

Tightrope

Lane budget balances on unstable highwire

By Steve Hooks
Of the Emerald

If misery loves company, as the old adage goes, Lane County and the University should be best friends. The county, like the University, faces a serious financial crunch.

Before they balance the budget, county officials expect to add more cuts and layoffs to a casualty list begun in July.

"Basically, it means things won't get done," says Scott Lieuallen, county commissioner.

A first-time visitor entering the Lane County Public Services Building won't get help from the information desk. That has been "closed due to budget cuts," the sign says.

Others may be surprised to find the building shut tight on Fridays. A four-day work week for county employees, another result of budget cuts, has been in effect since July. However, those who have business at the county courthouse will usually be served on Fridays.

County employees will also have to make do with fewer on-the-job services. "People vacuum their own offices now," Lieuallen says.

But reductions in cleaning crews are only symptomatic of

the greater problem.

On the advice of a special task force, the commissioners trimmed an additional \$132,000 in September from the budgets of the general services and information systems department and community health and social services department.

The money-saving measures eliminated or combined about nine management and secretarial jobs in those departments, according to a county memorandum.

The GSIS cuts mean county records, especially elections records, will take longer to process, says Steven Ickes, director of GSIS.

To bear its \$89,000 share of the cuts, GSIS laid off a manager and an executive secretary and eliminated two vacant managerial and clerical positions, Ickes says.

The CHSS share of the burden is \$43,000. CHSS eliminated another vacant position from its job roster, says Janet Chapell, director. Further vacancies may be eliminated or combined, she says.

"We're kind of torn between keeping things solid and moving and the need to save money," Chapell says. "The public probably doesn't see a direct impact right away (because of

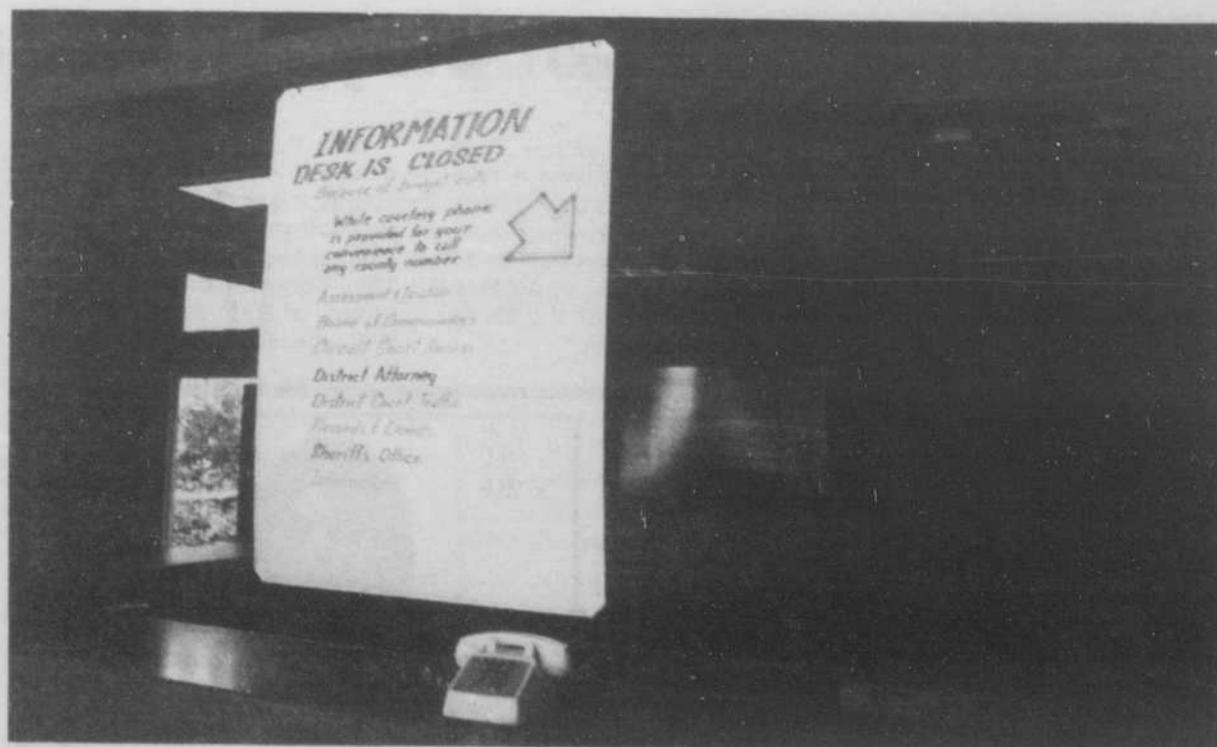


Photo by Dave Kao

"We've just been trying to get the damn (budget) balanced," says Steve Ickes, director of general services for the county.

the cuts). But it makes things harder to do," she says.

