



Carmage Walls Commentary Prize

2018 Entry Form

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Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? Under 50,000

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

New Braunfels and Comal County are among the fastest growing places in the country. The county is No. 2 overall, and the city repeatedly has been in the top 10, according to census figures. With that growth comes a wealth of questions and responsibilities, and the newspaper has tried to explain and answer through a series of editorials that appear periodically when issues and topics come up. The newspaper has tried to be a leader in the community and since growth is our top topic, we keep it front and center always.



OPINION

IEWS FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE H-Z

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OUR VIEW

Veramendi project is a big deal for NB

When looking at the specifics, the Veramendi project getting underway north of Loop 337 is a big deal in more ways than one. We even referred to it as “massive” in Tuesday’s front-page story.

And massive it is even if you simply look at the numbers: 2,500 acres, about 5,000 homes, 400 acres of public parks, a public elementary school to house its and other students, a river resort/hotel, a university, a hospital, retail locations. ...

That list features more than what many Texas towns already have.

Veramendi is so big that developers expect it to take 15 to 20 years and several phases to complete.

Those facts and numbers are staggering, but they again prove that New Braunfels and Comal County are extremely attractive places to live and work.

Companies want to locate here. Individuals and families want to move here. Folks continue to discover what we’ve known for a long time. This is a great place consisting of great people.

The first phase, which includes the school, college campus, medical center, retail space, parks and 600 of the dwellings, is what is starting. In fact, the school is expected to be ready this fall for the 2017-18 academic year.

We’ve all seen the growth that has made its way up and down the Interstate 35 corridor in recent years. We all know our fair city is smack-dab in the middle of it.

And, we all know the potential risks rapid growth brings with it.

However, there are huge advantages to growth as well, and we believe the Veramendi project has been properly planned and will be a big boost for our community and economy.

Our city’s leaders have partnered with ASA Properties to make this deal happen. They’ve discussed water, land and other key issues to make sure everything is in place and that the development will proceed and progress as planned.

It appears all the “I’s” have been dotted and all the “T’s” crossed.

We’re excited and anxious to see this project progress, and we believe it will be a good thing for New Braunfels. And although we understand the concerns some of our residents may have, growth – if properly planned – is a good thing.

Our city already has proven that over and over again, and this is just the latest piece of the expanding puzzle.



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- By fax: (830) 606-3413 • In person: 549 Landa St., New Braunfels

OUTSIDE VIEW

Congressman Smith is wrong on his healthcare vote

As a fiscal conservative, I am shocked Congressman Smith voted for a national health care plan that even President Trump considers ‘mean’. We must do better.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the legislation Congressman Smith voted for will cause twenty three million of us to lose our health insurance, most will be pre-retirement seniors like me. This is not good for our economy and it is not good for those that become sick.

Under this legislation, states will also have the option to allow private insurance companies to increase premiums for pre-existing conditions if a family has not had continuous health insurance. Age will make no difference.

Besides the Congressional Budget Office, the American Medical Association, American Cancer Society, and AARP have also condemned the bill Congressman Smith voted for. They state, the legislation will cause the number



BOB WOLF

Bob Wolf is a guest columnist and a resident of New Braunfels

of uninsured to skyrocket.

In fact, the AMA, our nation’s largest medical doctor organization, stated on May 3, 2017, “Americans with pre-existing conditions will be stuck in second-class health care coverage – if they are able to obtain coverage at all.”

Experts further estimate insurance premiums for a 64 year old earning \$28,500 would rise from \$1,700 to \$16,100 per year under the bill. There is no way anyone earning \$28,500 could ever afford to pay \$16,100 per year for health insurance.

Benefits such as lab testing costs, ambulance service, mental health ser-

vices, and maternity benefits required by the current national health program can be dropped.

Opiate pain management medication reimbursements for the critically ill can be reduced.

Medicaid subsidies for long-term care facilities will be drastically cut.

I understand why some do not like the Affordable Health Care Act. However, the program has provided health insurance for the first time to twenty million American children and adults who previously had no access to affordable insurance. Pre-existing condition coverage has been provided to every American for the first time in our history.

These are amazing achievements. Although our current system has weaknesses, it has been a lifesaver for many.

When Medicare was first introduced, it too was roundly criticized. However, Congress kept working to improve it. We need to do the same with our cur-

rent health care system.

Henry Ford never switched from Model T production to building cars for the affluent. Instead Henry Ford kept improving the manufacturing process so every American could afford a car.

We need to do the same thing; improve our national health care system so every American can afford to see a doctor or take a medicine. If some want to repeal Obamacare that is fine, but do not hurt the American public in the process.

The Bible says in Matthew 25:45, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’

Allowing 23 million Americans to lose their medical insurance and allowing premiums to rise for those with pre-existing conditions is not helping the least among us.

If we stay positive, I am confident we can create a world-class health care system.



ALL DAY, EVERY DAY
 Voice your opinion on the biggest stories of the day and comment on columns and letters to the editor 24 hours a day, every day at herald-zeitung.com.

