

Do Global Warming Deniers Run City Hall?

Many Salemians believe our city's leaders are immune to the plague of anti-science craziness infecting those on the right side of the national political spectrum.

In the U.S. as a whole only 30% of conservatives believe the effects of global warming have begun to happen, compared to 74% of liberals. But Salem conservatives are Oregonians. Could they also deny the reality of climate change?

After asking the Mayor, City Manager, Public Works Director, and city councillors to answer three simple questions about global warming, I'd say "Yeah, they probably do."

Two councillors, liberal-leaning Diana Dickey and Laura Tesler, responded to my email message almost instantly. Each said, "Yes, Yes, Yes" to:

- (1) Do you believe global warming is occurring, and is causing the Earth's climate to change in various ways?
- (2) Do you believe people are mostly responsible for the global warming/ climate change that is occurring?
- (3) Do you believe people need to engage in actions to deal with both the causes of global warming and its detrimental effects on humanity?

I found it strange, and not in a good way, that Mayor Peterson, City Manager Norris, Public Works Director Fernandez, and six of the eight city councillors weren't willing to give a yes, no, or not sure to these vitally important questions.

The first two questions I asked are scientific. Science studies reality. Reality isn't political.

I realize that I'm viewed as a gadfly by City Hall. But if a gadfly buzzed in my ear "Hey, dude, do you believe gravity is real?" I'd have no problem saying "For sure" before swatting it away.

Likely the questions put the non-responding Mayor, City Manager, et. al. in a tough political place.

They faced a choice between looking like they don't care about science, the environment, and the fate of life on Earth, or admitting that human-caused global warming is real and we need to do something about it — while supporting an unneeded \$400 million third bridge that will add substantially to Salem's carbon footprint.

Can't have it both ways, City leaders.

You can ignore my questions, but you can't run from reality: human-caused global warming is a fact 97% of the world's climate experts agree on. The City of Salem needs to take this into account in its transportation planning, street tree policies, and everything else.

Scientific facts are wonderful things. They reveal what is real in the outside world in contrast to what is true only inside our own heads.

I was raised by a deeply conservative science-loving mother. She saw no conflict between her avid Republicanism and devotion to learning the truth about how the physical world works. I grew up reading both National Review and Scientific American.

So I don't get today's conservatives, including those who currently run Salem's city government.

If you won't openly embrace the facts of global warming, why should anyone believe you are capable of effectively dealing with the reality of other problems facing Salem?

Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city's Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like. Brian Hines blogs at hinesblog.com