Like the other county departments, CHSS endured the direct impact of the earlier cuts and layoffs in July. The public health division of the CHSS saw \$800,000 pared from its budget, Chapell says. The department has also lost grant money since then, she adds.

"We had a (senior citizen medical) screening program that was really popular. That was eliminated. We reduced family planning by about one-third," Chapell says.

Cuts also pinched the flu shot program. "This year, we're only going to give them to seniors," Chapell says.

These county health services, like many other county programs, were shelved July 1. The commissioners started the fiscal year by slicing and dicing various agencies so the county could meet a scaled-down budget of \$31 million.

After voters rejected the county's May request to increase the property tax base by \$10 million, officials put into action the contingency budget that required the drastic cuts.

But during the summer, voters approved a special tax levy for county law enforcement. Officials also learned that revenue from federal timber lands will yield the county \$5.7 million.

Despite the relief, budget-cutting measures have cost the county "a couple of hundred people in terms of layoffs," says Jim Phelps, finance and management director.

The county also must find \$468,000 more to balance this year's budget and \$9 million to balance next year's budget, Ickes says.

"That \$9 million is not on us now, but is facing us squarely," he says. "We are planning a policy retreat to try to develop some clearer priorities for the 1983-84 budget."

The retreat is planned for December, in time for the arrival of the new county administrator, Ickes says.