Most read stories

Local News: Justice for the 13

Obituary: Jacob Caleb Sanchez

Obituary: Rosalinda “Rosie” Gallegos

Local News: Police nab suspects in local home burglary

Local News: Zebra mussel discovery in CL has TPWD worried

Most commented stories

Opinion: The war coal: Notes from the front lines

Opinion: The US needs courageous statesmen to fix healthcare

Obituary: Kellee DeAnn Eismann-Quinn

Opinion: Make the most out of your small living spaces

Local News: Officials discuss return of ordinance

NCAA is right to hold colleges accountable

Beaumont Enterprise. June 19.

Apparently, there’s more confusion in college sports than most fans realized. Then again, maybe troubled schools like the University of Louisville and Baylor University aren’t trying hard enough to find answers.

The interim president of Louisville is dismayed that his school’s college basket-

ball program has been severely punished for, ahem, hiring strippers and prostitutes to entertain prospective recruits.

“This ruling is unfair to Coach Rick Pitino,” Greg Postrel said, “who we believe could not have known about the illicit activities.”

Postrel went on to offer a convoluted theory as to how his misunderstood coach could have been

kept in the dark for a problem that should really be blamed on someone else: “(Pitino) delegated responsibility for monitoring the former operations director to his assistant coaches, who later stated they were unaware it was their job.”

Not to be outdone, former Baylor interim President David Garland said he filed annual reports from 2008-2010 to the Depart-

ment of Education stating that no sexual assaults occurred on campus because he was unaware of any. In fact, Garland said he didn’t even know the procedure for a student to report a sexual assault ... if one had occurred.

If these issues weren’t so serious, they would be humorous.

See **NCAA**, page 14

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OPINION

IEWS FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE H-Z

OUR VIEW

City continues to have a bright future

In this rapidly changing world in which we live, one really has only two options.

We can embrace what's happening before us and hang on and enjoy the ride as best we can, or we can fight it as we seek to keep things closer to the status quo.

It's the simple question: For or against?

As the city of New Braunfels continues to experience unprecedented growth, that exact choice is here for all of us to make.



Discuss this editorial with a letter to the editor.

We can either jump on the bandwagon and encourage the horses to continue to run, or we can try to pull the reins back and stop the progress.

Both options have validity.

Anyone who knows much about our city knows it was established in 1845 by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels, commissioner general of the Adelsverin. He named the settlement in honor of his German home.

In 1850, there were about 1,300 residents. At the turn of the 20th century, the population had grown to about 2,100.

As North America aged, New Braunfels grew. It had more than 12,000 residents in 1950, more than 22,000 in 1980 and about 36,500 in the year 2000.

The explosion continued.

The 2010 Census counted 57,740 folks in the city. The 2016 estimate puts 73,959 people here.

Those who attended last week's "State of the City" address at the McKenna Events Center heard City Manager Robert Camarena say that New Braunfels was the 18th fastest-growing city in the United States three years ago, the 13th-fastest two years ago, the second-fastest last year and the ninth-fastest this year.

The projection is for us to reach about 92,000 individuals by 2022, or about another 18,000 people in the next five years.

Our borders are bursting at the seams.

Yet Camarena said, in his opinion, that there is no better time to be a part of this city than right now.

He also said if there was one word to describe the state of our city, it's "blessed."

That word can have several meanings, but in the general sense, it's defined as "fortunate" or "divinely or supremely favored."

Yes, New Braunfels, Texas, is blessed.

Camarena went on to say that the city does have its issues and problems to address, but that is true of every community.

Our rapid growth has its concerns that go along with it as our powers that be must figure out how to accommodate it without spoiling the things that make us who we are and tarnishing our "small-town" feel that most of us cherish.

And, of course, we have to be concerned with things like water, infrastructure, services, crime and being able to control the things we want and need to control.

But, New Braunfels is a unique place, and our leadership is figuring out ways to continue to bring us quality as the quantity continues to come.

We believe our growth is a good thing and that it will continue to be a good thing in the foreseeable future.

We believe our city's leadership is doing things correctly and that there better things to come.

And, yes, we also feel that New Braunfels is blessed.



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OUTSIDE VIEW

The frequency of sexual harassment

OK then, #MeToo.

Long ago and far away, I had an academic superior who enjoyed sexually humiliating younger men. There was unwanted touching – always in social situations – but mainly it was about making suggestive remarks hinting that being a "hunk" was how I'd gotten hired.

My "pretty little wife," as she was insultingly called, got to stand there and watch. We had no idea how to defend ourselves.

There was a second guy in my department, also an administrator with power over one's career, who made a practice of inviting younger men on manly hikes in the woods and making aggressive passes.

It was a thoroughly poisonous atmosphere. I knew that to complain would invite ruin: first through what's now called "gaslighting" – claiming I'd imagined everything – followed by accusations of sexual panic and homophobia.

A definite no-win situation.

