

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** James Hungelmann <jim.hungelmann@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 31, 2026 2:17 AM  
**To:** Peter Prekeges; Tripp Hutchinson; Matthew McGraw; Randy Hall; Spencer Cordovano; Participate  
**Subject:** Public Submission - STRAIT TALKING/ May 31, 2026  
**Attachments:** STRAIT\_TALKING\_May\_2026 .pdf

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

Attached for inclusion in the public record of the next Ketchum City Council meeting is a commentary titled "STRAIT TALKING" dated May 31, 2026 (with Arabic translation).

The piece concerns observable commercial shipping conditions, energy-market behavior, evidentiary scrutiny, and the importance of distinguishing between publicly amplified geopolitical narratives and independently observable operational realities.

The commentary is submitted in the spirit of encouraging disciplined public inquiry, evidentiary caution, and thoughtful civic discussion during a period of intense international media saturation and geopolitical messaging.

Thank you for your consideration.

James Hungelmann  
Ketchum

***BREAKING NEWS*** — May 31, 2026:

***STRAIT TALKING***

1. Senior U.S. officials and some allied governments have collectively participated in constructing and amplifying through Western media institutions a coordinated public narrative surrounding the Iran crisis that is materially inconsistent with observable conditions on the ground, including the continued uninterrupted flow of commercial shipping, stable energy exports, and the absence of severe global oil-market dislocation.
2. The “war” involving Iran since its announcement by President Trump on February 28, 2026, appears in substantial part to resemble a media-driven geopolitical spectacle — in essence a “Wag the Dog”-style orchestration — rather than a major conventional military conflict, with the observable level of sustained air strikes, infrastructure destruction, casualties, and battlefield disruption remaining quite limited or, at times, effectively nonexistent relative to the scale and intensity of the surrounding public narrative.
3. While limited military, intelligence, cyber, or proxy operations may well be occurring, observable commercial, maritime, and energy-market conditions do not presently resemble those associated with a major sustained regional war or systemic interruption of Persian Gulf energy flows.
4. While it may serve the strategic interests of both the United States and Iran to project the existence of a significant Iranian nuclear-weapons capability, the publicly observable evidence regarding the immediacy, scope, and operational reality of such capability remains highly disputed. There are intelligence analysts who insist that the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Iran has never possessed a demonstrated operational nuclear-weapons capability, and that the threat narrative presented publicly over many years has far exceeded the actual strategic reality as is well understood within portions of the intelligence community.
5. Publicly available evidence has not independently confirmed claims that Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, died in any drone strike as reported, and independent verification surrounding the event remains extremely limited and contested.
6. Western reporting of statements from the Iranian government has been heavily filtered through U.S. and allied information channels and is often exaggerated or otherwise inconsistent with observable conditions inside Iran. Much of the resulting coverage appears heavily narrative-driven and often resembles political theater or strategic messaging more than rigorous independent investigative reporting or evidentiary scrutiny.

7. The real news in Iran appears to reflect conditions closer to business as usual, with the United States and Israel continuing practices that Iranian political rhetoric has long characterized as deceptive or manipulative geopolitical conduct.
8. Anti-government protests inside Tehran and elsewhere in Iran have been overstated and do not appear materially beyond levels of political unrest commonly observed in many Western countries, including the United States.
9. Throughout the entire duration of the “troubles” over the last three months, the Strait of Hormuz has remained open, with continued commercial shipping activity and ongoing energy exports occurring at or near normal levels.
10. Even during the Iran–Iraq “Tanker War” of the 1980s between Iran and Iraq (allied with and supported by the United States) — involving direct attacks on ships and prolonged regional warfare with casualties approaching one million — the Strait of Hormuz ultimately remained open to global oil flows.
11. China, India, Japan, and South Korea — nations that together consume roughly two-thirds of all oil and gas transiting the Strait and rely heavily on Persian Gulf supplies — have continued to receive uninterrupted and unimpeded deliveries throughout the entire period. None has experienced a significant supply shortfall, nor have they been compelled to draw meaningfully upon strategic reserves or secure major alternative sources of supply.
12. Japan and South Korea are particularly vulnerable to any interruption in Persian Gulf energy flows because they possess limited domestic oil and gas reserves and have few practical large-scale alternative supply options. Yet throughout the past three months, their normal Gulf supply has continued uninterrupted, undiminished, and fully sufficient to meet ongoing demand.
13. Global commercial and strategic petroleum inventories collectively represent roughly several weeks to a few months of world oil consumption, with many major economies generally maintaining combined inventory levels broadly equivalent to approximately 60–75 days of consumption under normal conditions.
14. The most significant global spare oil-production capacity remains concentrated among Persian Gulf producers, whereas other major exporters, including Russia, possess comparatively limited excess production capacity.
15. Saudi Arabia possesses pipeline infrastructure capable of bypassing the Strait by redirecting a portion of its exports to Red Sea ports that principally serve Europe and Mediterranean markets. However, that excess bypass capacity is only a fraction of the total volume of oil that normally transits the Strait of Hormuz — roughly on the order of about 20% — and doing so involves materially higher logistical and transportation costs compared with the standard high-volume Persian Gulf export system that relies heavily upon supertanker infrastructure.

