

Commentary

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EDITORIAL

Development in Darien has mix Brunswick needs

An interesting development is taking shape in downtown Darien that is set to reshape the riverside town's landscape.

Several blocks of downtown will be rebuilt and re-imagined by Art Lucas, owner of Lucas Properties LLC, to include a mix of uses, including condominiums, commercial space and a boutique hotel. It is a development that seems to be, for the most part, seen as a positive thing for Darien, as long as tabby ruins and an oak tree are not damaged or removed in the process.

With construction set to begin in the coming year, we wonder if Darien will see this new development come to fruition before Brunswick gets the conference center that has been in the works for nearly two decades.

We will also be interested to compare the long-term impacts of the two projects in their respective cities. Darien is getting a privately funded, multifaceted project that will lead to more people living downtown who will have more options for dining, shopping and working.

Brunswick will eventually get a publicly funded, 20,000 square-foot conference center capable of hosting around 400 people. If things go as the Urban Redevelopment Agency

leading the project plans, a roughly 90-room hotel will be built to accompany the conference center. A recent draft feasibility study suggested the hotel is needed to make the conference center successful.

A hotel might help the conference center do better financially, but that same study suggested it would be several years before a profit would be possible, and that relies on filling the center regularly.

The project in Darien is a wiser long-term proposition. It involves multiple uses for the space being built that includes people living in downtown Darien. Our bet is that in the long run, the city of Darien as a whole sees better return on investment than the city of Brunswick government does from a conference center that is now \$5 million over budget and will likely require taking on debt to complete.

It is not too late to change directions and draw back plans on the conference center into existing empty space in downtown Brunswick and find a developer willing to build a multi-use space that includes new residences and commercial space where the center is currently planned.

In the mean time, we will watch as downtown Darien is transformed and Brunswick gets meeting space it doesn't truly need.

OTHER VIEWS / STEVE BREEN



KOREAN PENINSULA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sailors only looking out for themselves, not public

I must provide my experience with the St. Simons Surf Sailor club as both a sailor and resident of Brunswick for over 15 years.

When I first inquired about the sailing club many years ago, I was shocked by the response. That day I had my boat in tow and pulled up to the SSSS gate and asked a member if he could open the gate, so I could get my boat to the beach. His response was, sorry you must be a member, can't let you in. I asked how I become a member and he said membership was full, despite many slips being open and many boats stored were in disrepair. I asked for the club's phone number and was told not to bother there's a waiting list.

As I met more people in the community, I heard similar stories from

sailors and the general public. I later learned the person I spoke to that day was in the leadership position at the surf sailors and had 10 slips reserved for himself. Recently SSSS leadership told the Glynn County Commission it takes two-plus hours to set up a Hobie Cat sail, which is completely false. In fact, many of their public comments about sailing are preposterous. These falsehoods are meant to protect their private interests and not sailors as a whole. How can a public property be managed this way?

The Coast Guard beach belongs to everyone, and we're very excited at the prospect of free public boat access for all.

**James McDonald
Brunswick**

ELECTION POLICY

Letters to the editor sent to The News from candidates for public office will not be published prior to the May 22 primary election. Letters regarding candidates will be accepted, but must be received by no later than Monday, May 13 so that letters may be published by Saturday, May 19.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters on topics of general interest to readers in Southeast Georgia by:

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Email: editor@thebrunswicknews.com Fax: 912-280-0926

Letters should be no more than 250 words in length and may be edited for clarity. Letter writers will be limited to one letter every two weeks

You must include your name, address and phone number.

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COLUMN / GEORGE WILL



The president who knew too little about the Electoral College

WASHINGTON

Among the recent garbled effusions from today's temporary president — cheer up; they are all temporary — was one that concerned something about which he might not have thought as deeply as the subject merits. During an episode of government of, by and for “Fox & Friends,” he said: He won the 2016 election “easily” but wishes the electoral vote system were replaced by direct election of presidents by popular vote. He favors this “because” — if you were expecting him to offer reasons drawn from political philosophy or constitutional theory, grow up — “to me, it's much easier to win the popular vote.”

He added, accidentally stubbing his toe on a truth, that running for president without the Electoral College would involve “a totally different campaign.” Which, he does not realize, is one reason for retaining the Electoral College.

The president's interest in all this comes from his festering grievance about losing the popular vote by five times more votes than George W. Bush lost it to Al Gore in 2000. His thinking is as murky as his syntax, but evidently he supposes that under a pure popular-vote system he would have campaigned in, say, indigo California, thereby reducing his opponent's huge margin of victory there (30 points). Perhaps. But his California campaigning might have increased her turnout, which was probably reduced by the lack of campaigning there. Who knows?

This we do know: Presidential majorities are built by the Electoral College as it has evolved, adapting to the two-party system. The Electoral College gives the parties a distribution incentive for achieving geographical and

ideological breadth while assembling a coalition of states. The electoral vote system, combined with the winner-take-all allocation of the votes in 48 of the 50 states (all but Maine and Nebraska), serves, as scholar Herbert Storing said, “to drive all interests into one of two great parties.” This discourages a destabilizing proliferation of small ideological parties and encourages the two parties “to cast their nets very widely.”