Ironically, life in a New England college town had been among my Arkansas wife's girlhood dreams. Instead, she found herself patronized to her face when she opened her mouth – always by academics, never ordinary New Englanders, I should stipulate.

I quit before they could fire me.

But it was a real learning experience.

In consequence, although definitely not Mr. Sensitive, when it comes to sexual abuse I've always understood what women are talking about.

Much of the time, it isn't



GENE LYONS

Gene Lyons is an award-winning columnist with the Arkansas Times.

even about desire – apart from the desire to put you down and keep you there.

That said, my situation was far less threatening than the women preyed upon by disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein.

First, there was no possibility of physical force. Second, my antagonists' power was limited to the precincts of one provincial academic department.

All I had to do was walk away.

No harm, no foul.

Not so Weinstein.

As the head honcho at one of the most successful movie companies in the world, he had the wherewithal to advance or ruin an actress's entire career. Based upon first-person accounts in Ronan Farrow's lengthy New Yorker expose, he was a calculating predator who set the same trap repeatedly in luxury hotel suites in New York, Hollywood, London and Paris.

He'd invite a young actress to a meeting in his hotel suite, greet her with drink in hand wearing nothing but a bathrobe, and then pounce, some-

times violently.

A big-time Democratic donor, Weinstein followed the script as written by Donald J. Trump.

You remember how it goes: "When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything ... Grab 'em by the p----. You can do anything."

If certain of the New Yorker allegations could be proved – alas, they probably cannot – Weinstein belongs not in some luxury European rehab, but an American penitentiary. He's more than a sexual harasser; he's a rapist.

Also, apparently, a bully in other ways.

"Lucky me," commented the British actress Kate Winslet. "I somehow dodged that bullet. The fact that I'm never going to have to deal with Harvey Weinstein again as long as I live is one of the best things that's ever happened and I'm sure the feeling is universal."

Although he's produced humane films such as "Good Will Hunting," "The Crying Game," "Pulp Fiction" and "Shakespeare in Love," tales of his temper tantrums are universal.

That said, Weinstein didn't invent the concept of the Hollywood casting couch, nor the louche sexual ethics of the movie business generally.

Trading sexual favors for sought-after parts is as old as the theater. The ancient Greek dramatists Sophocles and Euripides were famous for their adventurous love lives.

Indeed, one of the most interesting articles to emerge from the Weinstein affair was Slate's recounting of a British fan magazine's

1956 expose entitled "The Perils of Show Business."

Incongruously illustrated with cheesecake photos, it featured the following rules from actress Marigold Russell working women everywhere would be well-advised to heed:

"One: When you have to talk business, stick to offices – and office hours. Two: Refer invitations and offers to your agent. Three: Don't give your home phone number, give your agent's."

Actress and director Sarah Polley writes that her agent wouldn't let her meet Weinstein alone when she was 19, which told her all she needed to know.

She also figured that "the idea of making people care about (Hollywood sexual predation) seemed as distant an ambition as pulling the sun out of the sky."

Me, I'm so vain that I can't imagine wanting intimacy with somebody that didn't want me back. Which in the final analysis makes a bully like Weinstein seem almost pathetic to me, although not to his victims, I'm sure.

That said, there's also something smug and ugly about these ritual media stonings.

For a columnist like the New York Times' Bret Stephens to write that Weinstein's "repulsive face turns out to be the spitting image of his putrescent soul" strikes me as seriously over the line.

We sinless pundits hide carefully behind our bylines.

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The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of this newspaper.



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Most read stories

Obituary: "Coach" Chuck Engler

Local: Local shop passed on to daughters.

Local: Comal residents protest newest rock plant.

Local: Projection: 287,000 by 2045.

Obituary: Jeffrey "Jeff" Michael Smith.

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OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Growth is making us who we are

Growth. We've written about it before. We're writing about it today. We'll continue to write about it in the future. ...

When one talks about New Braunfels, one can't help but think of that growth.

We're exploding at the seams and widening our borders in every direction. We're strengthening our infrastructure. New businesses and housing opportunities are popping up everywhere. We're making sure we have the tools in place so we can be comfortable as we expand our numbers.



Discuss this editorial with a letter to the editor.

We certainly understand the reservations some have about our rapid growth. After all, there's happiness and security in remaining a quaint village where everyone knows everyone.

But, expansion is also a good thing as we reap the benefits of growing, and then growing some more.

Our city budget is healthy. Our local chamber of commerce is solid. Our leadership is strong. We have good people in good places who are doing good things for us.

In other words, we really are in a good place. We can have our cake and eat it, too.

Here in New Braunfels, we really have the best of both worlds. In fact, we've gone on record stating we think we're the best large small town in America.

Despite our growth, we continue to have that small-town feel, camaraderie and togetherness that comes through the intimacy of being close-knit and friendly.

Not all thriving communities have that.

We're blessed, and we're thankful.

And as we look ahead, there's so much to be excited about.

