

# Opinions

OUR VIEW

## Legal notices should remain in print

Late last year, Rochester's Charter Commission — the 15-member group that regularly reviews and updates the city's charter — recommended that Rochester no longer publish its new city ordinances in the Post Bulletin. Or any newspaper, for that matter.

"The official record still belongs with the city's records, not the fact that the paper has published it," argued commission member Bob Haeussinger. "It just so happened that they published it, but that isn't the binding document."

That might be true, although that charter change would apparently supersede a Minnesota statute that requires city councils to publish approved ordinances in the local newspaper.

But the phrase "just so happened that they published it" completely misses the mark.

The change — local governments no longer publishing city ordinances — would mean

less government transparency. More questions regarding legitimacy of the information. Less public access. Fewer checks and balances.

"The purpose of state and federal public notice requirements is to publicize information about government actions, so its citizens can make well-informed decisions and be active participants in a democratic society," according to the Minnesota Newspaper Association. "Government has an affirmative duty to provide this information so it is transparent and easily accessible."

Sure, we have a vested monetary interest here. Last year, the city spent just more than \$13,000 publishing city ordinances, and just less than \$10,000 in 2016.

But we strongly believe in the power of print — and in the power of the PB's influential online presence — when it comes to the public's right to know, especially concerning our local government.

And when the public wants to know, they seek out the PB.

Our audits show that roughly 70,000 people read the print version of every Post Bulletin. The Post Bulletin website — where this legal information is free, archived, and easily accessible to all — gets 435,000 average users. Per month.

And it's growing. Newspapers are alive and well in Minnesota, according to the MNA, and print circulation has remained strong. There are more than 330 newspapers in Minnesota. In 2016, MNA members printed and distributed more than 7 million newspapers every week. That's one newspaper for every three households in Minnesota.

Visits to newspaper websites have skyrocketed as well. Visits to government websites are infinitesimal compared to newspaper readership in print and online. (And the MNA hosts a state of the art, statewide website, MNpublicnotice.com, which reposts public notices at no cost.)

**ON SATURDAY:** Thumbs up to Matthew Hurt and 3,000 points.

com, which reposts public notices at no cost.)

During the Charter Commission meeting, a few board members questioned whether the city's digital-only model would serve as an effective legal public archive. They questioned whether an online-only model would be safe from things like hacking and data loss and lack of access.

The answer to those questions, of course, is no.

Like virtually all government websites, Rochester's includes various disclaimers that their website cannot be relied upon for legal purposes.

The Rochester Public Library, meanwhile, houses a physical archive of the Post Bulletin dating back decades. You may have to learn to use

**YOUR PROPERTY TAXES JUST WENT UP OR HADN'T YOU HEARD?**

Search public notices published in local newspapers from across the state in one convenient place.

Stay in the know at:  
**www.mnpublicnotice.com**

MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION A public service provided by Minnesota Newspapers and the Minnesota Newspaper Association.

microfilm, but still. Deputy City Attorney Dave Goslee said he plans to request that the city council hold a public hearing on the topic on Jan. 23.

We'll be there. But not on behalf of our-

selves. We'll be there on behalf of those 70,000 daily print readers, and those 5.2 million annual online visitors to PB.com, and those people searching our online or in-library archives.



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Hruska, Hickey are outstanding public servants

I am writing to appropriately recognize two outstanding Rochester City Council members as they retire from their elected positions.



Hruska Hickey

Ed Hruska has been a thoughtful, committed, respectful, studied and common-sense member of our council for 16 years. His contributions to good government, his honorable style of service and his leadership towards the orderly advancement of our city have been

outstanding. Ed Hruska truly gave our city his best.

Mark Hickey, a retired electrical engineer and U.S. Army colonel, has served our city for 5½ years with steady, thoughtful and committed leadership. Mark studied the issues and voted his convictions always with the best interest of the City of Rochester and its citizens at heart. He provided important and appreciated steadiness during times of great change.

Rochester has been fortunate to have been served by these two very special public servants. We thank them for their service and wish them well in all their futures hold.

Dave Senjem, ROCHESTER

#### Castle Quilters' creations made with love, dedication

What's all the humbug about 125 Live? All I can say is it's the friendliest place for seniors to gather! So much to do and meet people. Every department does their very best, always busy, always there for you.

I have to say the Castle Quilters are the best ever group of ladies who are gifted and ever so giving. The items they have in

their room are endless and beautiful. Every stitch of their items are made of love and dedication. Look them up, they're willing to help in any way they can. A beautiful group of ladies who are very special. Thank you ladies and 125 Live. Keep up the great work!

Bonnie Broton, DODGE CENTER

#### Build the wall with American steel

I feel as though I have a solution to the border barrier juggernaut. The Democrats should offer the \$5 billion only if they build the wall

with steel from the five steel plants that have opened since Trump became president.

Buzz Christison, PLAINVIEW

#### We must willing to share our bounty

I am shouldering my share of the blame. We are all to blame.

For refugees being released to the streets on cold nights, for refugees, including children, held in inhumane holding cells, for 2 young children dying in Border Patrol custody. For Federal employees (Border Patrol) being given grossly inadequate facilities and staff, hindering their ability to provide humane treatment. For our country being ill prepared for thousands of refugees despite knowing of their migration well in advance.

