

OPINION

FIRST AMENDMENT “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

OUR VIEW

Better late than never?

The best intentions may have fallen short, causing confusion by the public about whether one of Borderland’s hottest spots to cool off in warm weather was open or closed.

City Beach has been closed to swimming and camping since sandbagging operations began there and water continued to rise after the June 12 deluge of rainfall.

While many times the gates have been closed since that date, we and others heard the gates were open just as many times, leaving people unsure of the status of the beach.

On hot days, a swim at City Beach just can’t be beat. While there were no lifeguards on duty, people simply came in for a swim when the gates were open.

Now, the city has provided clear direction to the public about the status of the beach. It has placed signs just this week at the gates and released information to the local media about why the beach has been closed.

While many people know and understand it takes a long time for debris and contamination from a variety of sources to clear after water rises more than three feet above its normal level, others appear to have been unaware of the risks.

We know city officials did not intend to send mixed messages on the beach status. But apparent miscommunication occurred and some members of the public made inaccurate assumptions, as was made clear in posts and photographs on social media.

This week’s action to keep the gates closed, post “no swimming” and “closed signs” at the gates, and provide information about the status of the closure is a good step toward better communication with the public about a beloved summer spot.

However, these steps should have been taken early on in the beach closure, and immediately following tests that showed elevated levels of bacteria.

Sure, members of the public could have called city officials if they were unsure of whether conditions at City Beach were safe before taking their kids and themselves out for a swim. But city officials should have been upfront about the issues at the beach and immediately informed the public by taking the steps they have now.



FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

Hurtling toward the elections

The Aug. 12 primary election is less than one month away.

The primary ballot carries no local races, but candidates in several federal and state races will be narrowed for the Nov. 4 general election.

And next week, the filing period for city offices opens. Those offices will be decided Nov. 4.

We will, as in previous years, provide to our readers information prior to the general election about our local candidates and their views of issues pertinent to the office they are seeking. We will send questionnaires to local candidates and publish their responses verbatim — as they were provided to The Journal. We will set a word limit for these responses and the only changes we will make will be to correct spelling errors. This offers a chance for our readers to see how these candidates present and view themselves and the issues involved in the office they are seeking.

This information should be available prior to the mail ballots sent to many rural Koochiching County voters.

Laurel BEAGER
EDITOR

All letters of endorsement of or in opposition to candidates, as well as letters from or about candidates, will be published as paid election letters and are subject to a fee. The letters will be published on the Opinion Page, but will be labeled as a “PAID ELECTION LETTER.” We will maintain the 500 words or less limit on these letters, which will require a \$30 fee to be published. Graphs or photos may be submitted with paid election letters for an additional fee of \$20, but The Journal will decide, depending on available space, how large those graphs or photos will be published.

Paid election letters are to be paid for by the letter writer. If paid by another entity, that information must be stated properly, according to election laws. Payment for the appropriate amount must be received before a paid election letter will be published.

Paid election letters must include the writer’s complete mailing address, which will be published with the letter.

The newspaper may

determine it legitimate for an elected official who is also a candidate to respond to an issue on which that official has been specifically identified or challenged in the newspaper without their response being a paid election letter. The final judgment will be made by the newspaper editorial staff.

Questions about this new policy should be directed to me, as editor of The Journal, or Rob Davenport, publisher.

We are making this change because we believe it provides accountability for candidates and campaigns and limits campaigns from taking advantage of “free” advertising space on the Opinion Page. As always, we will not allow websites or emails of candidates or campaigns to be included in the paid letters.

August and November are important dates for our future. We urge voters to do a little homework to find out the view of the candidates. We will help by providing some information, and more can be found on the Minnesota’s Secretary of State website.

How to contact your lawmakers

FEDERAL OFFICES

President Barack Obama
Democrat
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20500
202-456-1111
Website:
www.whitehouse.gov
E-mail:
president@whitehouse.gov

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan
2447 Burnburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515
202-225-6211
Website: www.nolan.house.gov
Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan
Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Duluth Office of Congressman Rick Nolan
11 East Superior Street Suite 125
Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: 218-464-5095
Fax: 218-464-5098

Brainerd Office of Congressman Rick Nolan
Brainerd City Hall
501 Laurel Street
Brainerd, MN 56401
218-454-4078

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar
Democrat
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-3244

Minnesota Office:
1200 Washington Avenue

South, Suite 250
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-727-5220
Website:
www.klobuchar.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Al Franken
Democrat
Senate Hart Building 320
Washington DC 20510
202-224-5641
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STATE OFFICES

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WHAT OTHERS SAY

Tell FCC to keep Web access equal for all

Unless your home page is www.headinthesand.gov, you probably know the FCC is trying to draft new regulations governing how information flows to and through the Internet.

This “net neutrality” debate hinges on whether the FCC should allow Internet service providers to set up deals with companies to stream their content faster than others. Many big ISPs (think Verizon, AT&T, etc) want that option. Opponents, of which this Editorial Board is one, say Internet access should be equal for all.

Friday marks an important date for you to share your opinion. That’s when the FCC will close the public comment period involving its latest proposals, issued in May.

The period was supposed to close Tuesday, but so many people were _ yes _ using the Internet to weigh in, the FCC’s website basically crashed. You can visit www.fcc.gov/comments and submit comments under “Protecting and Promoting the Open Internet.” Or you can send an email to openinternet(at)fcc.gov.

Upon closing and review of these comments, another public comment opportunity will open when the FCC releases follow-up information.

Understandably, interest is high both for the mega-

sized providers and, more importantly, the mega millions of small businesses, organizations and entrepreneurs that face an uneven playing field under potential “preferred access” deals.

Look no further than Facebook, Google, Twitter and Netflix. Each started as a fledgling operation. Thanks to an open Internet, each became hugely successful. That access is why they all joined many companies in the Internet Association, which is pushing “to create strong, enforceable net neutrality rules for wired and mobile networks.” A trio of points make their case very compelling:

■ The Internet should be free from censorship, dis-

crimination and anti-competitive behavior; protected by simple and enforceable rules that ensure a consumer’s equal access to content they want.

■ Broadband subscribers should get the bandwidth they are paying for _ content should be treated equally, without degradations in speed or quality. No artificial slow lanes.

■ No matter how users choose to connect to the Internet, net neutrality rules should apply universally on wireless and wired networks.

Agree? Disagree? Jump on the Internet by Friday to share your views with FCC.

St. Cloud Times, July 16

Share your point of view

Make a difference by writing a letter to the editor or contributing to our online discussions. The Journal’s Opinion page is where meaningful community discussions take place.

The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

Candidate letter policy

The beginning of 2014 brought a new policy to The Journal. A charge of \$30 will be required to publish letters to the editor from candidates or about candidates. The letters must be 500 words or less and the fee must be paid prior to the letter being published. The name and city of the author will be published with the letter.

Letters may be emailed to laurel@ifallsjournal.com. The Journal will publish a deadline for publication of paid election letters prior to the Aug. 12 primary and Nov. 4 general elections.