We're getting a new, incredible recreation center. Loop 337 is being expanded to ease traffic flow. South Castell Avenue will get some kind of facelift that will give our downtown a big boost. Additional retail businesses seemingly are opening on a daily basis. Additional health care options are here or on their way.

The list is almost endless.

As your community newspaper, we've been taking care of you and reporting on New Braunfels, and Comal County, for 165 years. We've chronicled every step our great city has taken. We've been one of the constants in a changing community, and we continue to enjoy being here.

We think it's an incredibly exciting time to call New Braunfels home. We're excited about where we're going and what we're doing, and we're going to continue to be involved throughout the journey.

As New Braunfels continues to write chapters in its history, we will tell them to you.

We're excited about what's going on around us, and we're excited to bring it all to you.

We thank you for inviting us into your homes and appreciate you continuing to join us for the ride.



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OUTSIDE VIEW

Russia and China are winners

WASHINGTON – President Trump's lengthy trip to Asia was top-notch theater – much like a matinee-to-late show all rolled up into one performance – but it was hard to find even one gleaming nugget of new foreign policy wisdom in all those hours.

We saw once again the degree to which this president just can't take success for an answer. He made a respectably good speech in South Korea, and then went on to rub shoulders with Vladimir Putin and say all the wrong things.

Our intel officials were "political hacks!" he told American correspondents, and Putin had not at all intervened in American elections. But then, and not even slightly embarrassed, the very next day he said he only BELIEVED that Putin BELIEVED that his people had not intervened.

(And if I were to tell you what I BELIEVE about Trump BELIEVING about what Putin BELIEVES, you probably would not BELIEVE me at all. BELIEVE me!)

But the visit did make clear that President Xi Jinping, with quiet determination and a sense of purposefulness lost in America today, is now replacing this U.S. president on the world stage. And this modern-age "chinaman" sure knows his American.

President Xi didn't just roll out the red carpet for President Trump this time; he gave Trump the carpet in solid gold wrapping, with a toy panda on the



GEORGIE ANNE GEYER

Georgie Anne Geyer is a conservative American journalist and columnist for the Universal Press Syndicate.

side. Trump was treated to the first dinner for a foreign leader in the Forbidden City since the Communists took over in 1949. Trump loves this attention, and the Trumps responded, but in what turns out to be a contradictory way.

Video of President Trump's admittedly adorable granddaughter, Arabella, was shown in China singing in Mandarin Chinese. A cute tribute, for sure.

The only thing was that she sang to "Uncle Xi." Strange how this reminded me of a day in Prague in the '90s at Radio Free Europe when the head of the British foreign office told me that Britain's problems with thinking of the maniacal Josef Stalin as a reasonable man began when Churchill started calling him "Uncle Joe."

But there was another story from the president's trip that got little attention,

yet underlies everything that is happening in Southeast Asia.

Having served as a foreign correspondent in Vietnam for times between 1967 and 1970 for the Chicago Daily News, I was drawn to an article in The New York Times from Hanoi. From our old enemy! From the center of the little country that was only a "domino" to our foreign policy "thinkers" of the 1960s, who counseled that it would fall if we left Vietnam, knocking over all the non-Communist countries around it.

The article quotes a prominent Vietnamese major general critiquing the American presidential visit to Hanoi by saying: "I would like to give advice to the whole world, and especially to the United States, that you must be careful with China. Xi Jinping's ambitions are dangerous for the whole world. China uses its money to buy off many leaders, but none of its close allies, like North Korea, Pakistan or Cambodia, have done well. Countries that are close to America have done much better. We must ask: Why is this?"

Times South Asia correspondent Hannah Beech then quotes Maj. Gen. Le Van Cuong, retired director of Vietnam's Institute of Strategic Studies, as further noting that, in a lengthy address earlier this fall, Xi had called China a "great" or a "strong power" no fewer than 26 times.

Vietnam, the correspondent notes, "is worried

about American inattention." This fear is reflected across Asia.

These comments from Hanoi were enough to leap out at me like a snake in the Garden of Eden. For they were saying our reason for fighting the Vietnam War was fallacious. And that the Trump presidency is exacerbating the problem.

Small countries in Asia are being pushed into China's voracious arms by the U.S. exit from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the trade pact that would have given 11 smaller economies an alternative to the Chinese-led economic order.

TPP would have imposed international labor and government accountability standards on these small countries; now those checks on power are gone.

Prof. Nguyen Ngoc Anh of the Foreign Trade University in Hanoi adds: "As Vietnamese, we are always trying to find a way to balance China's power. For us, TPP isn't just an economic issue. It's also about geopolitics and social issues."

In sum, the trip unquestionably strengthened Russia and China, and the Trump policies that underlay it threw smaller economies like Vietnam's deeper under the big bus of China. This is quite an accomplishment for a two-week trip around almost half of the world. But only if you're Russia or China.

