OPINION

J. Keith Moyer, Publisher and Editor
John Kerr, Editorial Page Editor
Opinion desk: 702-383-0441

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THE REVIEW-JOURNAL'S VIEW

Stop stalling and settle the Badlands dispute

Las Vegas needs to quit sending good money after Badlands.

Last Wednesday, the Las Vegas City Council voted to appeal one of its four Badlands cases to the Nevada Supreme Court. The multiple cases all stem from the same long-running dispute. The city repeatedly blocked developer Yohan Lowie from building on the shuttered golf course. A group of wealthy and influential citizens in the nearby Queensridge neighborhood objected to the construction.

But the city previously zoned the golf course for residential construction. That means Mr. Lowie and his company, EHB Cos., had a property right to build on the land. When the city refused to allow construction, Mr. Lowie sued.

This case was always straightforward. What the city did was a textbook example of a taking under the Fifth Amendment. When the government takes someone's property, either through eminent domain or denying their property rights, the government must compensate the person.

Unsurprisingly, the city has lost repeatedly in District Court and in the state Supreme Court.

"When a governmental agency acts in a manner that removes all the economic value from privately owned land, just compensation must be paid," Supreme Court Justice Douglas Herndon wrote in a unanimous ruling from April.

In a memo this summer, Las Vegas City Manager Mike Janssen estimated the city could owe more than $500 million. That would be a significant portion of the city's annual budget. He warned the city could freeze hiring, delay planned projects and even sell city assets.

The City Council's next move is obvious. Beg Mr. Lowie to settle. He's even shown a willingness to do so. In 2022, he agreed to settle with the city for $64 million and land-use entitlements. The city should have jumped at that proposal, but it made a late change that scuttled the deal.

The city has spent more than $6 million on outside legal counsel in this case. It approved another $500,000 in August. It's unclear why the city needed to spend so much. Presumably, its in-house lawyers were perfectly capable of losing repeatedly.

Just two City Council members, Victoria Seaman and Nancy Brune, voted against the proposal to appeal the ruling. Ms. Seaman, who is running for mayor, has worked for years to resolve this issue. Her past warnings look prophetic. Other council members, including Mayor Carolyn Goodman, should swallow their pride and admit Ms. Seaman has been right all along.

If Las Vegas City Council members want to gamble, they should do it with their own money. Their Badlands foolishness has already saddled taxpayers with steep losses.

The views expressed above are those of the Las Vegas Review-Journal. All other opinions expressed on the Opinion and Commentary pages are those of the individual artist or author indicated.

LETTERS

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P.O. Box 70
Las Vegas, NV 89125
Fax 702-383-4676

East or west?

In a recent interview, Vice President Kamala Harris stated she wanted to change the direction that this country has gone "in the last decade." Ten years ago, Barack Obama would be president for 2½ more years. Donald Trump was president for the next four years. Ms. Harris was in the Senate for the same four years. For the past 3½ years that Joe Biden has been president, Ms. Harris has been the vice president.

So we had a Democrat president for six years of the past decade, and Ms. Harris was in a position of power for 7½ of those years. Which direction does Kamala want to take the country in now?
Anthony Palmer
Las Vegas

Solar mandate

Climate change and global warming impacts are constantly in the news. Federal policies might try to deal with the problem, but so far have had little major impact. Electric vehicles are the ongoing news-maker in solving the problem, but they still require energy to run. Where is all this additional electricity to power the "Electrical Era" going to come from?

We in Southern Nevada have the solution: solar-produced electrical energy. Mother Nature has blessed us with lots of sunshine and the solar energy that can come from it. But are we really doing our best to take advantage of it? Except for large solar energy fields on public lands (some of which are controversial) there are some smaller private installations, too. However, where are solar installations on private houses?