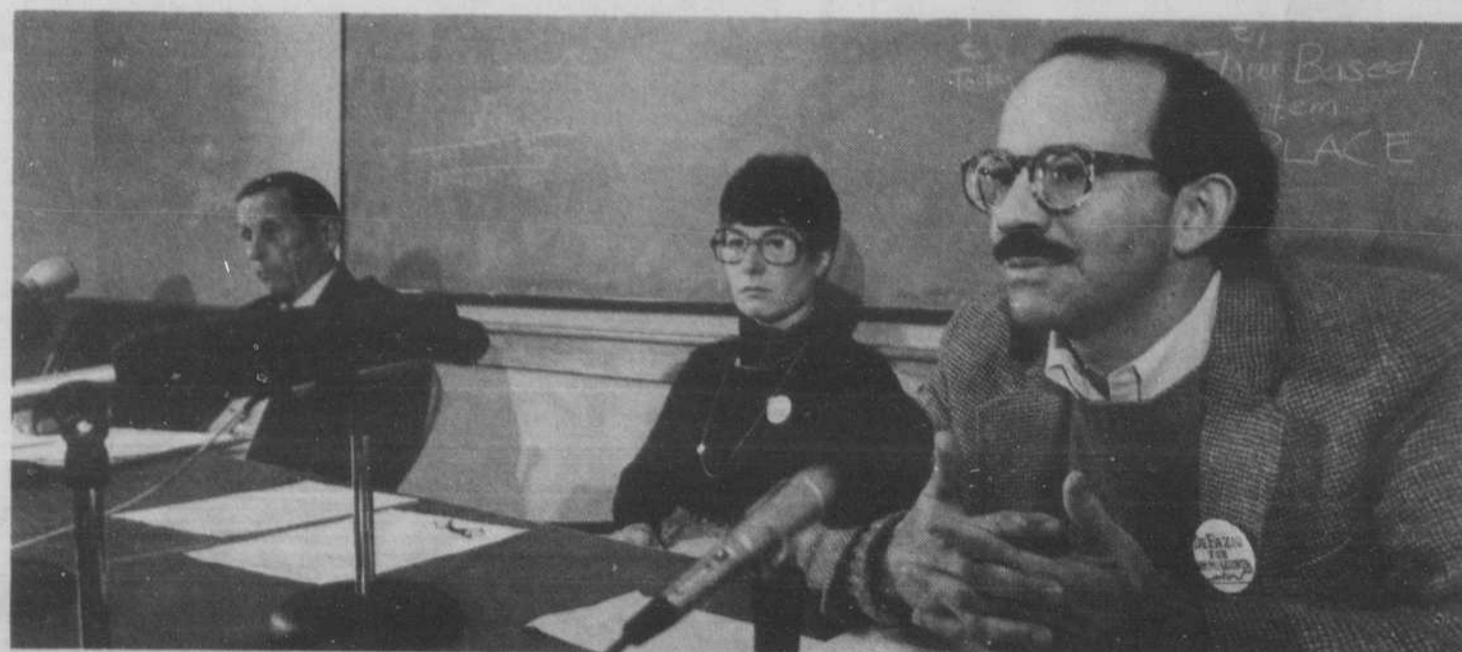


Photo by Dave Kao

Vance Freeman and Peter DeFazio, candidates for a Lane County Commission position, debated over mostly economic issues, in Springfield, Tuesday night.

Debate focuses on economics

By David Brown
Of the Emerald

Resuming county services five days a week, while maintaining reduced employee hours, was one idea advanced at the debate which brought together the candidates for Springfield's District 2 seat on the Lane County Board of Commissioners.

Challenger Peter DeFazio criticized the current policy which closes the Public Service Building on Fridays.

Incumbent Vance Freeman argued that employees commuting five days per week would cost those employees money on top of what was already lost through cuts in payroll and hours.

The debate focused mainly on the county's economic issues.

"I feel very strongly that the county should undertake economic development efforts" utilizing existing staff,

said DeFazio, an aide to U.S. Rep. Jim Weaver, D-Ore.

"I have a little problem with starting up another agency when we're already short people," responded Freeman, former Springfield mayor and city councilor.

He told the 50-member audience he favored creating jobs through reducing impediments in land-use planning to business development.

Freeman's experience as a commissioner and budget committee member leads him to believe the county must live with its existing budget.

"We are on a no new revenue policy," he said.

"I'd like to take a more active role in the budget committee," DeFazio said. Last year, when faced with budget deficit, the county commission simply put out a new tax levy and went home, he said.

The county should scrutinize departmental spending, DeFazio said. And ground-level county employees should have more say in cost savings, he said. "The people who do the work from day to day have many of the best ideas about cost savings," he said.

Freeman contended the county does recognize such suggestions and has acted on them. But "we don't have the funds to contribute" to programs expanding on that resource, he said.

To trim monetary waste, DeFazio suggested depositing county funds in local banks, making more money available for loans to local businesses.

"We do not have any surplus funds," and strong restrictions dictate the handling of county revenue, replied Freeman. Depositing the money in two Portland banks eliminates the problem of "keeping a trail" on the money, he said.

Faculty campaigners request student aid to hand out leaflets

"Save Oregon — No on 6," a recently organized faculty group campaigning against Ballot Measure 6, is requesting help from interested students in distributing leaflets Saturday, according to Dorothy Anderson, committee chairperson.

The measure, if passed, would abolish all statewide land use planning laws and eliminate the Land Conservation and Development Commission.

Anderson, former land use planning chairperson for the League of Women Voters, says the leaflet distribution is part of a series of events including radio, television, and newspaper ads designed to block the passage of measure 6.

She says about 75 to 80 people, including members of the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters and local land use planners, will be distributing information door to door.

Volunteers can pick up leaflets for distribution between 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. at two locations.

Students living close to campus can pick the leaflets up at the Survival Center in the EMU. The other location is Anderson's house, 939 E. 21st St.

Anderson, who participated in leaflet distribution against similar ballot measures in 1976 and 1978, says it is a successful campaign method because "it's one way that you're sure of getting a broad scope of information to a lot of people."

She says "a lot of people like that personal touch. They think, 'Oh, you care that much.'"

According to Jan Flaherty, assistant director of the campus Survival Center and treasurer of "Save Oregon — No on 6," about 20 students have volunteered to help.

Flaherty says, "The people I've talked to are really interested. I want to get at least 35. The more the better."

For more information call Flaherty at 686-4356 or Anderson at 345-2820.