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Obituary: Domingo "Pera" Perez

Obituary: Sharon "Boogie" Lynn Jones

Local News: Castell options: Fifth public meeting focuses on 3 possibilities

Local News: Loop 337 expansion breaks ground

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OPINION

IEWS FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE H-Z

OUR VIEW

Our chamber numbers mean strong growth

A good sign of how healthy a municipality can be is how strong and active its chamber is. If we use that as a barometer, New Braunfels remains a robust place.

On today's business page, we feature a basic Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce year in review which spotlights some of the accomplishments of the organization during the past 12 months, as well as some of the things it did to make our city an even better place to live, work and play.

According to its website, our chamber promotes the community and its economy by attracting and supporting local businesses and protecting the interests of its members and the community.



Discuss this editorial with a letter to the editor.

It did that and then some again in 2017.

A couple of figures that really stand out to us is that our chamber added 413 new members this past year, and it now has more than 2,400 in all.

That in itself shows just how healthy our chamber is and how active our community is in regards to growth, but especially when we add that the 2,460 members are a 24 percent increase from the 1,977 members our chamber had in 2013.

In fact, it's been a steady membership climb over the past five years, according to numbers provided by the chamber: 1,977 at the end of 2013, 2,099 in 2014, 2,200 in 2015 and 2,301 in 2016.

But maybe most revealing statistic is that the chamber conducted 113 ribbon cuttings in 2017.

Think about that. One-hundred-thirteen.

That's more than an average of two per week every week of the year, and the first time in recent memory the number has reached triple digits, although previous years have come close.

In 2016, there were 84 ribbon-cuttings. Going backwards from 2015 through 2013, there were 86, 98 and 92, respectively — all of which are very healthy numbers.

Some "growing" communities don't cut 100 ribbons over a 10-year period.

And not only is the triple-digit 2017 number impressive, but so is the variety of businesses that opened their doors this past year: Event venues, resorts, consultants, retailers, auto dealerships, office centers, nonprofits, eateries, salons, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, insurance companies, manufacturers ...

The list goes on and on and includes large employers and small businesses.

But besides the open door policy, our chamber also took care of its own by sponsoring and playing host to a plethora of events, conferences and seminars. It was estimated that those events and other things had an economic impact on the city of more than \$41 million.

Taking care of what's already here is equally as important, and maybe even more so, than attracting the new.

But to do both well is a reflection of the hard work and commitment our chamber, its employees and board of directors has.

We truly are blessed to have the Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce working hard for us.

Whether it's something as complex as economic development or as simple as helping a tourist with directions, our chamber is a true strength of our community.

And, we hope it has ordered a bunch more ribbon and sharpened the scissors for another great year in 2018.



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MY VIEW

Cliché advice regarding Castell

"Cliché" is a word I believe has taken on an unnecessary negative connotation. After all, phrases only become overused because they are justified and credible.

As I've matured, I've come to appreciate the predictability of clichés. In fact, maybe we all do more than we realize.

In 1994, McDonald's stopped counting how many hamburgers it served and ordered every store to simply add to their signs "Billions and billions served." It was not the secret sauce that sold all those burgers. It was predictability.

People like franchise places, not because the food or service is better, but simply because our human nature is to crave routine and predictability. We want to know what to expect.

"You get what you pay for" is one particular cliché that always stands the test of time for me.

No matter how many times I try to outwit that dang saying, the consequences associated with taking the least expensive option come back to roost over and over again. Subject be damned, the principal is well-founded.

You can hire a skilled employee and have successful projects or an individual who will work for pennies and struggle with productivity. You can buy



HONORABLE PERSPECTIVE

David Compton is the president and publisher of the New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung

the cheap mattress and toss and turn or the luxury set and sleep like a baby. You can invest in stocks from a well-know company or take a flyer on one that is just getting started.

Don't get me wrong. Every now and then, you might get lucky. However, to quote an old 1980s movie, "You can put a cat in the oven, but that don't make it a biscuit."

I've poured through data regarding what some are referring to as the revitalization of Castell Avenue. My opinion is that even that term being tossed around — revitalization — primarily by a small group of people opposed to most changes, is misleading. The prefix "re" could lead one to believe an attempt is being made to bring it back to vitality.

Most of the area where changes are being con-

sidered would be, for all intents and purposes, brought to life for the first time in a very long time, if ever. In fact, it is almost inarguable that the new Castell Avenue would be the best version of itself and have the most life.

It would easily bring the most opportunity, financial and otherwise, for the downtown area, all residents of New Braunfels, and even our history. Yes, I said it is in the best interest of our town's history.

While I hesitate to speak for anyone, I can't imagine our forefathers wanted us making decisions to lessen the impact of progress. We should almost assume they probably prayed for it.

If the collaboration by many entities over many decades on the Loop 337 expansion is any indication, they certainly prepared for it.

Change certainly can be unpredictable. Local leadership appears to be going above and beyond to try and create some measure of predictability with this project. We were preparing for our sixth input meeting tonight, but the weather forecast has caused it to be postponed. Whenever it gets rescheduled, I'd certainly urge you to attend.

