

Torrey offers to lobby on behalf of University

INTERVIEW: Mayor Jim Torrey discusses the future of the University and Eugene

By Eric Collins
Community Reporter

In the next 1,000 days, Mayor Jim Torrey will focus on public safety, affordable housing and the library system, as well as dealing with park and open space acquisition. The surprising omission: education. Despite the exclusion of higher education from the reported goals of Torrey's state-of-the-city speech last week, Torrey said he will lobby for student interests and encourage student involvement in city government.

Q Why weren't educational goals focused on in your state-of-the-city address?

A Because the city of Eugene as an entity is not by law involved with education. Higher education has a division of higher education, a community college has its own board, the 4J school district has its own board. And remember that this was the state-of-the-city. A number of times in that speech I referred to education. I talked about why we could not let anything we as a city are doing interfere with the need to educate our children. And children, as far as I'm concerned, go all the

way up through the University of Oregon. Specifically, what we would be doing in terms of raising money for education is not our charge. Our charge is to run this community.

In terms of what the city can do for education at the university level, I was talking to University of Oregon President Dave Frohnmayer yesterday, and I offered my assistance as mayor of this city to testify at any committee and to lobby on behalf of the University for their concerns.

One of their concerns is maintaining a lid on tuition increases. And I will be there testifying. I'm a member of the League of Oregon Cities board of directors, and I intend to use that position to allow me to communicate with other members of that board. I think I can be an able advocate for the University and for students. I can't guarantee that I will always agree with everything students and the University want me to agree with, but maintaining tuition levels I can agree with. Providing funding for staff salaries, I can agree with. Making sure people of this state have the opportunity to get a quality education, I can agree with.

Q How will you involve the University community in your goals for the city?

MAYOR'S INFO



Mayor Jim Torrey

TERM LENGTH:
Jan. 1997- Jan. 2001

SELECTED BACKGROUND:
Member of the Eugene City Council, company owner, member of Rotary

A We will deal with community outreach in trying to find what the core services the City of Eugene will provide concerning Measure 47.

My suggestion is to take the four high schools in Eugene, the high school in the Bethel District and the University of Oregon, that's six areas, and have an outreach meeting in each one of those areas. This way we can ask the public to communicate to us what they consider core services.

Entwined in all this is the question of whether there are some suggestions to how one would do this differently, wherever we get them. If a University class were to discuss core services of the City of Eugene, I'd be very interested in hearing those types of discussions and having those opinions presented to us.

I think it's the first time that I'm

aware of when we've actually gone and asked the University to help. I have identified places for meetings that I intend to have.

In addition to that, the City Council will be meeting at least once a quarter at some place other than the City Hall. One of those places will be the University of Oregon, I would say in the fall. I am hoping for a session in the evening, which will be the type of meeting with an open microphone. It's conceivable that 50 people from the University want to talk to us for three minutes apiece, and I'm prepared to listen to that, on any subject of importance to them. Councilor Bobby Lee demanded it, but I would have done it even if he hadn't demanded it.

Q With Measure 47 looming in the distance, how do you plan on implementing some of your

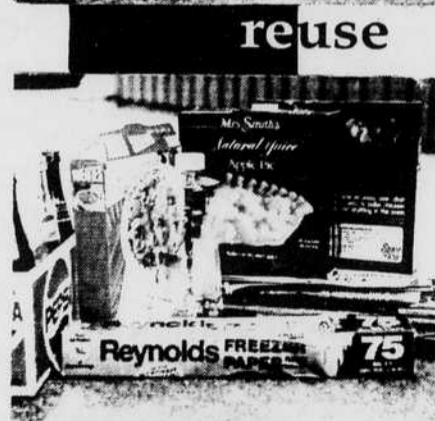
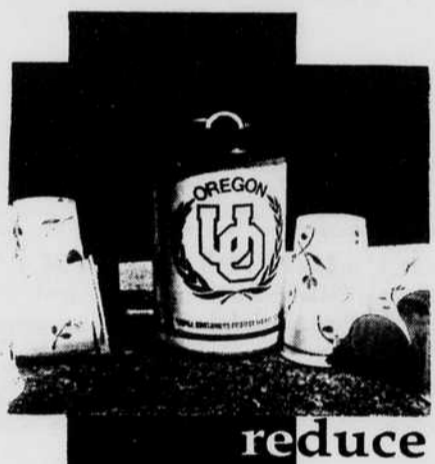
goals, such as acquiring parks and open spaces?

A If you listen to my speech, what I said specifically about parks, open space and natural habitat was that we need to acquire the property. I specifically didn't say to convert it into a park and operate it. What I'm looking at in the next 1,000 days is if we do not acquire that property, it is going to be developed, and it won't be available for acquisition.

The question of where we are going to get the operational money is a question I'm not prepared to deal with. I'm supportive of getting that money, but if we take too big a bite, we are going to lose the support of the community. I believe that this is a step we could take.

Would citizens prioritize operating a park over running an ambulance? I think the answer to that is no. There is a distinction here. Property is a capital asset. It can be purchased outside the impact of Measure 47. The operation of the park is an operational expense that is within the impact of Measure 47.

There is a distinction. You can go out to the voters and have them approve asset capital. In the case of the open spaces, I want to preserve these areas as an option for parks. If we don't preserve it, we'll never have that option.



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