

Protect Tualatin Parks

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In Tualatin we have an initiative ready to be voted on next March, designed to protect our parks. Surprisingly, some people and businesses disapprove of initiatives on principle. One of these people refers disparagingly to the procedure as a “direct democracy requirement,” and argues vigorously against any such initiatives.

Thomas Jefferson, by the way, wrote about the subject in 1816. He stated that people in the age of Aristotle “knew no medium between a democracy (the only pure republic, but impracticable beyond the limits of a town) and an abandonment of themselves to an aristocracy, or a tyranny, independent of the people.”



Jefferson defines a republic as a government “where the citizens cannot meet to transact their business in person.” He writes that “they alone have the right to choose the agents who shall transact it; and that, in this way a republican, or popular government, of the 2d grade of purity, may be exercised over any extent of country.”

In other words, our town of Tualatin is a place where we can indeed transact our “business in person,” directly voting March 8 on an initiative to protect our parks. A modern way of implementing Jefferson’s “only pure republic.”

Of course, initiatives are legal in Oregon and provide a legal remedy for people at large to bring about desirable change, both at state and local levels. But, on a philosophical basis, what are the reasons for opposing initiatives?

One reason from opponents is that we

should allow our elected representatives to do their job. If they don’t do a satisfactory job, we should vote them out. Unfortunately for this theory, no elections for city officials were available between January, 2009 and August, 2010. (That period began with six or so concerned protesters and culminated with 2700 signatures supporting the protection of the parks and turned in to the city elections official this recent August.) The only option during that period was the “recall,” which, at that time, we did not consider.

Now that I look back, a few of us were incredibly patient with the Tualatin City Council, which mostly ignored our concerns, beginning in January, 2009. But late in 2009, one neighbor (with help from three others) reached

200 people in our neighborhood with warning fliers. Soon after, the Tualatin City Council began the first baby step to notice the “obvious and overwhelming” fact that we really didn’t want a \$44.9 million, one-mile stretch including a traffic bridge over Tualatin Community Park. (Originally planned to cost \$95 million. Additionally providing a link between I-5 and 99W.)

Now, with our initiative, we citizens of Tualatin have moved toward “the only pure republic.” Assuredly Thomas Jefferson would agree with us.



Kathy Newcomb, has been a Tualatin resident for 22 years. She’s a retired CPA and State Auditor and has served on several city committees for over 11 years.