The best option, in the case of Castell Avenue, is the one the math, regarding future tax benefits, and the old cliché supports. It is op-

tion "A." It is the one that requires the biggest initial investment and that would create the most change.

Why are some asking for the least amount of change? I believe it is because it is closer to zero change, which let's be honest, is what some really crave.

It can be easy to equate anti-progress to saving history or protecting heritage. We need to remember the decisions we make today also become part of our history, and what we don't do will say way more about us.

As for burgers, it is hard to beat some of our local favorites like Pat's Place, Iron Horse or Freiheit's. Every burger may not be shaped the exact same way, but locals know to expect a great first and last bite.

That is predictability, too.

While maybe not batting 1,000, New Braunfelsers have made quite the tradition of getting big decisions like Castell Avenue correct. I fully expect this will end no differently.

David Compton is an Associated Press award-winning columnist and the current president and publisher of the New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung. His dad was a reporter in the U.S. Army, and he has been in the newspaper industry for the greater part of three decades. He can be reached at david.compton@herald-zeitung.com.

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Local: NB man may have died from gunshot wound.

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OPINION

VIEWES FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE H-Z

OUR VIEW

We must continue to grow responsibly

Five percent may not seem like a whole lot, but it depends on the perspective.

If a sales tax is 5 percent, one will pay \$1.05 for an item that costs \$1.

If a meteorologist says there is a 5 percent chance of severe weather, that means there is a 95 percent chance there won't be.

However, if an area is expanding at a 5 percent clip, or a little more than that, it's staggering.

Last month, we reported that Comal County is growing at a 5.1 percent rate, making it the second-fastest growing county anywhere in the United States.

Again, that 5.1 percent may not sound like a whole lot if that number stands alone. But, if you throw in the actual population numbers, like that we added 6,867 people from 2016 to 2017, that adds a little meat to the bone.

That's a lot of new folks who have discovered what the Hill County has to offer, and more specifically that Comal County is a great place to live.

Remember, 7,000 people, or at least almost that many, makes for a pretty decent-sized little town in and of itself.

And being No. 2 in growth this year comes on the heels of being No. 7 the year before.

In other words, the secret is out, and has been for a while. ...

Now, let's look at that No. 2 figure in another way.

Comal finished as the runner up to Falls Church, Virginia, which calls itself an independent city. There are 41 such cities in the United States, according to information we found online.

A little more research turned up that there are 3,007 counties, 64 parishes, 18 organized boroughs, 11 census areas, 41 independent cities and the District of Columbia for a total of 3,142 counties or county equivalents in the United States.

And we're No. 2 as far as growth — and fell only 50 people short, percentage wise, of being No. 1 — if we did the math correctly.

All of this tells us what we already have said — we are rapidly expanding.

Many people welcome the growth. Many others shudder when thinking about it. It just depends on your perspective of what you want your hometown to be.

Over the years, we feel the city and county's braintrust has done a pretty good job of preparing for and accommodating our rapid growth.

We're making sure that things like water, electricity and other necessities are adequate. We're making plans through bond issues, blueprints and in-depth discussions.

In many ways, we're preparing as best we can.

However, more work needs to be done in certain areas — like affordable housing and transportation. We highlighted our congested roads in an editorial earlier this week while everyone who lives from paycheck to paycheck knows how expensive (and difficult) it can be to live in New Braunfels and in certain places in Comal County.

Those are issues (and there are others) we still need to address, and someone has to take the lead and ensure we remain on top of these things so everyone is comfortable.

Growth may be great, but with it comes added responsibility.

So, if we're going to continue to grow rapidly, let's make sure we also grow responsibly.

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OUTSIDE VIEW

Investigation and the rule of law

Recently, I took part in a debate on the question “Does the Russia investigation endanger the rule of law?” I said yes.

First, a caveat. If “endanger the rule of law” means “destroys our legal order and threatens our democracy,” then no, I don't think the Trump-Russia investigation does that.

But if it means “involves our nation's most powerful law enforcement and intelligence agencies in reckless political conduct that undermines our system of elections and the orderly transfer of power,” then yes, the Trump-Russia investigation does, in fact, endanger the rule of law.

Two incidents from 2016 and early 2017 point to the danger posed by overzealous Trump-Russia investigators.

The first is that the Justice Department used the Logan Act, which bars private Americans from conducting foreign policy, as a pretense to pursue an investigation against the Trump team.

The Logan Act was passed in 1799 and has never been used to successfully prosecute anybody. No one has even tried since the 19th century. It is, by any practical measure, dead — look up the legal concept of “desuetude.”

And yet, in the summer of 2016, some prominent Democrats began accusing Trump of violating the Logan Act. They said he broke the law by sarcastically encouraging Russia to release Hillary Clinton's famous deleted emails. Several called for hearings.

Then, after Trump's victory, stunned and angry Democrats watched him prepare for the presidency — and prepare to undo many of Barack Obama's policies.

