

County measures would expand jail capacity

■ The measures would raise property taxes to provide funds for increased jail space

By Andrew Adams
Oregon Daily Emerald

Faced with an overcrowded jail and an underused juvenile detention center, Lane County is looking to raise funds to expand its criminal justice system.

Nearly 4,500 prisoners left the county jail before completing their sentences last year, and Sheriff Jan Clements hopes voters will approve Measures 20-38 and 20-39 this November to cut that number back.

Stephen Carmichael, director for the John Serbu Youth Campus at the Lane County Juvenile Justice

Center, said the two measures will force young offenders to face the consequences of their crimes.

But the opposition, led by political activist Steve Kutcher, says that if voters approve the measures, they will provide funding for unnecessary prisons.

Ballot Measure 20-38 would generate \$10 million a year for four years by increasing property taxes 55 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed property value. These funds would support a larger population at the county inmate work camp and Juvenile Justice Center, add staff to supervise the increased populations and open a female wing of the juvenile center's alcohol and drug treatment center.

The accompanying bond Measure 20-39 would provide just over

\$8 million to build a new jail intake center that would increase the incoming population by 65 peo-

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Campus

ple. Like 20-38, Measure 20-39 would raise property taxes 3 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Carmichael said the two initia-

tives are vital to preserve the effectiveness of the county's justice system because he said without adequate funding juveniles won't learn they can be held responsible for their actions.

“Last year we had about 5,000 crimes, but we had only 36 beds,” he said. “There's no way to hold kids responsible.”

Clements also said that it's hard to make inmates feel punished. By federal regulations passed in 1986, all jails have to keep their populations at certain levels by releasing criminals that pose the least threat to society.

Kutcher, however, said the reasons to vote for the measures are completely unsound. The local activist said he is organizing a committee to oppose the measures.

“The crime rate is going down and instead of decreasing the number of prisons they're increasing it,” he said.

Kutcher agreed prisons are crowded but said that's because the county is convicting people that don't need to be convicted.

“The major problem is there's a bunch of people in jail who shouldn't be there because of victimless crimes,” he said.

Victimless crimes, in Kutcher's opinion, mainly include drug possession. He argued the county should look at other crimes instead of prosecuting the “victimless” ones.

“Crimes against our environment they don't take very seriously,” he said. “There's crimes all over our county against air and water that go ignored.”

City trying to find funds to build new police station - again

■ A revised measure would provide funding to build a new police station and to buy property for a new fire station

By Eric Martin
For the Emerald

Advocates for a ballot measure that would fund a new police station and the land for a new fire station hope voters who rejected a similar measure in May will support their proposal this time around.

A revised and trimmed version of May's Measure 20-31, Measure 20-36 calls for the construction of an 80,000-square-foot police station — 17,500 square feet less than originally planned — that meets earthquake safety codes and eliminates overcrowding. The new station would be located on city-owned property on East Eighth Avenue, across the street from City Hall.

The station would provide the

“same square footage other similar-size police departments in the Northwest have,” said John Brown, a real estate appraiser and former member of the Eugene Police/Fire Station Task Force. “That's what they need.”

Eugene Police Department Lt. Rick Ziel said space in the current police facility is cramped, and cited the 12-foot by 14-foot waiting room as an example.

“There's no privacy,” Ziel said. “If you've got a girlfriend or wife that's just been raped, you have to stand in a room with other people and tell [the officers] what you want to tell them.”

The city formed the task force last summer to ascertain why voters rejected the original measure. The force concluded that voters found the levy too costly, disapproved of the proposed location and wanted to see design plans before devoting money to the project.

The new levy would be almost

\$6 million cheaper, would use city-owned property and includes plans for the police station. The measure also provides funds for the purchase of property for a new fire station that could be built within the next two years, Brown said.

Opponents of the measure say the \$21.1 million cost for the proposed municipal facilities is too expensive and unnecessary. They argue that taxpayer dollars could be saved if the city were to better use the office space it already has.

“There are other, less expensive options they're not looking at,” said Gary Kutcher, citizen activist and opponent to the measure. “I think they've become fixated with the idea of a fancy new police station.”

But Brown said though some disagree with tactics employed by Eugene police officers, they deserve safe facilities taxpayers would want themselves. He said seismic studies conducted by three

outside architectural consulting firms showed that a minimal earthquake could flatten the existing police station, an unacceptable possibility for essential services like police because they must be on call during disasters.

“The city has not paid much attention to it, but it's a fact they've known for 10 years,” Brown said. “In Western Oregon there have been 10 moderate earthquakes — measuring between 2.0 and 6.3 on the Richter scale — since 1993.”

But Kutcher said there were seismic studies completed a year ago that concluded existing facilities could be updated and made earthquake resistant with a cost of \$3 million to \$5 million.