16. Oil markets remain highly sensitive to geopolitical risk, and the fear of potential supply disruption is continually reflected within global commodity pricing.
17. Over the last three months, global oil prices have remained relatively stable when compared with prior major geopolitical or supply crises, fluctuating from a low of approximately \$72 per barrel to a high of roughly \$115, with current prices remaining in the low-to-mid-\$90 range. At no point have pricing patterns reflected the type of severe systemic supply disruption historically associated with prolonged physical interruptions in global oil flows.
18. While current oil prices are somewhat elevated by historical standards, they remain far below the most extreme levels observed during prior global energy shocks when adjusted for inflation. The 2008 oil-price spike, expressed in today's dollars, would equate to roughly \$190 per barrel — approximately 100% higher than present levels. In real inflation-adjusted terms, current pricing is more consistent with the elevated but still manageable market conditions experienced during portions of the 2022 Russia–Ukraine energy crisis than with any genuine, severe dislocation.
19. Throughout the entirety of the last three months since the onset of the conflict:
  - a. Iran has not materially or systematically impeded commercial shipping traffic transiting the Strait in any sustained manner, whether through the placement of naval mines, attacks upon commercial vessels, tolling mechanisms, or the blockade of regional ports.
  - b. The United States military has not attacked commercial shipping vessels or imposed any blockade upon Iranian ports located along the Persian Gulf or Gulf of Oman.
  - c. Commercial port activity throughout the Persian Gulf region — including Iranian oil, gas, freight, container, and general shipping operations — has continued substantially uninterrupted and largely unabated, with normal loading, unloading, export, import, and vessel-transit functions generally remaining operational throughout the period at or near normal levels.
20. The possibility cannot be entirely excluded that certain elements within the Iranian government are operating in a manner more strategically compatible with United States and Israeli interests than is publicly acknowledged, while continuing to maintain an outward public posture of opposition for domestic, regional, or broader geopolitical reasons.
21. The cumulative observable evidence presented above appears materially inconsistent with the portrayal of a severe or sustained regional military crisis as reflected throughout much of the surrounding public narrative.