Democratic Rep. Jared Huffman introduced the “One President at a Time Act of 2016,” which would specifically subject presidents-elect to the Logan Act. Rep. John Conyers, then the



BYRON YORK

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top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, asked the Justice Department to investigate Trump for a possible violation of the Logan Act.

All of that was just political posturing — not a threat to the rule of law. But unbeknownst to the public, the Obama Justice Department was using the Logan Act as a pretext to take action against the incoming administration.

When intelligence intercepts picked up Michael Flynn, the incoming national security adviser, talking to the Russian ambassador in late December, the Obama Justice Department saw that as a possible violation of the Logan Act. (It wasn't; many foreign policy experts saw nothing wrong with that.)

Nevertheless, four days into the Trump administration, Sally Yates, the Obama holdover leading the Justice Department, sent agents to the White House to question Flynn, ostensibly on the suspicion that he might have violated the Logan Act.

It was that interview that ultimately resulted in Flynn pleading guilty to one count of lying to the FBI.

The bottom line is, the Flynn saga, which is at the heart of the Trump-Russia investigation, appears to have hinged on a trumped-up suspicion that a new administration had broken a centuries-old law that has never been prosecuted be-

fore — when, in fact, the new administration's real transgression was to make clear it would throw away many of its predecessor's policies.

The second incident that suggests the Trump investigation threatens the rule of law is the FBI's use of the Trump dossier — a Clinton campaign opposition research product — as a part of its counterintelligence investigation into the Trump campaign.

To compile the dossier, a Democratic law firm hired the opposition research group Fusion GPS, which hired a former British spy named Christopher Steele, who paid a number of Russian “collectors,” who then talked to other Russians, who provided gossip about Trump. The most spectacular gossip is the dossier's description of Trump, in a Moscow hotel room in 2013, watching as prostitutes played out a kinky sex scene.

Steele took his material to the FBI, and the bureau agreed to pay Steele to keep gathering dirt on Trump — an astonishing development in the midst of a presidential election.

And even though the pay-for-dirt deal fell through, the FBI still incorporated the dossier into its Trump-Russia investigation. It was used as the basis to ask a secret court to grant a warrant to wiretap an American, Carter Page, in October 2016.

Now fast-forward to the transition. In early January 2017, intelligence chiefs James Comey, John Brennan, Mike Rogers and James Clapper traveled to Trump Tower to brief the president-elect on Russian efforts to interfere with the 2016 campaign.

After the briefing, by a plan they had devised earlier, three of them left the room, leaving Comey alone with Trump. Comey gave Trump a summary of the dossier, including the Moscow sex scene.

Imagine that. The very first time the incoming president met the FBI director face-to-face, the FBI's message was: We know about you and those hookers in Moscow.

In their new book “Russian Roulette,” authors Michael Isikoff and David Corn report Trump thought the FBI was blackmailing him:

“Trump had seen this sort of thing before,” they write. “Certainly, his old mentor Roy Cohn — the notorious fixer for mobsters and crooked pols — knew how this worked. So too did Comey's famous predecessor J. Edgar Hoover, who had quietly let it be known to politicians and celebrities that he possessed information that could destroy their careers in a New York minute.”

The intel chiefs' briefing of Trump soon leaked to the media. And the fact that top officials had seen fit to tell the incoming president about the dossier made it a legitimate news story. Within hours, Buzzfeed published the entire dossier on the internet.

As Sen. Charles Schumer said as all this was happening: “You take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday of getting back at you.”

With the Logan Act, Obama holdovers used a dead law as a pretense to push the Trump investigation. With the dossier, they used unverified opposition research not only to investigate the Trump campaign, but to execute a clever maneuver to make the dirt public.

And this was all done by the nation's top law enforcement and intelligence officials, targeting a new president. So yes, it is reasonable to say the Trump-Russia investigation endangers the rule of law.

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OPINION

IEWS FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE H-Z

OUR VIEW

Envisioning New Braunfels in the years ahead

Earlier this week, the city shared some insights into its proposed updated comprehensive master plan, which should be ready for adoption sometime this summer.

The plan as it stands today, titled “Envision New Braunfels,” was shared with the Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce board of directors and with attendees of the Greater New Braunfels Economic Development Foundation quarterly luncheon.



Discuss this editorial with a letter to the editor.

A comprehensive plan is a document designed to guide the future actions of a community. It presents a vision for the future and includes long-range goals and objectives for activities that affect the local government.

Those “activities” can include transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, housing and others. In New Braunfels’ case, the plan is being updated to help guide the city through the year 2030.

Key local points include an overarching, long-range vision plan for the community’s future growth, goals and objectives that provide policy guidance on all decision making and project prioritization, coordinating and informing all other plans and identifying citizen-driven goals and expectations for implementation.

One of the key things to remember is that a comprehensive plan, similar to a budget, is a working document much like a blueprint. It’s a document that will be used to guide the city as it continues to operate in the future.

