

Hansen: send business 'welcome' signal

By Marian Green
Of the Emerald

City council candidate Dick Hansen says his business background gives him the ideal experience to enhance Eugene's economic development.

He is running against Susan Sowards for the Ward 4 council position, which includes the University area. Incumbent Gretchen Miller is not seeking re-election.

Hansen is endorsed by several business people, including Tom Williams, of Williams' Bread, and Maurie Jacobs, of M. Jacobs Furniture.

As general manager of Valley River Center, the 47-year-old Hansen says he's

"worked with and taken chances with" many of the 100 or so businesses at VRC. In that job he promotes small businesses "all the time," he says.

At the same time, Hansen says he perceives no conflict of interest with developing the downtown area. "Downtown's strength is my strength," he says.

One of downtown's strengths is the new Eugene Performing Arts Center, he says. "We're going to be awfully proud of that facility," Hansen says. The complex is a "positive" tool to draw people to Eugene, he adds.

But, he notes, the city must be prepared to support it during its first years.

"That's just something we're going to have to do," Hansen says. "It's not generating enough dollars from the room tax and the ticket sales."

Hansen currently serves on the Economic Diversification task team and the Lane Transit District budget committee and has served on numerous city committees, including a stint as chairperson of the Eugene Budget Committee in 1978.

"Believability" is a major problem in the community, he says.

"The economic development problems are substantial," he says. "We need to send a very clear signal to outsiders that we are, in fact, receptive to busin-

esses coming in and locating here."

Noting that the Fantus Co. report "clearly states that outsiders still believe that an anti-business attitude exists," Hansen says he hopes to begin changing that image at home by going "one-on-one with existing businesses."

Hansen also says he'd work to "cut down" on red tape for people requesting information or staff help "so that we can make a decision rather than dragging it out."

Relations between the business community and the University need to be improved, Hansen says, because the two "have a tendency to look with distrust on each other."

Sowards: keep University as a top priority

By Marian Green
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City council candidate Susan Sowards emphatically supports keeping the University Eugene's number one priority.

Sowards, 31, is running against Dick Hansen for Gretchen Miller's Ward 4 council position, which includes the University area. Miller, who is not seeking re-election, endorses Sowards for the position.

The University is Eugene's largest employer, Sowards says. "The city council made it its number one priority, and I would intend to keep it that way," she adds.

The city council also should keep the University its number one lobbying effort at the Legislature to ensure that it remains "well and strong," she says.

If new industry does locate in the area, a trained workforce will be needed, Sowards says. Instead of giving the University "short shrift" in economic diversification planning, programs should be coordinated between the University and Lane Community College to provide that training, she says.

Sowards says the city needs to work toward continued economic planning.

"The minute we rise out (of an economic depression) the talk fades," she says.

Bringing in high technology

industry is "an excellent idea," but many companies don't have the money to relocate right now, says Sowards, a partner in Business Development Associates and formerly an administrative aide to state Rep. Margie Hendricksen. She also serves as a citizen member on the Eugene Budget Committee, as well as other boards.

She suggests looking at ways for small businesses to raise venture capital and to replace normally imported products with Oregon products.

Sowards supports the Eugene Performing Arts Complex "strongly." But, "it may need to be made more affordable," she says.

"I'd like to see it set up so local groups can afford to use it." Groups such as the Oregon Repertory Theatre have complained that the center's cost is prohibitive, she says.

"It's a hard time in the economy to introduce something like that and expect it to succeed, but it has a good chance," Sowards says. "We've got it, and we'd better market it."

Sowards says communication is vital to strong city government.

A member of the Fairmount Neighborhood Association, Sowards says she has been attending other Ward 4 neighborhood meetings since February and was surprised to

find the groups "not as representative as they might be because they don't have enough power."

"I think it might be a good idea to give them a little more

power."

Putting governmental information in the public library and perhaps using public access television to film important city council and committee meet-

ings are ways of improving citizen awareness, she says.

"When people know more about their government, government becomes theirs again."

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