NGOs and volunteers are working to exhaustion and millions of citizens donate funds to provide the care and shelter that is the right of every human being. (See United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially #25.)

I volunteered at Annunciation House, an El

Paso shelter for refugees, for 12 months. I was aware of the crowded, cold conditions in the holding cells, the minimal amounts of food and water provided, many children arriving at the shelters with coughs. I did not do enough to educate others about the inhumane conditions.

We in the United States are better than this. We can disagree over the advantages and disadvantages of immigration, but we cannot hesitate to provide basic human rights. We must talk with each other, be open to concerns about drugs and violence, be open to the richness of the mix of cultures in the U.S., be aware of the benefits of hard-working newcomers, be willing to share our bounty.

We must ask our legislators to establish practical and humane immigration laws.

Jane Greiling, ORONOCHO

## Are we brave enough for the new world of reproduction?

A new medical device may change almost everything we think about making babies. It might also sweep away the current controversy over abortion while creating new ethical dilemmas. We speak of the artificial womb.

Also called a biobag, an artificial womb is a big plastic sack filled with synthetic amniotic fluid. A tube going into the bag supplies the fluid, and another tube drains it.

Artificial wombs have been used to bring lambs to full term outside the mama sheep's belly. It's just a matter of time before the artificial womb is ready to gestate a human fetus.

The biobag's developers say their only goal is to help premature babies thrive. Instead of using mechanical ventilation and other equipment to salvage those born much too early, nurses in neonatal units could put the premature babies in bags mimicking the pre-birth environment. That would allow the baby to continue developing as peacefully as it would in its mother's womb. Biobags could also save extremely premature babies from dying or suffering brain damage, lung disease and other serious conditions.

You see where this could go. It could go to ectogenesis. A fixture of science fiction, ectogenesis is the growing of an embryo or fetus outside the mother's body. The 1999 movie "The Matrix" featured a network of biobags with fetuses growing inside.

Right now, scientists are able to nurture embryos



FROMA HARROP

conceived through in vitro fertilization for almost 14 days. Two weeks is the voluntary limit placed on human embryonic research because that is when the "primitive streak" — a forerunner of the nervous system — appears. There are new calls to extend the cutoff to 28 weeks.

It's inevitable. Embryos grown in dishes will eventually be put into biobags. Baby made, uterus not required.

What does this mean for society? Where do we begin? Women would be spared the pain, physical risks and economic losses of child bearing. Gay men — or anyone, really — could have children without securing the services of a female's womb.

The abortion debate would change radically. For example, a state could require that women having abortions transfer the fetus to an artificial womb. The woman could keep the resulting baby or let someone adopt it. Such a system, one imagines, would lead to a large supply of adoptable infants, perhaps making more babies than there are parents.

What are the possible objections to replacing the human womb with extra-uterine devices? Many may

find the idea distasteful and unnatural. They may argue that removing the physical tie between mother and baby could undermine their emotional bond. (Others would counter that fathers and adoptive parents connect just as closely with their children.) Some say a developing fetus needs to hear the heartbeat and voice of the mother, but those sounds could be reproduced and provided.

The subject of what happens to embryos often produces emotional responses. Consider the debate over using embryos for embryonic stem cell research. (Never mind that IVF clinics routinely discard thousands of unused embryos.)

Scientists can already manipulate genes to make "designer babies." Soon they will be able to gestate them in biobags. Any number of startling scenarios arise.

Humans wanting large numbers of children via one partner are currently constrained by the fact that women usually bear only one child at a time. What would stop rich people from paying for a roomful of artificial wombs producing, say, 20 children at once? Laws would — or could.

Before laws can be made, though, societies will have to decide what may be ethically done. And societies will disagree.

Oh, brave new world. Biotech is creating it faster than our imaginations can travel.

Follow Froma Harrop on Twitter @FromaHarrop. She can be reached at fharrop@gmail.com.

Artificial wombs have been used to bring lambs to full term outside the mama sheep's belly. It's just a matter of time before the artificial womb is ready to gestate a human fetus.

#### GOT AN OPINION? WE WANT TO HEAR IT

The Opinions page is where Post Bulletin readers share opinions and gain perspective on different points of view. Here's how to get involved.

**Letters to the editor:** We welcome letters of up to 250 words on issues in the news. Please include your name, address and daytime phone for verification. We publish a representative sampling of letters received, and those that are respectful, civil and stick to issues go to the head of the line. Letters will be edited for grammar, clarity and conciseness.

**Guest columns:** We also welcome columns on important public issues. Ideal length is up to 600 words, and we prefer guest columns that are exclusive to the Post Bulletin.

Send letters and columns to letters@postbulletin.com, or to Opinions page, Post Bulletin, 18 First Ave. SE, Rochester, MN 55904. No attachments to email, please. We encourage letter writers to include a portrait pic for use with their letters. Letters become the property of the PB and can be republished in any format.

IF IT MATTERS TO YOU, IT MATTERS TO US

POSTBULLETIN

Member of the Small Newspaper Group, Kankakee, Ill.

LEN ROBERT SMALL  
President & CEO

THOMAS P. SMALL  
Senior vice president

SALLY HENDRON  
Vice president, finance