With that said, one of the challenges the plan must and will include is how to accommodate our growth. We talk about growth all the time around here because, well, it’s a key element of who we are and where we’re going.

In fact, population projections have us topping 80,000 people in two years and surpassing 90,000 by the year 2022.

How we accommodate the continuing influx of folks, as well as take care of our current residents, is what the meat of the plan is all about.

To that end, the city has included a lot of community input for this latest update. In this specific case, that’s a good thing. After all, as mentioned, the plan revolves around our city and how it’s going to take care of its residents, so getting input from those residents should be important.

City Councilman Ron Reaves may have stated it best when he said, “Envision New Braunfels is really going to establish a vision and a framework for New Braunfels. The plan is being created through public dialogue and review to really reflect the vision of what our residents are thinking here in New Braunfels.”

In other words, it’s a community-driven document. We like that way of thinking with a specific plan such as this one.

We also like how the updated comprehensive plan looks at this point. We’re certainly heading in the right direction with where we think we want to go.

And, we challenge our city’s braintrust to keep working on it to make it the very best road map it can be.

After all, it is envisioning New Braunfels in the years ahead.



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OUTSIDE VIEW

Is anything pointing to collusion?

Remember collusion? The allegation that Donald Trump and his aides coordinated or conspired with Russia to fix the 2016 presidential election is the heart of the Trump-Russia investigation.

Yet we recently saw two developments in the Trump investigation – one discussed widely in the press, the other not as much — and neither pointed toward collusion.

In the development that set off a press firestorm, FBI agents raided the office and hotel room of longtime Trump lawyer/fixer Michael Cohen, apparently looking for evidence concerning Cohen’s role in paying off the porn star Stormy Daniels, who once denied but now says she had a one-night-stand with Trump more than a decade ago.

Cohen’s lawyer, Stephen Ryan, said he was told the raid was “in part, a referral by the Office of Special Counsel, Robert Mueller.”

The less-noted development was the release of a heavily redacted search warrant from the tax evasion, bank fraud and money laundering case against one-time Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

As expected, the warrant dealt overwhelmingly with allegations of financial crimes against Manafort, but one sentence — out of 27 paragraphs and sub-paragraphs — concerned the infamous 2016 Trump Tower meeting between Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, Manafort and some Russians who said they had dirt on Hillary



BYRON YORK

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Clinton.

The Manafort warrant — executed in a pre-dawn, no-knock, guns-drawn FBI raid on Manafort’s apartment while Manafort and his wife were asleep inside — allowed the FBI to seize “communications, records, documents, and other files involving any of the attendees of the June 9, 2016, meeting at Trump Tower,” as well as Aras and Emin Agalarov.

(The last two are Russians who dealt with Trump in the 2013 Miss Universe pageant held in Moscow.)

So two big stories, both generated by the Mueller investigation. And about the issue at the heart of the Mueller investigation — not much.

In the Cohen case, it’s believed that Mueller’s team came across evidence that implicated Cohen in wrongdoing but did not fall under Mueller’s original assignment to probe “any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the cam-

paign of President Donald Trump” or any other matters that might “arise directly” from that investigation.

So Mueller handed off the Cohen information to the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, whose office oversaw the raids on Cohen’s office and hotel room.

There was much speculation about what the agents wanted — evidence about the Daniels payoff being the leading candidate — but at the same time, the fact that Mueller farmed out the case to federal prosecutors outside his office suggests that the Cohen matter, whatever it is, does not fall under Mueller’s core Trump-Russia assignment.

As far as the Manafort search warrant is concerned, the document shows clear Mueller interest in what Manafort knew about the Trump Tower meeting. But it appears whatever the FBI might have seized on that topic, if anything, did not lead to any charges against Manafort stemming from the meeting or collusion with Russia in general.

Manafort faces the most serious charges of any figure in the Trump-Russia affair. But none of those charges alleges collusion.

Most have nothing to do with the Trump campaign, or concern alleged criminal activity that began before Manafort’s association with the campaign and continued during his brief time as campaign chief.

It is always possible that Mueller has more charges in mind for Manafort.

But it is important to note that the no-knock raid on Manafort’s apartment took place on July 26, 2017.

Manafort, along with business partner and fellow Trump campaign official Rick Gates, was indicted on Oct. 27, 2017.

On Feb. 22, 2018, Mueller expanded the charges against Manafort in what’s called a superseding indictment. In none of those many charges is the accusation that Manafort was involved in a scheme with Russia to influence the 2016 campaign.

Again, it is important to note how little we know about what Mueller is doing. For all the public knows, a big collusion indictment could be coming tomorrow.

But it is also important to note what we do know. And we do know who Mueller has charged, and with what, after an FBI investigation that began in July 2016 and a special counsel probe that began in May 2017.

And so far, there have been no charges — not against Manafort or Gates, not against Michael Flynn, not against George Papadopoulos, or others — involving alleged collusion.

The Mueller investigation is marching on, and in the case of Cohen, giving birth to new farm-team investigations — but, so far at least, the story has not been about collusion.

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