

County assessor faces financial crunch

Bain plans to be 'part of Lane County team'

Second in a series on Lane County government

By JACK CONDLIFFE
Of the Emerald

"I'm going to try and not make any headlines for you," Lane County Assessor Bill Bain says while sitting in a row of cubicles temporarily set up for him and three new county commissioners.

Staying out of the headlines will be a major change for the county assessor. Outgoing assessor Ken Bylund was frequently in the news.

He battled Lane County Commissioner Archie Weinstein over the commissioner's property taxes; lobbied in the Legislature for tax relief; fought with the Board of Equalization, a property tax appeals board, over assessments of business properties; and went up against the county employees' labor union.

Those days may now be over. Bain says his major goal in office will be quiet job performance.

Some immediate problems faced Bain when he assumed office at the beginning of this year. A state Department of Revenue report found that the county commissioners had not adequately funded the assessor's office, long a contention of Bylund during his skirmishes with Weinstein and other commissioners.

Bylund has asked for \$417,000 to upgrade his staff of appraisers, but the county staff has recommended only \$180,000.

The financial crunch has already forced the assessor's office behind in this year's property assessments, which State law requires be reappraised every five years, with other year's valuation increases estimated by computer.

Another problem Bain will face is in keeping property values consistent with zoning. Agricultural land cannot be valued at what it might be worth if the owner subdivided it.

Many property values may go down as comprehensive land use plans required by the state Land Conservation and Development Commission go into effect.

The solution, says Bain, is better coordination between the assessor's office and the county Planning Department.

Asked whether he would continue Bylund's independent lobbying in Salem, Bain responded, "I intend to continue (lobbying), but, I intend to continue as part of the Lane County team." His positions will be worked out in consultation with other county officials.

"If we approach the thing as a unit, then we might have to modify our personal stances, but we'll be more effective," he says. Bain also hopes to increase his effectiveness in lobbying the Legislature by joining the statewide and western Oregon assessor's organizations.

Bain says people will be looking to the Legislature for two things in a tax relief bill. "They're concerned about overall spending limits and they're concerned about runaway property value increases," he says.

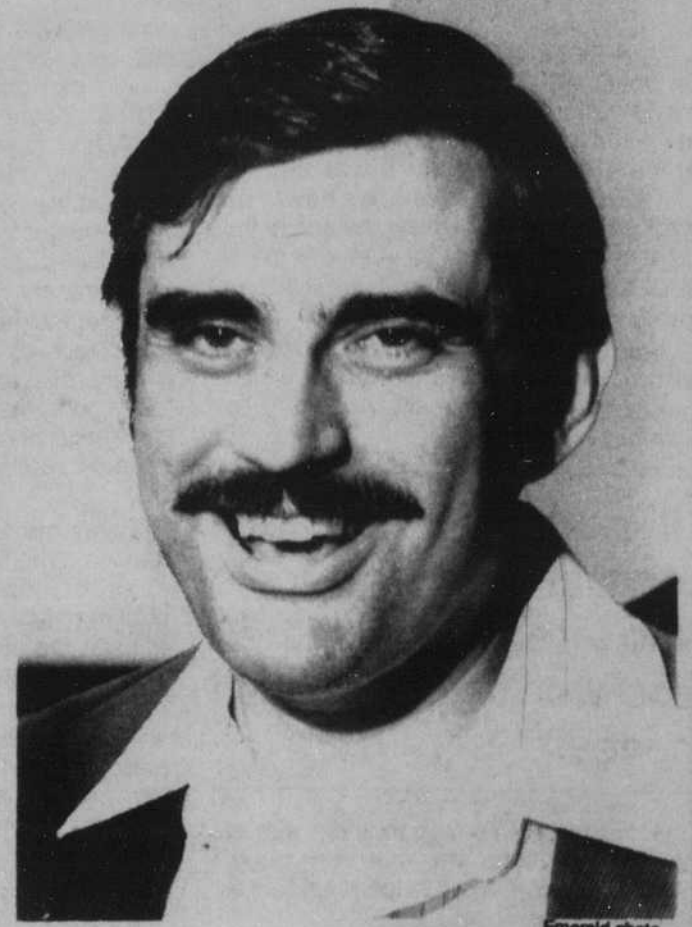
Bain says he expects the Legislature to pass an expenditure limit and to deal with skyrocketing property values in some way.

How the property value question is handled concerns Bain. He says the solution must be equitable, unlike Ballot Measure 6, which would have resulted in neighboring property owners with similar homes having widely different valuations.

Before Bain concerned himself too much about the Legislature, he had to wind up his appraising business, meet his new staff and generally learn his job.

He and Bylund steered clear of each other during the transition. "We don't see eye to eye," Bain said before he assumed office. "But we're making an effort toward a smooth transition."