James Hungenmann  
The White Room LLC  
May 2026

1. يبدو أن مسؤولين كبارًا في الولايات المتحدة وبعض الحكومات الحليفة قد شاركوا بصورة جماعية في بناء وتضخيم عبر مؤسسات الإعلام الغربي، رواية عامة منسقة حول الأزمة الإيرانية تتعارض ماديًا مع الظروف القابلة للملاحظة ، على أرض الواقع، بما في ذلك استمرار التدفق غير المنقطع لحركة الشحن التجاري، واستقرار صادرات الطاقة ، وغياب أي اضطراب خطير في أسواق النفط العالمية.
2. تبدو “الحرب” المتعلقة بإيران منذ الإعلان عنها من قبل الرئيس ترامب في 28 فبراير 2026، إلى حد كبير، أقرب إلى استعراض إعلامي وجيوسياسي مصمم لصناعة الانطباعات العامة أكثر منها نزاعًا عسكريًا تقليديًا واسع النطاق حيث ظل المستوى الملحوظ للغارات الجوية المستمرة، وتدمير البنية التحتية، والخسائر البشرية، واضطراب ساحات القتال محدودًا للغاية أو، في بعض الأحيان، شبه معدوم مقارنة بحجم وشدة الرواية العامة المحيطة بالأحداث وبينما قد تكون هناك بالفعل عمليات عسكرية أو استخباراتية أو سببرانية أو عمليات بالوكالة محدودة النطاق، فإن الظروف التجارية والبحرية وظروف أسواق الطاقة القابلة للملاحظة لا تشبه في الوقت الحاضر تلك المرتبطة بحرب إقليمية واسعة ومستدامة أو بانقطاع منهجي في تدفقات الطاقة عبر الخليج العربي.
3. وبينما قد يخدم المصالح الاستراتيجية لكل من الولايات المتحدة وإيران إظهار وجود قدرة إيرانية كبيرة في مجال الأسلحة النووية، فإن الأدلة المتاحة علنًا بشأن مدى وفورية وواقعية تلك القدرة لا تزال موضع نزاع كبير. وهناك محللون استخباراتيون يصرون على أن الأدلة تشير بقوة إلى أن إيران لم تمتلك قط قدرة فعلية ومثبتة على إنتاج سلاح نووي، وأن الرواية المتعلقة بالتهديد قد تجاوزت، على مدى سنوات طويلة، الواقع الاستراتيجي الفعلي كما تفهمه بعض الدوائر داخل مجتمع الاستخبارات.
4. لم تؤكد الأدلة المتاحة علنًا بصورة مستقلة الادعاءات المتعلقة بوفاة علي خامنئي، المرشد الأعلى لإيران، في أي ضربة بطائرة مسيرة كما تم تداوله، ولا يزال التحقق المستقل من الحدث محدودًا للغاية ومثارًا للجدل.
5. لقد جرى ترشيح ونقل التصريحات الصادرة عن الحكومة الإيرانية بصورة مكثفة عبر قنوات معلومات أمريكية وحليفة، وغالبًا ما يتم تضخيمها أو عرضها بطريقة لا تتسجم مع الظروف القابلة للملاحظة داخل إيران. ويبدو أن جزءًا كبيرًا من التغطية الناتجة يعتمد على السرديات السياسية، وأحيانًا يشبه الاستعراض السياسي أو الرسائل الاستراتيجية أكثر مما يشبه التحقيق الصحفي المستقل أو التدقيق القائم على الأدلة.
6. تبدو الأخبار الفعلية داخل إيران أقرب إلى ظروف الحياة الاعتيادية، مع استمرار الولايات المتحدة وإسرائيل في ممارسات وصفتها الخطابات السياسية الإيرانية منذ زمن طويل بأنها سلوك جيوسياسي خادع أو تلاعب.
7. لقد جرى تضخيم حجم الاحتجاجات المناهضة للحكومة داخل طهران وأماكن أخرى في إيران، ولا تبدو متجاوزة بشكل مادي لمستويات الاضطراب السياسي التي تُشاهد عادة في العديد من الدول الغربية، بما في ذلك الولايات المتحدة.
8. طوال مدة “الاضطرابات” خلال الأشهر الثلاثة الماضية، ظل مضيق هرمز مفتوحًا، مع استمرار حركة الشحن التجاري وصادرات الطاقة عند مستويات طبيعية أو قريبة من الطبيعية.
9. حتى خلال “حرب الناقلات” بين إيران والعراق في ثمانينيات القرن الماضي — والتي تضمنت هجمات مباشرة على السفن وحربًا إقليمية طويلة مع خسائر بشرية قاربت المليون — ظل مضيق هرمز في النهاية مفتوحًا أمام تدفقات النفط العالمية.
10. واصلت الصين والهند واليابان وكوريا الجنوبية — وهي دول تستهلك مجتمعة نحو ثلثي النفط والغاز العابرين عبر المضيق وتعتمد بشكل كبير على إمدادات الخليج العربي — تلقي الإمدادات بصورة متواصلة ودون عوائق طوال الفترة بأكملها. ولم تتعرض أي من هذه الدول لنقص كبير في الإمدادات، كما لم تضطر إلى الاعتماد بشكل ملموس على احتياطاتها الاستراتيجية أو البحث عن مصادر بديلة رئيسية.
11. تُعد اليابان وكوريا الجنوبية عرضة بشكل خاص لأي انقطاع في تدفقات الطاقة القادمة من الخليج العربي بسبب محدودية احتياطياتهما المحلية من النفط والغاز واقتتارهما إلى بدائل واسعة النطاق وعملية. ومع ذلك، استمرت إمداداتهما الطبيعية من الخليج خلال الأشهر الثلاثة الماضية دون انقطاع أو تراجع وبصورة كافية لتلبية الطلب المستمر.
12. تمثل المخزونات التجارية والاستراتيجية العالمية من النفط، مجتمعة، ما يعادل تقريبًا عدة أسابيع إلى بضعة أشهر من الاستهلاك العالمي، حيث تحتفظ العديد من الاقتصادات الكبرى بمستويات مخزون تعادل تقريبًا 60 إلى 75 يومًا من الاستهلاك في الظروف الطبيعية.
- 13.