He also said taxpayers aren't getting what they pay for in Measure 20-36 because only property for and the design of a new fire department facility are funded by the measure — not the facility itself.

“I'm really troubled by the ballot

title [in the City of Eugene Voter's Pamphlet],” Kutcher said. “I believe they're trying to fake voters out by implying they will get a fire station.”

The line in question, printed on page six of the voter's pamphlet, reads: “Shall City of Eugene issue up to \$25,120,000 general obligation bonds for downtown police facilities and a fire station?”

Kutcher said the line is biased rhetoric attempting to sway voters to cast their ballots for the measure.

But Brown disagrees and said the City Council drafted the language in question.

“It's not misleading to me,” he said. “I know what [the general obligation funds] are for. If you read the ordinance, you'll see a fire station is not included in this measure. But let's say we build [the police station] for \$22,500,000. The excess money will go toward a fire station.”

Guide available online

■ The Oregon Voters' Pamphlet is posted on the Internet to make reading easier for voters

By Andrew Adams
Oregon Daily Emerald

With a voters pamphlet that rivals some Oregon phone books in size, the secretary of state's office has posted all the material on the 26 state ballot measures and dozens of candidates on the Internet.

Paddy McGuire, chief of staff for the secretary of state's office, said the pamphlet was placed online because of its size and to inform voters living outside the state.

“On the very first day the site was up, we received an e-mail from an Oregonian living in Scotland who found a problem with one of the site's links,” McGuire said. “That's pretty instantaneous results that folks all over the globe are using it.” McGuire quickly added that the problem was fixed.

The pamphlet, at www.oregonvotes.com, will spare voters the task of thumbing through the 376-page printed voters pamphlet, McGuire said.

“It's about as long as the Eugene-Springfield white pages, and it's the first voters pamphlet to be bound like a phone book,” he said.

Every registered voter will still be receiving a copy of the voters guide so there won't be any re-

duced cost from posting the pamphlet on the Internet. But McGuire said the secretary of state's office received non-profit bulk rate postage from the Post Office and will save money through that reduced rate. He said the state saved approximately \$700,000 through the rate, which reduced mailing costs from \$1.2 million to about \$450,000.

Annette Newingham, Lane County elections manager, said the that information online will help voters understand the issues, but couldn't say whether or not that will improve voter turnout.

“I'm not really sure if that's going to be a factor,” she said.

Information on the two Lane County bond measures — 20-38 and 20-39 for a forest work camp for minor offenders and jail improvements — is available at the Lane County Web site: www.co.lane.or.us.

Brian Tanner, the state affairs coordinator for the ASUO, said the Web site should help students find voter information. He added that the ASUO will be putting together its own guide about measures that will have a direct effect on higher education, but for other state measures, the Web site would be a better source than the bulky pamphlet.

“I don't think any student in their right mind with all the other reading they have to do anyway would look through [the voters pamphlet],” he said.

Local Measures

Eugene Ballot Measure 20-36

The measure would give the city a maximum of \$25.1 million in local tax dollars to build a new police station and purchase land for a new fire department.

Supporters say the city's police and fire facilities are outdated, cramped and need to be replaced to accommodate the city's growing population. They also say the police station is seismically unsound, raising concerns that the Eugene Police Department could be crippled in an earthquake or other disaster.

Opponents say the price tag is too big and that cheaper options, such as better managing the city's existing facilities, should be explored.

Eugene Ballot Measure 20-37

A proposed levy, this measure would grant the city \$1.75 million per year for two years for neighborhood-based youth programs. Property taxes would increase about 3 percent.

Supporters say the programs funded by the levy would give kids productive after-school activities and could keep children supervised and out of trouble.

No organized opposition

Lane County Ballot Measures 20-38 and 20-39

Measure 20-38 would generate \$10 million a year for four years by increasing property taxes by 55 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed property value. These funds would support a larger population at the county inmate work camp and Juvenile Justice Center, add staff to supervise the increased populations and open a female wing of the juvenile center's alcohol and drug treatment center. The accompanying bond, Measure 20-39, would provide just over \$8 million to build a new jail intake center that would increase the incoming population by 65 people. Like 20-38, Measure 20-39 would raise property taxes by 3 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Proponents say there is dire need in Lane County for the two measures. They cite prisoner releases from the county jail and what they call an under-staffed and ineffective juvenile justice center. The funds could mean more people would pay for their crimes, and more juveniles would receive the attention their crimes deserve.

Opponents argue that the prisons are overcrowded because they're packed with people arrested for crimes that don't need to be prosecuted. They believe jail beds should only be used for serious offenders. They also argue that the county should use more rehabilitation methods, rather than just resorting to incarceration.