

Council hears hospital parking arguments

By CHRIS NORMAN
Of the Emerald

The complex question of limiting neighborhood growth arose before the Eugene City Council Wednesday when a neighborhood group presented a case against Sacred Heart General Hospital's proposed six-story parking structure.

After the West University Neighbor's (WUN) presentation and a hospital spokesperson's comments, the council voted to request both sides enter into talks to maintain open communication lines.

Council member Jack Delay interpreted WUN's request for the city council to intervene in the parking structure's construction as an attempt to "plan now before the project is undertaken."

WUN charges in a letter sent to the council, which appeared in Monday's Emerald, that the proposed parking structure would

violate the city's zoning code under the "entirely closed building" rule, would contribute to "neighborhood blight," would add to traffic congestion, would increase auto pollution and would present night-time safety hazards.

"We can accept that we don't have up-to-date zoning for that part of town," Delay says. If neither group can begin talks now, "I'm willing to ask the council that full consideration be given to this matter."

Council member Scott Lieuallen adds the issue of limited neighborhood growth can't be side-stepped by the council.

"People are uptight about a runaway building boom that is changing the community," he says. "They say, 'Look, we're being overrun by this issue' (before they can bring together an opposing or alternative plan)."

The proposed parking structure is planned for the southwest corner of 13th Avenue and Hilyard

Street. The hospital's adopted plan, drafted by the Careage Corp., of Bellevue, Wash., will cost about \$1.75 million, says Dick Williams, hospital associate administrator. The nine-month construction period is scheduled to begin in June or July, but no bids are out yet.

Brad Perkins, WUN spokesperson, told the council, "We're sitting here at a desperate point, not knowing if the building permit will be applied for. We want assurance from the council that if the building permit is applied for, we are notified."

Previously, WUN has been disappointed that Sacred Heart hasn't kept it informed of all the parking structure's development stages.

Gordon Rennie, the hospital's

director of public relations, declined to respond to WUN's charges before the council because he says he hasn't had a chance to read the letter. But later in a telephone interview, he did respond to the allegations.

Rennie said there are no code violations. But the WUN letter claims the parking structure is zoned in an area that must have "entirely closed" buildings—in effect sealed, much like an office building is sealed in glass.

Rennie also said city traffic engineers were consulted in the planning stages, and he believes the parking structure won't add to traffic congestion or pollution because of the hospital employee shift changes.

"These cars are already here," he said. "They are already being

accommodated. They aren't going to be dumped out all at once into the streets."

Of the estimated 500 employee cars, Rennie says about 150 will disperse at the peak shift change at 3 p.m. One hundred cars will leave in the next hour, 50 more by 6 p.m.

Rennie also rejects WUN's night-time safety hazard argument because of lack of evidence. In any event, Williams says an attendant will probably be stationed at the parking structure and all but the first level will be closed off.

"We're neighbors, too," Rennie said. "Obviously, the hospital doesn't want to create a monster that we can't live with. But there are limitations that we must work within that many people are unaware of."

Council favors bicycle bridge over Franklin Boulevard

If you are one of the many students who has scurried across the first three lanes of Franklin Boulevard, perched on the island, and then scurried across the next three lanes, there is a chance the scurrying won't be necessary in the future.

A proposed Franklin Boulevard overpass for bikers and pedestrians was approved Wednesday by the Eugene City Council. The proposal was one of seven additions to the Eugene Bikeway Master Plan the council approved.

The bike bridge would extend from the open space between Science III and Oregon Hall across Franklin to the canoe shack, according to Jim Johnston, a university planner.

Johnston says he's been working on the proposal for over three years and that just because the council approves it doesn't mean it will be implemented. The bridge would be built by the University

using state funds allocated by the legislature. But before it gets to the legislature the proposal must get the approval of University, Pres. William Boyd and the State Board of Higher Education.

The bridge would help reduce congestion on the Franklin and Onyx Street intersection, and provide a safe alternate way for handicapped people, bicyclists, and pedestrians to cross the Boulevard.

Council member Tom Williams questioned the proposal, saying "I hear all the marvelous things it will do. But why would anyone ride up an overpass — my experience has been that bike riders will not go one-eighth of an inch out of the way if there is a quicker, more dangerous, faster way."

Diane Bishop, city bicyclist coordinator, stated that the Jefferson overpass bike bridge has been used a lot and that the Franklin bridge would not be nearly as

steep as the Jefferson one because the incline must be appropriate for wheelchairs.

Spraying draws protest in Oakridge

Oakridge residents protested U.S. Forest Service herbicide spraying near the city's water supply Wednesday, with a "brush-in."

Jan Schuetze, spokesperson for the group said about 35 area residents, armed with chainsaws, machetes, axes and bare hands, cleared brush from around small conifers.

The group cleared 10 acres in about three and one-half hours, she said.

The Oakridge City Council's appeal to Forest Service Chief John McGuire to halt spraying near the Salmon Creek watershed, which supplies the city's water, was turned down last Friday.

However, Willamette Forest Supervisor John Alcock announced Monday the spraying program would be reduced from 450 acres in the Salmon Creek drainage to only one unit of 34 acres.

Alcock also said the buffer zone along streams would be increased from 100 to 200 feet.

The citizen's group plans to finish manual clearing of the unit Saturday, she said, depending on the weather. "We want to show the Forest Service we can do it effectively."

In spite of their efforts, Schuetze said, the area may be sprayed with herbicides. According to her, a Forest Service spokesperson said the area didn't look clear enough; "he said they'd probably go ahead and spray anyway."

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