14. لا تزال أكبر طاقة فائضة لإنتاج النفط العالمي متركزة لدى منتجي الخليج العربي، في حين تمتلك دول مصدرة 14. رئيسية أخرى، بما في ذلك روسيا، قدرات فائضة محدودة نسبياً.
15. تمتلك المملكة العربية السعودية بنية تحتية من خطوط الأنابيب تتيح تجاوز المضيق عبر تحويل جزء من صادراتها إلى موانئ البحر الأحمر التي تخدم بصورة رئيسية الأسواق الأوروبية والمتوسطية. ومع ذلك، فإن تلك القدرة البديلة لا تمثل سوى جزء محدود من الحجم الإجمالي للنفط الذي يعبر عادة مضيق هرمز — في حدود تقارب 20% تقريباً كما أن استخدامها ينطوي على تكاليف لوجستية ونقل أعلى بكثير مقارنة بالنظام التقليدي عالي الحجم المعتمد — على ناقلات النفط العملاقة في الخليج العربي.
16. تظل أسواق النفط شديدة الحساسية للمخاطر الجيوسياسية، كما أن الخوف من احتمال تعطل الإمدادات ينعكس باستمرار في تسعير السلع العالمية.
17. خلال الأشهر الثلاثة الماضية، ظلت أسعار النفط العالمية مستقرة نسبياً مقارنة بالأزمات الجيوسياسية أو أزمات الإمداد الكبرى السابقة، حيث تراوحت بين نحو 72 دولارًا و115 دولارًا للبرميل، مع بقاء الأسعار الحالية ضمن نطاق التسعينات المنخفضة إلى المتوسطة. ولم تعكس أنماط التسعير في أي وقت نوع الاضطراب المنهجي الحاد المرتبط تاريخياً بانقطاعات مادية مطولة في تدفقات النفط العالمية.
18. وعلى الرغم من أن أسعار النفط الحالية مرتفعة نسبياً مقارنة بالمعايير التاريخية، فإنها لا تزال أقل بكثير من المستويات القصوى التي شهدتها صدمات الطاقة العالمية السابقة عند احتساب التضخم. فارتفاع أسعار النفط عام إذا ما عُبر عنه بقيمة الدولار الحالية، يعادل تقريباً 190 دولارًا للبرميل — أي ما يقارب 100% أعلى، 2008 من المستويات الحالية. ومن حيث القيمة الحقيقية المعدلة بالتضخم، تبدو الأسعار الحالية أكثر اتساقاً مع الظروف المرتفعة ولكن القابلة للإدارة التي شهدتها بعض مراحل أزمة الطاقة المرتبطة بالحرب الروسية-الأوكرانية عام 2022، وليس مع أي اضطراب حقيقي وحاد، 2022.
19. طوال الأشهر الثلاثة الماضية منذ بداية النزاع:

أ. لم تعرقل إيران بصورة مادية أو منهجية حركة الشحن التجاري العابرة للمضيق بشكل مستدام، سواء عبر زرع الألغام البحرية، أو مهاجمة السفن التجارية، أو فرض رسوم عبور، أو حصار الموانئ الإقليمية.

ب. لم يهاجم الجيش الأمريكي السفن التجارية ولم يفرض أي حصار على الموانئ الإيرانية الواقعة على الخليج العربي أو خليج عمان.

ج. استمرت الأنشطة التجارية في موانئ منطقة الخليج العربي — بما في ذلك عمليات النفط والغاز والشحن والحاويات والنقل البحري الإيراني — بصورة متواصلة إلى حد كبير ودون انقطاع يُذكر، مع استمرار عمليات التحميل والتفريغ والتصدير والاستيراد وعبور السفن عند مستويات طبيعية أو قريبة من الطبيعية طوال الفترة.

20. لا يمكن استبعاد احتمال أن بعض العناصر داخل الحكومة الإيرانية تعمل بطريقة أكثر انسجاماً مع المصالح الأمريكية والإسرائيلية مما هو معلن علناً، مع الاستمرار في الحفاظ على موقف علني معارض لأسباب داخلية أو إقليمية أو جيوسياسية أوسع.
21. يبدو أن مجمل الأدلة القابلة للملاحظة الواردة أعلاه يتعارض مادياً مع تصوير الأزمة بوصفها أزمة عسكرية إقليمية. شديدة أو مستدامة كما ينعكس في جزء كبير من الرواية العامة المحيطة بالأحداث.

جيمس هونغيلمان  
LLC ذا وايت روم  
مايو 2026

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** HP Boyle <boylehp@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 2, 2026 3:29 AM  
**To:** Participate  
**Cc:** Sarah Lurie; Andrew Theophilus  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT for Council on Budget

As you begin the next budget, I ask that you consider whether taxpayers should pay for certain items and whether Ketchum residents are receiving value for those expenditures. This is especially true for county-wide expenditures that no other city in the WRV will pay for.

You conducted this type of evaluation when you made big changes to the KPD and BCHA, for which I commend you. I ask you to carry that logic through the rest of the budget.

The biggest issue is the new fire district. The district is objectively harmful to Ketchum residents. It was a massive tax increase, a gift of our fire station, and a total loss of control over service quality and funding accountability. You recently brought housing and the police department back in-house to gain more control over the budget and service levels. This was a great step for your constituents. I urge you to apply the same logic and do the same for one of our most important public services, fire. I realize that will take a referendum. I hope you move toward that process.

The second area where we receive no value for our money is the Blaine County Sustainability Commission. I am all for sustainability, but only for substantive, not performative, expenditures. BCSC is funded half by the County and half by Ketchum. No other city in Blaine County contributes. What does Ketchum get for its money? According to BCSC, greenhouse gas emissions per capita and in aggregate are increasing. Similarly, the aquifer continues to decline over the long term—we have water curtailment almost every year, not just during drought years. Our community is thus becoming measurably less sustainable, and BCSC has had no impact on sustainability. We have wonderful non-profits such as WRLT and BWP that are far more effective. There is no reason to continue throwing good money after bad for the BCSC.

