

City Council candidates plan to aid economy

By Gerrit Koepping
Emerald Reporter



As the rate for the Eugene City Council Ward 8 seat heats up, the question of the day seems to be how to revitalize the ailing downtown economy.

Each of the four candidates has put forward plans to solve what all agree is a pressing problem.

Thomas Slocum said downtown needs to emphasize and encourage commercial development to halt what he calls an urban sprawl of mini-marts and shopping centers. He said more people working downtown would create increased traffic that would stimulate businesses. He said plans that stimulated only retail businesses are part of the reason Eugene is failing.

As an example, Slocum men-



Mary Hudzikiewicz

tioned free parking in downtown Eugene, which he called an unfair subsidy for retailers.

Slocum said downtown property owners were taxed to support free parking in downtown Eugene for retail customers, while commercial employers still had to pay for their employees' parking. This caused many companies to leave downtown and thus began the



Thomas Slocum

current downward spiral, Slocum said.

"The primary fault for this is in poor administration and because nobody wants to understand that retail doesn't drive a downtown," Slocum said.

Mary Hudzikiewicz also has plans for the downtown area. She said to stimulate nearby businesses, Olive Street, which is closed to traffic, should be



Nancy Nathanson

reopened to automobiles. She also said she would support the opening of a new downtown library.

"I would like to create a uniqueness to downtown," Hudzikiewicz said.

Part of that, she said, would include trying to create a Saturday Market "feel" to the downtown area by encouraging such businesses as speciality restau-

rants. Unlike Slocum, she feels residential and small retail should be encouraged.

Richard Szakalski said it would be a waste of badly needed money to open Olive street. He also said Eugene did not have enough funds at this time to open a new library.

"They're going to have to raise property taxes to pay for it, and this will mean pricing people out of the market," Szakalski said.

The result, he said, would be even more damage to the downtown area.

Szakalski has other plans. He said he would save Eugene money by privatizing the Hult Center and eliminating the sister city project.

"Any programs we had going need to be looked at structurally and need to be examined to see if there is any overlap," Szakalski said.

Nancy Nathanson said a good deal of downtown's problems lie in the lethargy of city government.

"When the process gets bogged down, voters get dismayed and the economy falters," Nathanson said.

She vowed to streamline the city council and lead it in more aggressive decision making.

But the downtown economy is just one of the issues facing these candidates.

Nathanson is also pushing for the opening of a fire station within Ward 8, which she said would increase fire and medical response time.

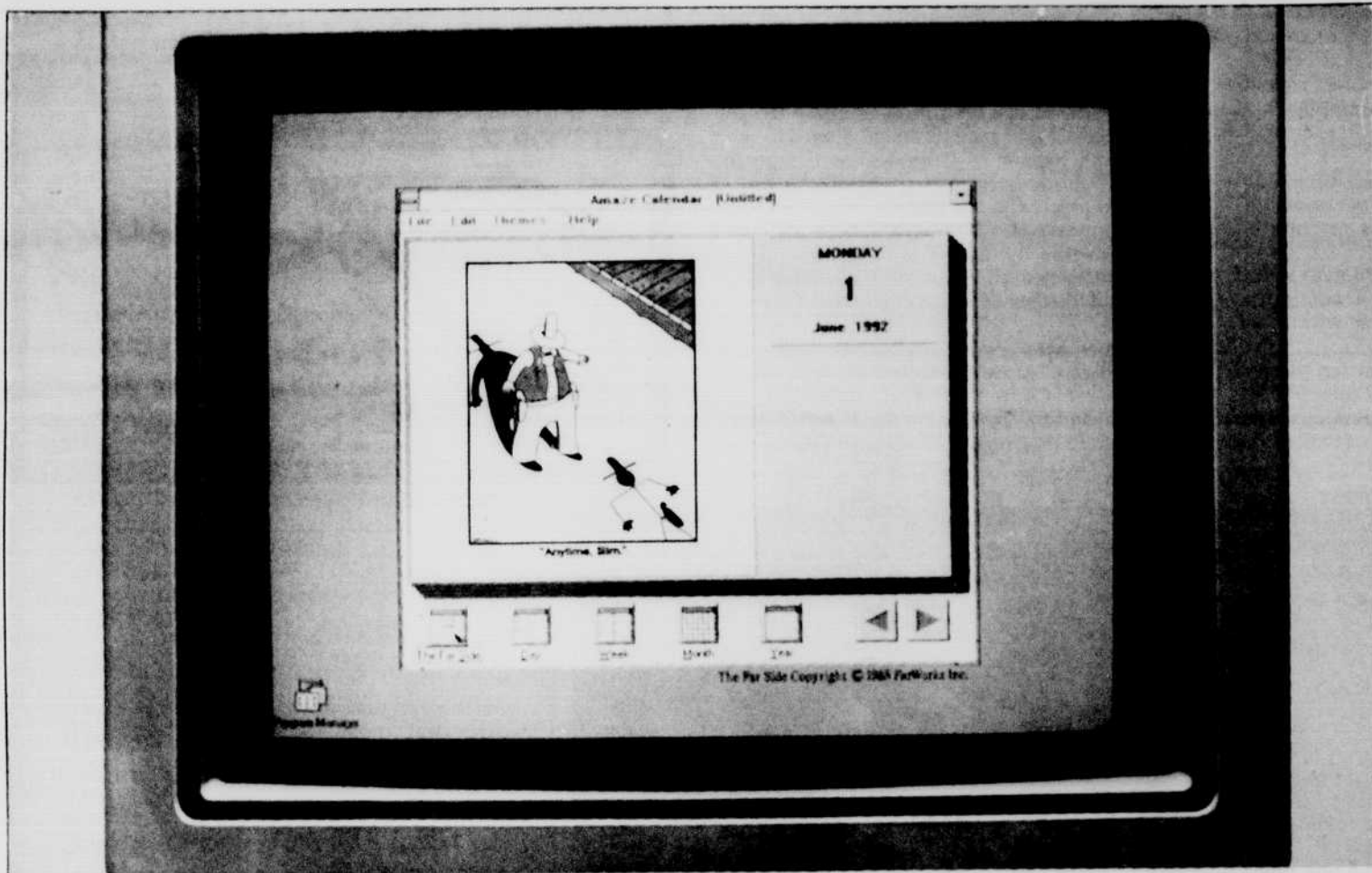
Another goal is to improve and beautify the Amazon waterway, so it is valued for more than a flood-control ditch, she said.

"I want it to be a source of pride for Eugene," Nathanson said.

Szakalski has a plan for homeless families. His plan calls for a program that would loan homeless families enough money for deposit and first- and last-month's rent on an apartment or house. He said families could pay back the money when they are able.

To raise revenue, Hudzikiewicz said she would advocate a county-wide sales tax but is opposed to taxing businesses.

Income could also be gathered by raising the rental fees for the Hult Center, but she said she would try to keep the rent stable for groups that are unable to pay higher rents. She also called for the promotion of the Riverfront Research Park as a way to stimulate the local economy.



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