Today's president might not have noticed that America has 51 direct popular-vote presidential elections, in the states and the District of Columbia. This buttresses the federal system by having, as political scientist Martin Diamond wrote, presidential elections that are “federally democratic” rather than “nationally democratic” in registering the popular will, which is nonetheless registered. This “sends a federalizing impulse throughout our whole political process,” one that is increasingly useful as national politics continues to reduce states to the passive role of administering the national government's preferences. The 17th Amendment (direct election of senators, rather than by state legislatures) was bad enough. Who thinks there is too little centralization in American governance under today's administrative state?

In 1967, an American Bar Association commission, which recommended replacing the Electoral College with a direct popular vote, strangely criticized the electoral vote system for being, among other bad things, “ambiguous.” Actually, in close elections, including 2016's, the electoral vote system provides what Diamond called “useful amplification.” In 1960, John Kennedy won 49.7 percent of the popular vote but 56.4 percent of the electoral vote (303-219). In

2008, Barack Obama won 52.9 percent of the popular vote but 67.8 percent of the electoral vote (365-173).

Woodrow Wilson could conduct a strong first term (during which America acquired the income tax and the Federal Reserve system) partly because his 41.8 percent of the popular vote produced 81.9 percent of the electoral vote (in a contest featuring three major candidates). If what Diamond called the Electoral College's “magnifying lens” had been scrapped when the ABA commission called for this, the current president's 46 percent of the popular vote could not have been translated into 56 percent of the electoral vote (304) and President Hillary Clinton would be glad that the Electoral College had ended.

America is a “mitigated” democracy (this adjective is from James Madison, the foremost translator of democracy into institutional architecture), in which, for example, Wyoming's U.S. senators represent just 1.5 percent of the number of people that California's senators represent. American democracy, as in the Electoral College, accommodates considerations more complex than simple-minded majoritarianism.

The president who said “nobody knew that health care could be so complicated” might be astonished to learn that people were thinking deeply about the Electoral College long before the subject crossed his mind. Which it did because he managed to lose the popular vote to one of the two least-popular major-party nominees in American history, the other being today's temporary president.

George Will is a Pulitzer Prize-winning conservative political commentator. Contact him at georgewill@washpost.com.

COLUMN / STAR PARKER



Michelle Wolf vs. Mike Pence

Humor is a good and important thing.

The ability to laugh at life, to laugh at oneself, shows faith, optimism and humility. Laughter in the face of adversity is a sign of a healthy spirit.

In this sense, the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner was once a positive event.

Poking fun at the highest centers of power in Washington showed that, despite differences of opinion, our commitment to our most fundamental values — particularly our First Amendment protections for freedom of speech and religion — held us together and our sense of nationhood.

But something has happened. The common ground that held us together is shattering.

There was no humor in this year's correspondents' dinner. What pretended to be humor was politicized vulgarity driven by animosity and hate.

The attacks on members of the Trump administration by leftist comedienne Michelle Wolf were shots across a ravine — a ravine that now divides America into two sides that have so little in common, and share so few values, that it is not clear whether our national fabric can withstand the great tension pulling on it.

Wolf called Vice President Pence a “weirdo”, saying he “thinks abortion is murder, which, first of all, don't knock it till you try it. And when you

do try it really knock it. You know, you got to get that baby out of there.”

It is interesting that Wolf referred to the humanity in the mother's womb as a “baby.” If she thinks the infant is a baby, then she agrees with Mike Pence that abortion is the destruction of a distinct and unique individual.

When we cannot agree as a nation on something so fundamental as the nature and meaning of life, our national unity stands on very shaky ground. This was on display at the correspondents' dinner.

The retiring president of Planned Parenthood, Cecile Richards, is now touring the country promoting her new book in which celebrates her 12 years as head of the nation's largest abortion provider and extolling the virtues of the pro-abortion movement. Not once does she mention, per Alexandra de Sanctis in National Review, that “under her watch Planned Parenthood clinics have performed 3.5 million abortions.”

When President Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address, as the Civil War raged, he said, “Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes his aid against the other.”

Arguably our national fabric is more damaged today than then, when the nation was torn apart over the issue of slavery.

Not only do the warring sides today not “read the same Bi-

ble,” but many, probably most, do not read it, care about it, nor share any common thoughts on the existence and nature of our Creator.

According to a new Pew Research report, although 80 percent of Americans say they believe in God, just 56 percent of this 80 percent say they believe in God “as described in Bible.”

This means that only 44 percent of all Americans today believe in the God of the Bible.

In a Marist poll of January 2018, 44 percent self-identified as “pro-life” — exactly the same percentage that believe in the God of the Bible.

Perhaps one reason White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders was able to so graciously hold her composure, despite the vicious attacks directed at her at that maybe final WHCA dinner, was she knew deep inside that Michelle Wolf is the epitome of our nation's great divide, which is not a laughing matter.

Perhaps we should turn again to Lincoln who said that a “nation divided against itself cannot stand.” Per his wisdom, we might expect that we will move again to be a nation that reverses life and the God of our Bible. Or maybe we'll continue our descent into the abyss of nihilism.

Star Parker is an author and president of CURE, Center for Urban Renewal and Education. Contact her at www.urbanecure.org.