Finally, the budget includes funding for a variety of non-profits that have been pet projects for various council members. It is inappropriate for Council members to direct public funding for their personal priorities. It is not a proper function of city government to fund local non-profits with tax dollars.

Thank you,

Perry Boyle  
Ketchum

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** Mel Jackson <mel@sunvalleyeconomy.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 2, 2026 4:32 PM  
**To:** Peter Prekeges; Participate  
**Subject:** SVED Thoughts on Original LOT  
**Attachments:** COK Original LOT - SVED Letter.pdf

Dear Mayor and City Council Members – Attached letter submitted respectfully.

See you in the Star Chamber soon!

Regards,  
Mel

**Mel Jackson**

(208) 350-0539

Sun Valley Economic Development

[www.SunValleyEconomy.com](http://www.SunValleyEconomy.com)





**SUN VALLEY  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

June 2, 2026

To: The Honorable Mayor of Ketchum Pete Prekeges

Cc: Ketchum City Council

Re: Original LOT – Analysis for Nov 2026 Ballot Initiative

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

Understanding that (i) original Local Option Tax (“LOT”) needs to be renewed later this year, (ii) the City of Ketchum (“the City”) has the ability to modify the LOT percentages that are applied against the various categories, and (iii) the City is generally in favor of raising overall sources of funds for deployment into Capital Improvement projects and other city priorities, I write you today to ask you to consider an approach to the LOT allocation make-up that is an alternative to the one that was put forward in earlier city meetings.

The genesis for this letter comes from outreach I’ve received from those in the lodging industry within Ketchum city limits, whether hotels or short-term rentals. There is a genuine fear that a 4-5% increase in the Lodging LOT rate (making the overall lodging tax 15-16%) would make our properties less competitive when compared to both our immediate neighbors (Sun Valley and Hailey) and regional resort cities. A specific concern is the potential loss of business, convention and other group travel, which – beneficially - oftentimes come during “soft spots” in the calendar. There is a general desire to see if we can hover around the bulk of cities and resorts in the 11-13% total tax range and not be an outlier like Sandpoint (in Idaho) or Crested Butte, CO (regionally).

An example of how a much higher Lodging LOT rate could hurt the Ketchum economy:

A \$250k piece of convention business (rooms x multiple nights, plus associated event space and F&B), normally yielding 5k in Original LOT, would potentially climb to 15k-17.5k, a difference of 10-12.5k. That is a meaningful amount of money that someone representing that group simply cannot overlook, potentially prompting a move elsewhere. [Indeed, this is backed up by a 2021 article and study by Tourism Economics.<sup>1</sup>] It’s also worth pointing out that Ancillary Spending in other LOT categories (Retail and Liquor by the Drink) occurs when visitors stay in Ketchum.

When considering alternative approaches, what’s compelling is that due to the volume of sales that flows through the Retail category, it only requires an increase of a fraction of 1% to achieve the same kind of “fund-raising” goals the city is seeking in total.

SVED assembled the table below based on City LOT data for FY25 as posted on the city website.

For illustrative purposes, we used a 4% increase in Lodging LOT in Scenario A. In Scenario B we used only a 2% increase in Lodging but added a 0.5% increase in Retail.

<b>Total LOT Receipts - FY 2025</b>	
Total Base LOT	\$ 3,945,006
Lodging	\$ 820,358
Retail	\$ 2,242,418
Bldg Mtls	\$ 507,760
<b>Scenario A:</b>	
Lodging increased from 2% to 6%	\$ 2,461,074
Building Materials increased from 1% to 2%	\$ 1,015,520
Total LOT:	\$ 6,093,482
Change:	\$ 2,148,476
	<i>up 54%</i>
<b>Scenario B:</b>	
Lodging increased from 2% to 4%	\$ 1,640,716
Building Materials increased from 1% to 2%	\$ 1,015,520
Retail increased from 1% to 1.5%	\$ 3,363,627
Total LOT:	\$ 6,394,333
Change:	\$ 2,449,327
	<i>up 62%</i>

(In case you are wondering, the exact break-even point for an increase in the Retail % to offset the decrease in the Lodging % – in the example above – would be 1.365%.)

So, Scenario B would have the combined benefits of keeping Lodging Tax “in the neighborhood” of other jurisdictions - total lodging tax of 13% - while offering slightly more LOT overall to the city’s coffers (roughly \$300k for the year in the example above).

Purely from a fairness perspective, it seems that all categories should chip in to help raise funds for projects and services that – frankly – they will all benefit from. Retailers will benefit from CIP-funded projects aimed at improving city infrastructure.

And the impact of an additional 0.5% LOT added to that \$10 beer at Grumpy's or \$10 wrap at Wrapcity? 5 cents.

