



Mayor Les Anderson rides his bicycle to work daily.

Photo by Phil Waldstein

Mayor, city manager head Eugene

Les Anderson is an easy person to talk to. He greets you with a wide smile and a firm handshake, inspiring confidence with a friendly welcome.

Anderson is in his fifth year as Eugene's mayor and he is enthusiastic about his role in city government and about the community he lives in.

"I'm confident we're by far the most progressive city in the state — in so far as realizing what our urban problems are and attempting to meet those problems.

"Eugene is a meld of good things: it has a good environment and a good economy. We have been able to combine industry, commerce and environmental education in a pretty good balance."

In the corner of Anderson's office at Random Lengths Publications where he is president, stands a mode of transportation familiar to most students — a ten-speed bicycle. Anderson, who has been referred to as Eugene's bike-riding mayor, laughingly refuses to be a symbol of inspiration. "I ride a bike because I enjoy it," he said, "I'm a follower rather than a leader — the University has led the community in inspiring interest in bicycling and jogging."

Eugene has a weak mayor system as opposed to a "strong mayor system." A strong mayor is elected as an administrator, whereas in Eugene the role of administrator is filled by a professional city manager.

Anderson is sold on the system.

He thinks that it is important for people to understand the role of the mayor. "Some people think I am a 'boss' meaning that I have a free rein to do what I want. I represent the executive branch of government. My legislative powers are limited. As the presiding officer of the council my job is to keep things moving, to provide diversity in reaching answers to city problems.

"I have no vote except in case of a tie, although I do have the power of veto," explained Anderson, "I take it to be my duty to explain and articulate the problems of the city and to open up issues that face the city and at the same time inject my own beliefs.

"The mayor also has an external role...he represents the city of Eugene to other units of government and to other entities outside the city — the governor, the state legislature, L-COG, and the League of Oregon Cities.

"The charter is not too specific as to the role of mayor...I preside at council meetings as the 'official representative' of the city, I appoint boards and commissions — beyond that it is pretty much an individual interpretation of the role."

Anderson defines his role as "an advisor, a mediator, and an articulator."

"To put all the nuts and bolts together in regards to city government, you get an educated, skilled professional — he knows how to develop a tax program, how to run a public works program efficiently, he's been trained to do these things.

"From an administrative viewpoint it's especially good and it is also good from a political viewpoint," said Anderson. "There is a definite point at which a councilman or mayor will not go any further...his role is a political policy role."

"I think also you get a more neutral viewpoint in terms of problems and issues that face the city. A professional is inclined to look at the urban situation more objectively than a political person — who may see his own interests being affected."

Anderson views the University as an integral part of the Eugene community. He worked for the University for 10 years in the alumni office and as assistant to the president.

"When the University was founded it brought out people of the 'Greek scholar type'. They plunged into developing the University and they had a great influence on the entire community — as they were very active in civic enterprises. This set the foundation for a tie between the two that many cities don't have. It goes back historically.

"The contributions from the University in city government by University people has been tremendous. They have a great influence on the community in many other ways.

"The university has opened up unique opportunities in cultural and recreational pursuits," asserted Anderson.

"The University and the community have grown together," explained Anderson, "unlike Corvallis, for example, the University is not the dominant force in the community. This is an advantage for both groups.

"I think it's greatest influence is its innovative aspects," said Anderson. It's there to develop new ideas and these ideas extend into the community.

"We get accused lots of times of being unresponsive," said Anderson, "usually because we don't respond in the way a certain group wants us to respond.

"We make a real attempt to serve as an open public forum for all segments of the community. We have a lot of diverse factions here and opposing viewpoints — this is healthy, not wrong.

"Although we don't always come up with the right answer all the time, we utilize all the techniques at our disposal to find it."

Kathleen Glanville

Hugh McKinley, with over 20 years experience in the management of cities, is Eugene's "professional administrator." He has held this position for the last 13 years and is a seasoned veteran, experienced in the workings of Eugene's city government.

"I am the chief executive responsible for the operation of and the providing of services," explains McKinley, "I'm employed by the council and given the responsibility of carrying out their decisions."

Eugene's city-manager form of government places complete power of administration in the hands of the city manager.

"My job is to apply the resources," said McKinley. "Although I am active in policy forming, I am not a voting member of the council. They decide what is to be done, the level of service, the priorities, and the amount of money to be spent."

McKinley is also budget officer for the city. He is responsible for city funds, collection and expenditures and both the safekeeping and accounting thereof. He is the man who does the hiring and firing of the administrative staff.

"All the operating heads report to me. I prepare the council's agenda and reports. I gather data — and provide them with alternatives and recommendations."

McKinley views the University as a vital force in the community as well as a potential resource.

"There's a lot of interaction between city government and the University...I'm afraid we don't take advantage of it like we should.

"We've tried to get good representative spokesmen from ASUO organizations to speak on student concerns — they appoint people to this representative-liaison responsibility but they often get so wrapped up in academics and other activities that their interest wanes."

"We are open and receptive to that type of participation, if the student organization is willing to maintain it," said McKinley.

"Occasionally we will get an ASUO president who is a live wire — then there is a flurry of interest in city government, but it doesn't last too long."

Greg Leo, newly elected ASUO president, said that his administration is "very interested in this sort of relationship with the city government."

"Right now we have a job description in the planning stages which would provide for an 'ASUO-City liaison'," said Leo. "This person would be the official ASUO spokesman at City Council meetings."

McKinley also recognizes the value of the University in terms of individuals. In many ways the city government in Eugene serves as an unofficial classroom — providing a learning experience for students interested in fields related to local government. Working closely with the University, McKinley has co-operated with career guidance, CSPA, political science, journalism, urban planning, and the law school.

"We use interns from the CSPA school considerably," said McKinley. "We did have a work study program at one time, but the funding is not assured this year."

"Urban planning and the Parks and Recreation Department use many people. We are kind of a training ground, which is as much for our benefit as theirs — many people come out of school and work for us a while before moving on. It is a great asset for us," asserted McKinley.

The city also encourages its employees to continue their education.

"We have a lot of employees who are taking University courses," said McKinley. "We provide academic assistance to employees if they are taking courses related to their job."

Kathleen Glanville

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