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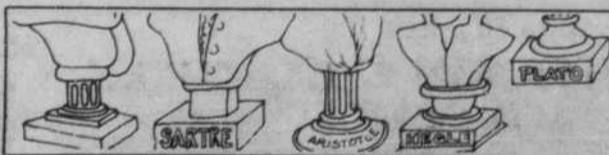
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Eugene City Council lends ear to public

By Michele Matassa
Of the Emerald

When city budget cuts threatened the Eugene Library's bookmobile service in June, Ada Tolliver was one of many citizens to speak up about it.

Tolliver, who had been employed by the library for 10 years, stood up before the eight-member City Council and the mayor of Eugene to defend the bookmobile. She said it was extremely painful telling nursing home residents the bookmobile was being cut, since it often was their only form of enjoyment and contact with the outside world.

Although Tolliver's plea later proved futile — lack of money forced the council to cut the bookmobile — she and every other concerned citizen had the opportunity to argue their case before the city government.

Public hearings such as that one concerning the city budget are only one function of the Eugene City Council.

The council meets every second and fourth Monday and all but the first Wednesday of each month to determine the city budget and land annexations, as well as oversee the operation of city services and try to improve the local economy.

Oct. 28 and 29, the council will meet to identify its goals for the year and give direction to the city staff so it can help meet those goals, according to Barb Bellamy, city public information director.

For the past two years, the council's top priority has been economic development and diversification, Bellamy says.

To further that goal, the group formed the Business Assistance Team and the Development Assistance and Information Center, which advises people who are developing businesses and have questions about city zoning.

The economic development goal also produced the Willamette Research Corridor, a plan to use representatives from Eugene and Springfield governments and from Oregon State University, Lane Community College and the University to determine ways education can attract business to the area, Bellamy says.

The council will be acting on the Research Corridor Wednesday at 11:45 a.m. in City Hall building.

Other issues the councilors will be dealing with this fall are

management of the Hult Center for the Performing Arts, annexation of the River Road/Santa Clara area and financing of local services.

The council will determine if the Hult Center, which currently carries a \$563,000 deficit, should share revenue from the city's general fund or continue operating on donations and ticket proceeds.

The city also will conduct a full audit of the center to find more efficient management methods, Bellamy says.

Action on the River Road/Santa Clara area is difficult to predict, Bellamy says, because the county government currently is considering a proposal to incorporate a separate city there.

Financing local services is an important issue right now because "projected resources aren't keeping up with projected needs" and the state Legislature hasn't, as of press time, come up with a decision on property tax limitations, Bellamy says.

Council Pres. Emily Schue says financial planning is "the thing we have to get right to work on, and that is definitely the hottest issue of the next couple years."

The financial dilemma facing local governments right now is getting worse, not better, Schue says.

"The basic reason for that is because of revenue from other sources than the property tax are constantly shrinking. That means federal and state (revenues). So we have to find more and more money to stay even.

"That's what makes it so hard. It's very hard to tell people 'We're going to raise taxes but, Oh! We're going to close the library on Monday,'" Schue says.

Schue and the rest of the councilors volunteer all of the time they spend, which amounts to about 20 hours per week, Bellamy says. Even Mayor Gus Keller, who presides over the council, receives no pay.

Because the councilors aren't paid for their time spent in research, council meetings and committee assignments, most of them hold down other jobs.

Keller is an investment councilor. Brian Obie, council vice president, is president of Obie Communications Corp., which partly owns KUGN radio station. Councilor Dick Hansen manages Valley River Center.

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