[While my first draft of this letter pre-dated your May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, I note in the Agenda Packet for City Council from that date, on Slide 209, that folks responding to the City Survey also mention “too high”, “too expensive”, and “less competitive” as reasons not to be in favor of a big increase in the Lodging rate. I also greatly appreciate Finance Director Brent Davis’s presentation on “other options” for LOT at the very end of that City Council meeting, which, regrettably, I was unable to attend.]

Ultimately, you will make the decision that you feel best serves the city, its residents and its businesses. And there are admittedly many permutations in play. My goal here is simply to bring data and analysis for you to consider as you march down the path of assembling language for the upcoming ballot.

Respectfully,



**Mel Jackson**

Executive Director

**Sun Valley Economic Development**

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**Sources Cited**

1 “The Effect of Lodging Tax Increases on US destinations” – Tourism Economics - 2021

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** James Hungelmann <jim.hungelmann@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 2, 2026 9:54 PM  
**To:** Peter Prekeges; Randy Hall; Matthew McGraw; Spencer Cordovano; Tripp Hutchinson; Participate  
**Subject:** Public Record Submission: The Return of the Outbreak Narrative.  
**Attachments:** Return\_Outbreak\_Narrative\_June\_2026.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

Attached for inclusion in the public record of the next Ketchum City Council meeting is a short commentary titled *The Return of the Outbreak Narrative*.

Although focused on current public-health narratives, the larger theme concerns evidentiary scrutiny, due process, and the preservation of independent judgment in periods of institutional pressure and emergency messaging.

Thank you,

James Hungelmann

## The Return of the Outbreak Narrative

June 1, 2026

This is not merely a commentary about Ebola, Hantavirus, COVID, or the latest outbreak narrative. It is a commentary about the unresolved legacy of COVID itself and the profound rupture in public trust that followed. Every subsequent epidemic warning and emergency declaration is now filtered through that unresolved experience, and increasing numbers of people are no longer willing to surrender judgment, liberty, or bodily autonomy without demanding far greater evidentiary scrutiny.

Today, warnings about Ebola outbreaks, Hantavirus deaths, new variants, and emerging threats are once again filling headlines and media cycles.

The familiar language has returned. So too has the familiar institutional response. Which is precisely why it is time to step back and examine the larger pattern itself.

A disease threat emerges somewhere in the world. Authorities announce a new variant. Media amplification follows. Government agencies issue warnings. Pharmaceutical manufacturers unveil new interventions.

And once again, the public is expected to suspend evidentiary scrutiny and trust institutional authority.

But something fundamental has changed. Increasing numbers of ordinary people no longer instinctively trust pronouncements issued by government agencies, international bureaucracies, pharmaceutical conglomerates, sprawling “nonprofit” hospital systems, and media structures operating in near-total narrative synchronization.

What was once presented as temporary emergency management increasingly appears to many citizens as a recurring cycle of fear amplification, institutional dependency, and commercial opportunity. The names may change. The script increasingly does not.

Authorities can travel to international conferences, stand beside NGOs and global health agencies, hold emergency summits, and repeat that “we have seen this before.” They can fly to the Congo or elsewhere and once again present the familiar institutional cast arriving supposedly to rescue humanity at precisely the opportune moment.

Perhaps that performance still works on some populations somewhere.

But increasing numbers of people are no longer persuaded by institutional messaging alone.

The public has now lived through emergency declarations, censorship, coerced conformity, rapidly shifting narratives, and pressure campaigns surrounding masks, injections, and social behavior. Many people have concluded that institutional authority itself is no substitute for transparent evidence subjected to genuine adversarial scrutiny.

Perhaps the deepest unresolved problem of the COVID era was the extent to which society was asked — and often pressured — to treat foundational premises as conclusively established while meaningful scrutiny was marginalized or suppressed. Questions surrounding transmission, attribution of causation, effectiveness of interventions, statistical modeling, emergency authority, and long-term consequences were frequently treated not as matters open to rigorous examination, but as settled conclusions requiring immediate compliance.

Yet due process exists precisely to guard against mass error, institutional overreach, panic-driven decision-making, and the human tendency to confuse repetition, authority, and consensus messaging with verified truth.

Due process is not merely a courtroom technicality. It is a civilizational safeguard intended to preserve freedom, rationality, bodily autonomy, and ultimately social sanity itself.

The erosion of due process during the COVID era did not merely affect civil liberties and public discourse. It also narrowed the range of permissible medical viewpoints and approaches to human health.

A highly centralized allopathic framework — intertwined with pharmaceutical interests, regulatory agencies, sprawling “nonprofit” hospital systems, emergency-management structures, and institutional media networks — was elevated as the singular authoritative model. Meanwhile, age-old preventative, nutrition-based, immunity-oriented, and nature-based approaches to human health were often marginalized, ridiculed, or excluded from meaningful public consideration.

