

More debate on wetlands issue

The City Council and county commissioners heard public reaction to proposed changes

By Tricia Duryee
Community Reporter

Over 40 citizens, who declared a "for," "against" or "neutral," spoke their minds Wednesday night on whether to change the 1992 West Eugene Wetlands Plan.

During a joint session at the Eugene City Council Chambers, the council and the Lane County Board of Commissioners listened to suggestions from the public regarding proposed amendments.

The original wetlands plan, which has become a national model, was devised to determine those portions of the wetlands most suitable for preservation and those best suited for development.

Now, six years after the plan's implementation, new issues have arisen, which the Eugene Planning and Development Department has attempted to address by adopting new or revised policies and clarifying language.

These policy amendments, regarding protection and development, could designate additional areas as wetlands based on information gathered during more recent and detailed mapping.

Steve Gordon, a wetlands con-

sultant from the Lane Council of Government, said in an earlier work session that the city staff, who developed the amendments, has been efficient in keeping up with the issue.

"Every year there has been a change in state and federal wetlands law," Gordon said. "The plan is still afloat because of the staff working on it and because of the input from the broad range of citizens in Eugene."

However, Jeff Miller, who was mayor when the original plan was adopted, said that even though it is hard to go against the planning board, he thought the council should because of a lack of information. Miller's advice to council members was for them to not pass the amendments.

Steve Cornacchia, Lane County Commissioner chairman, submitted a letter outlining alternatives to the amendments. Many present commented on his suggestions.

"We are spending over \$15 million in the wetland program to acquire open space and restore wetlands and streams. West Eugene is

now famous as an urban wetland model. Yet, West Eugene is still an important ingredient in our economic future," Cornacchia stated in the letter.

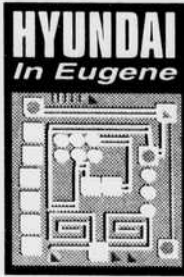
Cornacchia thought the plan should designate a site as either a development or restoration area. He outlined simple guidelines to determine the difference.

Miller said he believed Cornacchia's suggestions were headed in the right direction.

According to Cornacchia, wetlands should be developed if they are relatively isolated or disconnected from the larger system of wetlands and waterways, and if they are being served by existing streets, roads, sanitary sewers and municipal water.

In contrast, Cornacchia stated wetlands should be restored if they contain hydric soils, are capable of providing adequate wetland hydrology or don't currently benefit from municipal infrastructure and urban services.

Support was voiced for all options. Citizens considered amending the plan, keeping the plan in its original form and also adopting Cornacchia's suggestions. Public comments were made by a variety of citizens and city officials, including a representative from the Eugene Water and Electric Board and Eugene Planning and Development Department.



Council considers library funding

The City Council will decide whether to pursue funding for a new library downtown

Jesse Sowa
Community Reporter

Several options are available to the people of Eugene should they choose to build a new library, according to one city official.

In a meeting Wednesday night at the Petersen Barn Community Center, Lew Bowers of the Eugene Planning and Development Department told the Mayor's Library Committee an enhanced or "grandfather" increment option is probably the best way to fund a new library in the downtown urban renewal district.

Bowers said the option would

make available \$650,000 not provided by other options. It would also include \$11 million for additional projects selected by the city. However, the option would also include an average addition of \$33 to each Eugene resident's tax bill.

The Eugene City Council will ultimately decide which direction the plan to build a new library will take, Bowers said.

The council has three options when taking action on the issue. First, they can terminate the urban renewal district, which can be done anytime and would pay off the projected city deficit for the 1999 fiscal year. The council can also decide to use the grandfather or base options, which would need to be decided by June 1.

The base option was the one

used prior to the passing of Measure 5 in 1990, and is considered the default option should no other be chosen.

Bowers said the council will decide based on several factors. These include the projects the council wants to accomplish, the effectiveness of the urban renewal district and the priority ranking of urban renewal projects.

A council work session and a public hearing will take place March 9 to discuss the issue.

The council will then decide on March 16 the option residents will vote on in September. Should the grandfather option be selected, the council will be forced to take preliminary action on the above date.

The council's decision is expected by May 30.

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