

Riverfront Research Park Forum Heats Up

by Garde Wells

On Thursday, March 5 the City of Eugene, the University of Oregon, represented by UO President Paul Olum, and the Carley Capital Group, developers of the Park, hosted a public forum on the Riverfront Research Park.

According to Olum, who was the first to speak at the evening presentation, there will no longer be any debate about whether a 71-acre research park will be constructed along the banks of the Willamette River.

The actual site in question involves the area between Franklin Boulevard on the south, Autzen Stadium on the north, the Ferry Street bridge on the west, and the Interstate-5 bridge over the Willamette on the east.

One of the "Project Goals" of the Research Park is "to enhance the appearance and use of the Riverfront area." Another of the goals that appeared in the Riverfront Forum's Thursday night agenda was "to assist in the ongoing diversification of the economic base of the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area and of the state of Oregon as a whole, by encourag-

ing the growth of research-based industry."

Olum made it clear that the Riverfront Community Forum would provide no opportunity to discuss the issue of classified, or secret research. In his opening remarks, he stated that "sometime in the next month" there would be a public discussion of some of the "philosophical, political, and social concerns" surrounding the project.

Later in the agenda of March 5's public meeting, during a speech that former Eugene Mayor Gus Keller read from his notes, audience members interrupted the proceedings and questioned the process that has transpired in the past several years regarding the site selection for the Research Park. Keller now heads the Riverfront Research Park Commission.

During another interruption of the planned agenda (which absolutely would concern nothing more than the architectural planning of the existing site), an audience member said, "You're asking us to jump into a swimming pool that isn't yet filled with water. We're questioning whether

or not the swimming pool is in the right location in the first place."

At this point Olum rose to the podium in an attempt to quell any dissent among the Forum's participants. He said that "the issue of the site

"...the issue of the site itself has been discussed for four years..."

itself has been discussed for four years. . . ."

Eugene City Manager Mike Gleason, who was not on the agenda, also jumped to the podium to defend the Research Park's position, saying that

the developing partners have already gone through all of the necessary legal processes in determining the site on the south bank of the Willamette. (Moments later a citizen who was present at the forum overhead Gleason requesting additional police officers to stand by at the meeting.)

Paul Olum, trembling angrily, again speaking out of order on the meeting's agenda, said, "The only thing that will stop this project is if it is (technically) unfeasible!" He also emphatically suggested that anyone who disapproved of the forum's format should leave, rather than make any further protests.

It would be an understatement to say that the main part of the evening's agenda that followed the controversy was a denouement. What transpired after the emotional beginning was a discussion of architectural concerns. Despite insistence upon the specific four topics of *Transportation, Recreation/Amenities/Public Areas, Design, and Other*, small group discussions nevertheless produced comments regarding the site selection itself.

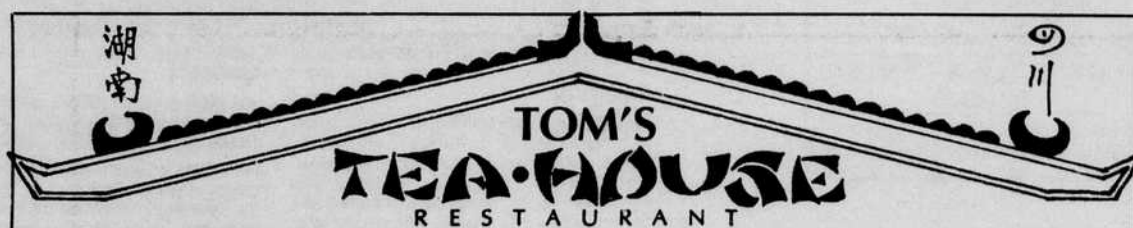
In the summary of the small group

meetings (each of the 20 or so tables had from five to six community members, a group leader—a representative of one of the several committees involved in the Research Park planning process—and a "recorder"), one of the recorders expressed that there was concern in the group about "speculative development."

Forum participant Paul Montagne compared the political climate in Eugene, regarding the development of the Research Park, to New Guinea's "Cargo Cult" phenomenon. Native tribes in New Guinea observed cargo aircraft landing and delivering supplies at a nearby airstrip. The natives, thinking that the airplanes must be gods bringing goods from the skies, constructed their own elaborate mock airplane landing strip in the jungle in hopes that the airplane deities would come and deliver cargoes of food and tools.

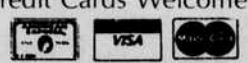
For anyone who feels they would like to have a hand in further developments, a second Research Park Forum will be held on Tuesday, April 7 at 7:30 pm in the City Council Chambers.

WHAT'S HAPPENING will be closed March 20-26.



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