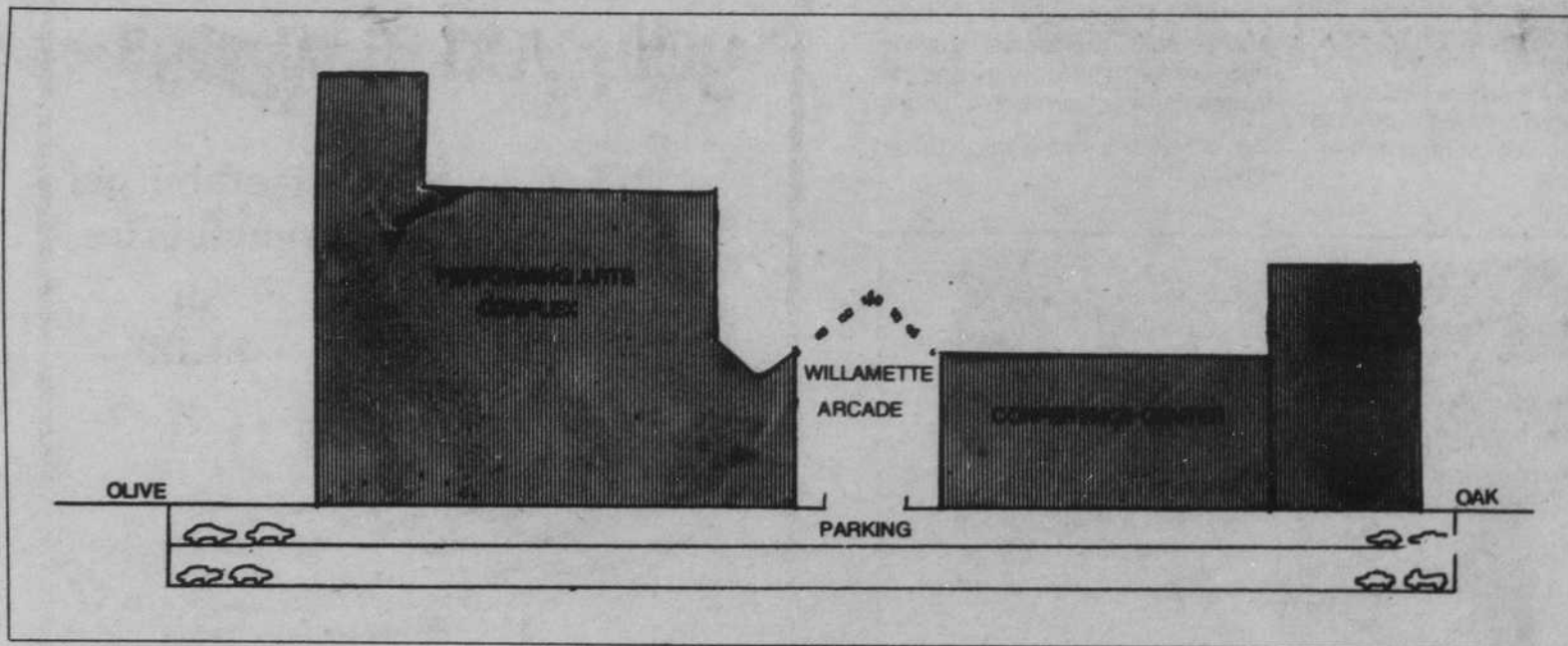
Bain was extremely critical of Bylund's management practices during the election campaign, citing lower



Lane County's new assessor Bill Bain intends to change the image of his office, making it less controversial than it has been in the past. Bain has been extremely critical of former assessor Ken Bylund's management practices and says his own management style will prove to be more effective.

morale and higher turnover than nearly all other county departments.

Bain says his own style of management is different from Bylund's, and he doesn't anticipate the employee problems that plagued Bylund.



Theater, performing arts center gets unanimous approval from City Council

By LORRAINE NELSON
Of the Emerald

A master plan for a two-block civic center site in downtown Eugene was unanimously approved by the Eugene City Council Wednesday.

The council approved a Eugene Civic Center Commission recommendation to adopt an architectural concept for the two-block site although funding is available for only one block.

The area is bounded by Sixth and Seventh Avenues and by Oak and Olive Streets.

Funds for a performing arts facility and parking are still available from an \$18.5 million bond issue approved by Eugene voters last year.

The master site plan, put together by the New York architectural firm of Hardy Holz-

man Pfeiffer Associates, calls for a 10-story performing arts facility to be built on the west block of the site and a hotel-conference center to be located on the east block of the site. Recommended height for the convention center is about three to five stories.

Retail facilities, including space for rehearsal halls and community meeting rooms, are planned to line the east and west sides of Willamette Street between the two blocks. That portion of Willamette Street would be covered and closed to traffic but open to pedestrians at all times.

Plans for two levels of underground parking on each block site are dependent upon soil studies now being conducted.

The two levels would provide parking for 1,000 cars. Funds are now available for only one level of parking on one block, to hold a total of 250 cars.

A combination of private development and tax increment financing has been suggested to fund the development of the second block.

Mayor Gus Keller expressed his appreciation of the development of the project so far and urged the civic center commission to "keep the project rolling."

The council also adopted civic center commission recommendations:

- That the civic center architects be authorized to proceed with the performing arts facility design and the amount of parking that can be provided within the \$18.5 million bond issue approved for the project.
- That the architects be authorized to continue development of the master plan design concept to the extent that it is necessary for the development of the performing arts center.

Councilman suffers attack, on critical list

Eugene City Councilman Bill Hamel remained in critical condition late Wednesday night after he suffered a cardiac arrest during that day's council meeting.

Hamel, 59, was given cardio-pulmonary resuscitation by several city officials and paramedics and then was taken to Sacred Heart Hospital.

Hamel suffered the attack shortly before 1 p.m. Wednesday during the council's meeting at the International King's Table restaurant in the Oakway Mall.

Eugene Community Relations Director Carol Baker and Asst. City Attorney Joyce Benjamin administered the heart massage and artificial respiration to Hamel after he apparently stopped breathing.

Hamel was re-elected last May to the council from Ward 5, which covers north Eugene.



Bill Hamel

Thursday, January 18, 1979