

Council faces housing, budget

By Meg Dedolph
Emerald Reporter

Nearly all Eugene's returning City Council members agree Eugene Decisions, the city budget, low income housing and transportation are some of the year's major issues.

"Eugene Decisions, from my experience with it," said Councilor Bobby Green, "is going to be around for a long time."

Green said he believes the city of Eugene should place more emphasis on economic development and the tourism industry.

"Our issues are politicized," Green said. "Companies that are considering expansion like to move in confidential ways. If an underground movement mounts a campaign against a company, the company will pack up and move elsewhere."

Green also said he believes encouraging minority-owned businesses will not only assist with Eugene's economic development, but may also contribute to Eugene's tourism business.

Green said he is also concerned about public safety.

"We need to enhance our public safety," he said. "More police officers would be ideal, but citizens need to take back the community. We hired a new police chief with a strong background in community policing, and we need to help him out."

Green said he believes this year's council will be "extremely vociferous, with lots of give and take and compromising."

Councilor Shawn Boles said he believes the new council will be focusing on two or three issues this year.

These issues include implementing Eugene Decisions, developing alternative transportation and working on more low-income housing.

Boles said he would like to restructure city ordinances that emphasize compact urban growth, work on housing and homelessness issues and help the community to "recognize taxes are the price you pay for civilized government."

Boles also said Eugene would be an appropriate southern terminus for a high speed rail line, par-

ticularly one that ran from Oregon to British Columbia.

A decision on the library will only be reached this year if a revenue source is found, Boles said.

Returning council member Paul Nicholson said the political make-up of the council is much different this year.

"Each councilor who left was replaced by someone more to the left," he said. "I do think it's going to be a more progressive council and more receptive to general interests and less to concentrated interests," he said. "There's a lot of variety and a big range — it's a pretty independent minded council," he said.

Nicholson said he also believes transportation will be a major issue this year with a number of major decisions ahead. These decisions include what to do about the Ferry Street Bridge and the proposed central bus station that LTD wants to build on city property.

Returning councilor Kaye Robinette said he believes the new council will be concerned with the impact of the city's financial problems on the University.

"Eugene is not the same city without the University as it is with it," he said.

Robinette said he wants to work on keeping the council's agenda in moderation, which will in turn limit staff work and help in the control of expenditures.

Council member Randy MacDonald said the council needs to redefine the way the government promotes citizen involvement through boards and committees.

"It takes hundreds of thousands of dollars to give staff support to committees," he said. "Is there a better way to get citizen involvement?"

Robinette said limiting the agenda "won't make it a lot of fun for the new council members."

"I can't imagine someone running for council and not having things they want to do affirmatively," Robinette said. "Those won't get on the agenda for a while."

Robinette said he believes the council should handle the "core services" before other programs are begun, or "we'll be cutting back on police while we're building a new library."

New city councilors want clean Amazon

By Jacqueline Woge
Emerald Reporter

Of the many issues facing the Eugene City Council this coming year, new councilors Nancy Nathanson and Barbara Keller are interested in the redevelopment of the Amazon Channel.

The channel, which winds through west and southeast Eugene, was built by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1960s for flood control. Today, many see multiple uses for the channel.

"We're looking at a total reconfiguration of the Upper Amazon by allowing more recreation, natural habitat areas, foot and bicycle transit and natural cleansing of stormwater runoff coming from the South Hills," Keller said.

Keller already has experience with the issue from working with the Upper Amazon project's steering committee.

"Environmental and livability issues, including the Clean Water Act, wetlands, floodways and greenways, have been on the backburner," Keller said.

"Until now, the channel has been treated as a backdoor," she said. "I'd like to turn that around and make it a front door."

Nathanson said she hoped the private and public sectors would work together in installing and maintaining recreational areas with benches and walking paths along the already existing bicycle path.

"Hopefully people won't continue to put their trash out there," she said.

Beyond the Amazon Channel issue, the two councilors disagree about what issues need attention first.

Keller said her first concern is the library. "It has been two years since Eugene voted to build a new library at the old Sears building site," Keller said.

We need to buy the property, finance the project and build a new library, she said.

Keller said she was interested in changing the direction of community safety toward community policing and prevention, especially by concentrating on youth most likely to get into trouble with the law.

The council should concentrate on a few issues at a time and finish them before tackling other issues, Nathanson said.

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Bascom also said she was interested in moving ahead with affordable low-income housing and "continuing our tolerance for diversity."

Bascom also outlined three new initiatives.

"Let's build transportation that moves us without strangling us," she said. "In transportation, I believe, lies the greatest potential for either enhancing or degrading the livability of a city."

Eugene has been a national model for innovative bike-way systems, Bascom said, noting that five percent of Eugene residents travel by bicycle.

"I've watched city after city defeat bicycle plans by plunging into poorly conceived solutions," she said. "We in Eugene know that vision and cooperation can result in reaching a solution."

Some of Bascom's options for improved transportation include a Ferry Street Bridge redesign enhancing bicycle use, providing five-minute bus service in the University and downtown corridors, providing fee bus

passes for some groups and discouraging all-day car storage.

On the issue of bolstering tourism, a "coordinated visitor market" is essential to attract a maximum number of visitors, Bascom said.

Bascom also renewed her call for prompt action to get the Sears building converted into a new library.

"The private sector wants a show of support from the city before it starts raising money," she said. "The city, on the other hand, wants to know what the private sector will promise. That's not a recipe for 'let's get going,' that's a recipe for frustration."

"These are the three visions I have for our city, three hopes I carry in my heart, three dreams I'll work for tirelessly to try to make a reality," Bascom said. "However, if I work alone, these initiatives will come to naught. In the next four years, I will ask for your help, drawing on our traditions of caring for this community, giving time and substance. I know these traditions are alive and in all of us here today."

Following Bascom's speech, the University Choir sang "America The Beautiful," but a group of about 15 local activists added their own verse to the end: "O beautiful for working folk who forged the wealth you see, In farm and mill, in home and school, unsung in history, America, America, may race nor sex nor creed, No more divide, but side by side, all rise united, freed."

The crowd applauded and Bascom thanked the group for "that bit of spontaneity."

Paul Prenskey, who participated in the added verse, said the activists wanted to disrupt the proceedings as a way of telling the mayor and the councilors that they are just pretending, and they don't plan to address issues such as gay and lesbian rights and homeless problems.

Prenskey said the protesters decided to add a verse to the song to express their belief that citizens must be involved in their community and "to push their city government to do this work."

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