Whether one ultimately agrees or disagrees with alternative approaches is not the central issue. The deeper issue is that genuine due process requires open inquiry, competing viewpoints, adversarial scrutiny, and the ability of populations to hear differing perspectives before sweeping medical and social mandates are imposed upon society.

Healthy societies do not preserve freedom or public trust by monopolizing health care, suppressing dissent, or collapsing legitimate debate into a single institutionally approved narrative.

Authorities can hold press conferences, issue warnings, roll out dashboards and graphics, and unleash every form of institutional spectacle imaginable. But until they actually put the case on — openly, transparently, and under meaningful evidentiary scrutiny — the public has every right to turn the channel and pay no heed whatsoever.

The burden is upon those making the claims—not upon free citizens to blindly submit.

Before any person is asked to mask, isolate, inject, or surrender bodily autonomy, the premises supporting those demands must be capable of withstanding rigorous public examination.

Put the evidence on. Allow independent examination. Permit challenge and cross-examination. Allow competing experts to be heard.

That is due process—the dividing line between lawful public health and institutional overreach.

No government agency, international body, pharmaceutical company, hospital system, media network, or public-health official has the right to demand obedience merely by announcement.

And trust, once broken, is not restored through louder messaging.

Political leaders may theatrically announce that a nation has “withdrawn” from an international health organization. Yet if governments, universities, corporations, media outlets, and domestic agencies continue treating that organization’s pronouncements as authoritative, then nothing substantive has changed.

One does not truly “pull out” while continuing to psychologically and institutionally submit to the same authority structure.

In that sense, the public was not “pulled out.” Instead, the public was drawn further into a system where institutional declarations substitute for transparent evidentiary debate, skepticism becomes stigmatized, dissent is marginalized, and the same institutions benefiting from fear repeatedly position themselves as indispensable saviors.

This is therefore a warning to the bureaucratic machinery itself — to the CDC, the WHO, the NGO networks, pharmaceutical interests, hospital systems, emergency-management structures, and media amplifiers that repeatedly arrive offering prepackaged solutions to crises from which they derive institutional, political, or financial advantage.

The public is no longer psychologically captive merely because authority speaks. People are increasingly prepared to say:

If there is a real emergency, prove it. If there is a real threat, demonstrate it. If there is a real necessity, establish it through evidence rather than repetition, intimidation, and institutional pressure.

What happened during COVID — the censorship, coercion, social pressure, isolation, and punishment of dissent — must never happen again.

The public now understands the pattern. It understands how fear can narrow thinking and pressure populations into surrendering independent judgment.

The next time the machinery bellows, the answer must be simple:

America is not going down this way.

We are not surrendering our minds.

We are not surrendering our bodies.

We are not surrendering our rights.

Put the evidence on.

James Hungelmann

The White Room LLC

# The Return of the Outbreak Narrative

June 1, 2026

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We are not surrendering our rights.

Put the evidence on.

James Hungelmann

The White Room LLC

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** Lolo D <larissaddehaas@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 3, 2026 10:22 PM  
**To:** Participate  
**Subject:** light ordinance

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

185 Bald Mountain Road has had Christmas tree lights on for months now.

Here is a photo of their tree.

1. has been on past hours the entire night during allowed winter times. (nov- march)
2. Has still be on since march when they are no longer allowed.
3. The light is so bright it trespasses onto private and public property. It is obnoxious and should not be allowed even during the nov-march "holiday" allowances.

The city and county have been slacking on enforcement. I would like to see fines that are a percentage of the property taxes and accrue every day the allowance is ignored.

I let this house know earlier this evening that their lightening is illegal. (I finally got the chance as they were finally home long enough for me to be neighborly and educate them). Instead of thanking me for the knowledge they yelled at me for "being on private property" when I was only in their driveway. And now, over 20 minutes later ( and after 10pm as the winter ordinance section for holiday lights states. their tree is still on with zero disregard for the concerns of their neighbors).

Their behavior is extremely discouraging. As a local who understands small town dynamics, I would rather let them know about our local ordinances first hand than simply report.

However,

It is obvious, that they, as wealthy part time transplants, do not care about neighborly conduct, or our amazing dark sky reserve.

I would appreciate if city council followed Mayor Prekeges statement during the dark sky week proclamation, and actually create an adherence structure that forces the rich, multi million dollar tourist home owners to obey our ordinances.

If they can afford a 20,000\$ lighted tree, they can afford a 10,000\$ fine for ignoring laws for over three months.

- a concerned citizen worried about our loss of dark sky reserve status as multi millions build egregious mansions with zero regard for anyone but their own ego builds

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** Wendolyn Holland <W@wendolyn.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 4, 2026 1:24 PM  
**To:** Participate  
**Subject:** Arts & Heritage Commission submission

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Dear Mayor, Council, Staff & Members of the newly constituted Arts & Heritage Commission,

Thank you for this opportunity to weigh in on an exciting new program the City is sponsoring. This note is not an offer to serve on Ketchum's Arts & Heritage Commission (AHC), but instead more of a response to a request for information, from a member of the "sister" body for 6 years: Ketchum's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC).

