

Torrey: Pleased with effects of dog and skateboard ban

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ble that in the end result you are now citizens of your community, which is all of our community, and I would hope that we would be able to get along. I'm confident that we can, provided both of us use reason and restraint as we approach this coming fall season.

Q Is there anything the city has done to work on this problem?

A We're trying to work hand in hand with the University of Oregon people in an attempt to define what is an acceptable level of behavior and try to catch the potential incidents before they happen. We check out people who take out kegs and things of that nature so we have an idea of knowing where they are. Not with the intent necessarily of stopping the party, but just being able to pinpoint where the party might be if something gets out of hand quickly. We are going to be vigilant, and as long as everybody understands that and acts with restraint, I think we're going to be in good shape.

Q Do you think students feel a connection with the City of Eugene?

A I really don't. Some do, but very, very few.

Years ago, I worked for the State Accident Insurance Fund in Salem, and one of the things that I was hired to do was to be the business, almost, ombudsman for the State of Oregon. The State Accident Insurance

Fund has this huge building in the middle of Salem, a great big concrete facility. It's probably five stories high and could probably house 700 or 800 employees. Inside that building was a different world. It was as if the outside world didn't exist. And I think to a certain degree that at the University of Oregon, inside the framework of the university setting — not necessarily just inside the property of the University — that community of the University is somewhat insulated from the rest of the city.

And I think to a certain degree — with the exception of perhaps athletic events and some cultural events — the rest of the city feels somewhat isolated from the University. I believe that there are substantial amounts of misinformation that people expect to happen and really don't have happen.

As far as students being concerned about issues that affect them as far as the city is concerned — I don't hear from them. I'm somewhat frustrated about not knowing how to go and communicate with them. But I don't want to impose myself on them if they don't have any interest. I'm interested in their concerns. If they had a concern and wanted to speak with me, I'm available to do that.

Q City councilmember Bobby Lee is a former ASUO president. What is the value of having him on the council?

A First of all, he understands a lot of the concerns that students have. He is extremely concerned about the high cost of housing in and around the University area. Not so much the dorms as it is the apartment complexes around the University area.

He is concerned about the quality of the environment surrounding the University. In the University grounds themselves, they're well maintained.

You get off the campus and depending on the interests of the property owner, you could have some pretty badly maintained facilities. The property owner in some instances — I won't say every instance — says, "What's the value of spending the money and trying to improve it?" Their reaction is get a bunch of young people in there, and they may end up damaging it anyway.

They make so much money off of these homes. They have, financially, probably the best return on investment of any other housing investment in the city, and that can't last forever. Those houses aren't going to last forever. The question then becomes: What's the city's role on private property surrounding the University.

Bobby Lee has a pretty good feel for what's happening there. I think you would call him a student-activist. The fact that he understands students, understands the University, understands the

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Mayor of Eugene

concerns of the students around the University I think is very helpful.

Q What do you think are some of the more important issues facing students at the University of Oregon?

A I would definitely say housing. Not so much the freshmen because they're almost mandated to be in a dorm. After your freshman year, if you decide you want to live someplace else, the cost of housing in Eugene is extremely high. It is part of the problem we have with our homeless population.

The second issue that I would see is the cost of your education. It's not going to get lower. They took the out-of-state tuition level about as high as they could. When you don't have the high revenue that was being generated by those out-of-state students for the University of Oregon and Eugene, it is going to get laid at the doorstep of in-state students.

The major issue that I see for

the cost of education is that there is really not a strong constituency for students in the state legislature. They talk the story, but they really don't vote the story. There has to be a constituency in particular for in-state education costs for students. Do we want to limit a low-income family student who might be the next medical breakthrough, or might be the next best writer, or might be the next entrepreneurial business genius from going to school?

If students want to do something for themselves, do it back in their home areas. You already won the battle here. Every legislator from Eugene will do what they can to keep the cost of education down.

Q Do you think the ban on dogs and skateboards on East 13th Avenue has been successful?

A Yes, I absolutely do. I was the proponent that got that thing moving. And on a weekly basis, I drive — I wish I could say I take a bike, but I don't — I drive from Willamette to the University on 13th and turn around and drive back to High Street on 14th.

You go down that street right now in the middle of the day, and you will never see large groups of kids on skateboards or large numbers of dogs on leashes. It is just a better place. I haven't had a complaint from 13th in six months.

This interview was edited for length.

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