7 billion people (and growing), the competition for supremacy/survival will grow ever more ruthless.

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William C. Hall. Send email to carderw@cfl.rr.com.

## Letters to the Editor

### Don't change Orange City's name

Editor, *The Beacon*:

I just wanted to voice my opinion on the article about changing the name of Orange City, Fla.

I think Orange City Council Member Michael Wright should leave well enough alone. Look at all the personal and public documents that would have to be changed. Who's going to pay for that?

There are more important things to worry about! After all, it's been more than 100 years since the city was named!

I was born and raised here and do not want the name changed.

Melissa Gardner  
Orange City

### Keep the parks safe for small dogs

Editor, *The Beacon*:

As a taxpayer and a responsible pet owner, I feel I must bring to the attention of other dog lovers the lack of responsible owners visiting our dog parks. They disregard signage, and disrespect our right to a safe environment for our dogs, as well.

I know dog parks are not just social places for our dogs, but have become the local pickup and social-meet-up place for their owners, as well. I know we, as well as our dogs, are social creatures, and that dog parks were created for just this reason.

I see that signs are posted regarding the amount of weight for each side of the dog park, so the dogs

are segregated into "large" or "small." However, the postings are disregarded. So far, I have paid medical damages twice because irresponsible large-dog owners have brought their large supposedly nonaggressive dogs over to the small-dog side of the park.

On June 27, I got out of my car with my dogs, and before we were even able to get into the gate on the small-dog side, a large dog came lunging at the fence. I called my dogs back to me, as I was not going to place my dogs at risk again.

The owner of the dog looked up and stated, "Oh, my dog would not hurt any dog." I stated I had been told this by other dog-owners on two occasions, and the last time, my miniature pinscher was attacked. The owner of the large dog just stood there, and did not even move to take her

dogs to the large-dog side of the park.

I had no choice but to place my dogs back in the car and leave. I am tired of paying taxes and not being allowed to take my dogs to the local dog parks. And, that this has become an unsafe environment for myself and my dogs.

When my dogs were attacked on both occasions, the owners never took responsibility for their dogs, and when I contacted the local authorities, they were not sure whom I should report the incident to. This last time, on the weekend, the local authorities gave me the number for the Volusia County Parks and Recreation Division so I could contact them on Monday.

Please know this may not be an every-time occurrence of large dogs being in the small-dog side, but it is becoming

more of the norm.

I do understand that sometimes there are situations where old large dogs come to the small-dog side of the park so they, too, can feel safe and unencumbered to roam. However, large dogs that are active need to stay within their own environment, so small-dog owners also have a safe place for their dogs to enjoy.

Dian Joy  
Orange City

### Write a letter

Want to write a letter to the editor? Use our online form. Click "Opinions" at www.beacononlinenews.com. Or, mail your letter, marked "for publication," to 110 W. New York Ave., DeLand, FL 32720. You may also send an email to info@beacononlinenews.com.

Your letters  
are welcome  
for this page

The Beacon's Opinions page is an open forum for the community. Your letters on any topic are welcome. Letters are not censored because of the opinions expressed. You must include your name, your telephone number, and your town of residence; only your name and town will be printed. Address and e-mail are on this page. Thank you.

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