I live in the City's Area of Impact and offer a few points.

1. Please consider the appropriate role of government in writing, recording, and communicating history. Commissioners may want to consider what types of governments normally write their own history, rather than leave the task to trained, professional historians. I am confident these types of questions arise in the adjacent humanities domain of art. Perhaps the long-standing Arts Commissioners may have insight to share.
2. Another topic to consider is the role that City government can or ought to play in recording its own history. It is unclear whether this topic would align with the HPC, AHC, or both.
3. Further, we collectively may want to consider if the two Commissions can or should ever collaborate. I invite you all to review the meeting packet from Council's May 14, 2025 meeting, containing the Commission's proposed work plan for 2026. The one-page table provides easy reference and a walk-through of our duties in the ordinance, A through L.

Separately, I will add that in my "civilian" role, I have founded a new nonprofit here in the Valley, *The History Project*. *The History Project* is the Valley's first nonprofit solely dedicated to the active preservation and celebration of our shared historic past as a function of current and future economic development. I look forward to exploring potential partnerships with your new organization.

Lastly, I will share that should real or perceived conflicts arise between my role as a public servant and that as head of a private-sector nonprofit, I will happily excuse myself from public service.

I am hopeful in both roles I can support you all in this new & exciting endeavor.

Best regards,  
Wendolyn

## Dawn Hofheimer

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**From:** lroquet@lizzysfreshcoffee.com  
**Sent:** Friday, June 5, 2026 10:16 AM  
**To:** Participate  
**Cc:** 'KBAC Board'  
**Subject:** Concerns Regarding Proposed Increase to Retail Local Option Tax

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Mayor, Council Members, and City Staff,  
CC: KBAC

I am writing as the owner of Lizzy's Fresh Coffee in Ketchum to express my concern regarding the proposal to increase the retail portion of the Local Option Tax by an additional 1%.

Lizzy's Fresh Coffee has proudly served the Wood River Valley for the past 18 years. As a woman-owned business, we employ a local workforce, serve local residents and businesses, purchase goods and services locally, and contribute extensively to the community through donations and support of organizations including BCRD, SVSEF, the Wood River Trails Coalition, youth hockey programs, local schools, fundraisers, and many more other community events.

While our packaged coffee is exempt as a grocery item, all of the products we sell are directly affected by retail sales tax, including all specialty coffee beverages, coffee brewing equipment and accessories. The hardgood products are also widely available online, often with lower pricing and fewer barriers to purchase.

**As a local retailer, we already face the challenge of competing against national online sellers. An increase in retail sales tax further widens that gap. While the tax may appear modest on paper, it contributes to the perception that local businesses are more expensive than online alternatives. For some customers, that additional cost becomes part of the purchasing decision and can encourage them to buy elsewhere.**

The impact extends beyond tourists. Local residents, second homeowners, and visitors alike ultimately bear the additional cost. Every increase in retail tax places more financial burden on customers while making it harder for local businesses to compete in an increasingly online marketplace.

Local businesses like ours provide far more than products. We create jobs, support nonprofit organizations, sponsor youth programs, contribute to community events, occupy commercial space year-round, and help maintain the character and vitality of Ketchum. When local retail sales decline, the effects ripple throughout the broader local economy.

Independent retailers are already navigating significant cost increases from labor, health insurance, utilities, freight, rent, and other operating expenses. Unlike large online retailers and national chains, small local businesses do not have the scale or margins to easily absorb these pressures. Each additional factor that increases the final cost to consumers makes it more difficult for local businesses to remain competitive.

My concern is that increasing the retail tax asks independent businesses and their customers to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden for addressing the City's funding needs. While I understand the importance of funding capital improvement projects and housing initiatives, **I respectfully urge the City to carefully consider the unintended consequences that an additional retail tax may have on local businesses that are already facing substantial competitive and economic pressures.**

My family lives here, works here, spends money here, and enjoys the Sun Valley lifestyle alongside our employees and customers. We have invested nearly two decades into building a business that serves this community, employs local residents, and contributes meaningfully to the quality of life in Ketchum. We care deeply about the long-term success of our town and appreciate the difficult decisions facing City leadership.

However, I do not support increasing the retail Local Option Tax and encourage the City to explore alternatives that do not further disadvantage local retailers and the customers who choose to support them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Liz Roquet  
Owner, Lizzy's Fresh Coffee  
Ketchum, Idaho

Liz Roquet  
lroquet@lizzysfreshcoffee.com  
P 208.806.0212  
[www.lizzysfreshcoffee.com](http://www.lizzysfreshcoffee.com)