Look around Las Vegas at the small number of solar panel installations on roofs. This is especially notable on new construction. The answer to future electrical energy needs is right in our faces. All new construction should be mandated to have solar. What is an additional $20,000 to $25,000 in housing costs when the median price for a new home is $470,000? It is time to quit talking "green" and start doing more to "see green."
Richard Augulis
Las Vegas



MICHAEL RAMIREZ
EDITORIAL CARTOONIST

"The presidential campaigns agree on debate rules."

Review-Journal editorial cartoonist Michael Ramirez is a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize and a four-time winner of the Sigma Delta Chi Award. Contact him at mramirez@reviewjournal.com.



More about feeling good than environmentalism

INSTEAD of using fossil fuels, we're told to use "clean" energy: wind, solar or hydropower.

Hydro is the most reliable. Unlike wind and sunlight, it flows steadily. But now, environmental groups want to destroy dams that create hydropower. "Breach those dams," an activist shouts in my new video. "Now is the time, our fish are on the line!"

The activists have targeted four dams on the Snake River in Washington. They claim the dams are driving salmon to extinction. It's true that dams once killed lots of salmon. Pregnant fish need to swim upriver to have babies, and their babies swim downriver to the ocean. Suddenly, dams were in the way. Salmon population dropped sharply.

But that was in the 1970s. Today, most salmon make it past the dam without trouble. Fish-protecting innovations such as fish ladders and spillways guide most of the salmon away from the turbines that generate



JOHN STOSSEL
COMMENTARY

electricity.

"Between 96 percent and 98 percent of the salmon successfully pass each dam," says Todd Myers, environmental director at the Washington Policy Center.

Even federal agencies now say we can leave dams alone and fish will be fine. But environmental groups don't raise money by acknowledging "good" news. "Snake River Salmon Are in Crisis," reads a headline from Earthjustice. Gullible media fall for it.

The Snake River is the "most endangered in the country!" claimed the evening news anchor.

"That's simply not true," Myers explained. "All you have to do is look at the actual population numbers to know that that's absurd."

Utterly absurd. In recent years, salmon populations are higher than they were in the 1980s and '90s. "They make these claims," Myers said, "because they know people will believe them. … They don't want to believe that their favorite environmental group is dishonest."

But many are. In 1999, environmental groups bought an ad in The New York Times saying "salmon … will be extinct by 2017."

I invited 10 activist groups that want to destroy dams to come to my studio and defend their claims about salmon extinction. Not one agreed.

Politicians and activists want to tear down Snake River dams though they generate tons of electricity. "Almost the same amount as all of the wind and solar turbines in Washington state," Myers said.

"Imagine if I told the environmental community we need to tear down every wind turbine and every solar panel. They would lose their minds. But that's essentially what they're advocating by tearing down Snake River dams."

Unlike wind or solar, hydro "can turn on and off whenever it's needed. Destroying hydro and replacing it with wind makes absolutely no sense. It will do serious damage to our electrical grid."

He continued: "If you want to spend $35 billion on salmon, there's lots of things we can do that would have a real impact. … (Reduce the population of) seals and sea lions," he added, "The Washington Academy of Sciences says that unless we reduce the populations, we will not recover salmon."

But environmentalists don't want people to hunt sea lions or seals. Instead, they push for destruction of dams. "Because it's sexy and dramatic, it sells," Myers said. "It's more about feeling good than environmental results."

Every Tuesday at JohnStossel.com, Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom.

ALL X-CITED

The Opinion page guide to tweets and responses

@reviewjournal



Greg Price
@greg_price11
took notes:
(Joe) Biden: "I'm not able to go out in the crowds anymore. The Secret Service doesn't let me." Reporter: "Why not?" Biden: "They say it's too dangerous." ▶



Chef Andrew Gruel
@ChefGruel
notices slippage:
Since he is no longer the candidate, they have stopped giving him his medicine. ▶



Billy Ray Kay
@billyraykay
lives in Florida:
It would be embarrassing for the Secret Service to have to issue a silver alert.