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Death penalty foes to start 'Life for a Life' campaign

SALEM — Foes of Oregon's death penalty have received the go-ahead from the Oregon Supreme Court on a ballot title and will begin gathering signatures this week to put a measure on the ballot in November 2002.

"We understand that change often doesn't come easy," said former Sen. Mark Hatfield, who as Oregon governor led a successful 1964 repeal of capital punishment in Oregon.

Hatfield's fellow chief petitioners on the initiative campaign are former schools superintendent Norma Paulus and Dr. William Connor.

The campaign is expected to prompt a statewide debate of the is-

sue that could attract national attention and campaign contributions.

"Life for a Life" campaigners have about a year to gather the nearly 90,000 valid signatures required to put a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot.

The "Life for a Life" campaign would abolish capital punishment in favor of life without parole and financial restitution for convicted murderers.

Supporters said they hope to gather enough signatures using volunteers, but they would consider using paid signature gatherers if needed.

Oregon voters have gone back and forth on the death penalty over the years, although in the last vote in 1984 they overwhelmingly supported reinstating capital punishment.

Oregon last carried out executions by lethal injections in 1996 and 1997. Twenty-five men currently are on death row in Oregon, although the next execution likely won't be carried out for several years because of legal appeals.

Steve Doell, head of Oregon Crime Victims United, has said most Oregonians still support capital punishment.

The Associated Press

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Sacred Heart

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posed plans in March to build a more than 500-bed hospital housing mostly inpatient and emergency services and employing 2,200 people on a 38-acre parcel of land in North Eugene.

The organization purchased the land at the northeast corner of Coburg Road and Crescent Avenue in 1992 for \$1.8 million, and construction was set to start in mid-2002.

The downtown facility would have been remodeled into an outpatient, administrative and support services and enhanced urgent care facility employing 1,800 people.

But after expressing concerns about a northern relocation, city officials approached PeaceHealth with a desire to discuss alternatives and encourage compact urban growth theories.

At a City Council meeting June 18, councilors and PeaceHealth officials proposed an alternative plan to acquire 37 acres of land six blocks immediately west of the current campus. The land encompasses many apartment buildings, businesses, and historic landmarks, approximately 391 trees and the University's Riley Hall.

Community members say this is reminiscent of Sacred Heart's demolition of the 60-year old 11th Street Mayflower Theater in 1986, hours before a meeting with the Eugene Historic Review Board that could have declared it a historic landmark.

Citizens' concerns include the removal of trees and historic landmarks, details of land acquisition and condemnation, relocation, and the possible mixture of church and state. Residents also questioned why the hospital can't build up

rather than out and why other sites were not chosen.

Terrett said because of seismic upgrades and the need to have adjacency to certain departments, an expansion upward would diminish the quality of the health care the hospital hopes to provide. He added that other sites didn't meet either the space specifications or specific hospital zoning policies.

Expansion of the downtown site is estimated to cost \$100 million more than the \$300 to \$350 million of the proposed North Eugene hospital. The timeline for the project would be lengthy, due to the need to complete it in phases as opposed to the four to five years for the North Eugene site.

PeaceHealth has asked the city to contribute \$35 million to the project, \$30 million of which would come from a taxpayer-supported bond measure, and to ease zoning regulations and provide tax breaks.

It also wants the city to pay half the cost of acquiring, condemning and relocating homes and businesses within the six blocks from Patterson Street to High Street and 11th Avenue to 13th Avenue. This costs are more than \$40 to \$60 million. PeaceHealth would agree to repay the city the cost and limit its development of the North Eugene site to only outpatient and limited inpatient services.

Most city councilors, however, have agreed only to make a financial commitment of \$25 million, \$20 million of which will likely be a property tax-supported bond levy the city intends for use in control of traffic flow and parking.

Should voters reject this bond measure, PeaceHealth is asking the city to support the move north and to help expedite land-

use actions to build there. The alternative of expanding at the old Eugene site has been rejected by PeaceHealth due to lack of space in the area, no adjacency to the hospital, street placements and nowhere to move the nearly 400 employees in the building during construction.

When the controversy over a move north started, groups such as the North Eugene Growth Impact Committee, the University Small Business Association, Citizens for a Hospital in the Heart of Eugene and local doctors and nurses urged the hospital to reconsider, citing traffic problems the north would face, changing growth patterns, distance and the hole it would leave in the city center. Many believed the latter would be a barrier in the revitalization of the downtown area.

"I've tried to make sure that people in this neighborhood know what's going on," said Richie Weinman with the City Planning and Development Department. "I know the time frame has been short, and we've made an effort to make sure that people will know about these meetings and know about the discussions so they're not terribly surprised by it."

Tom Olshanski, the spokesman for the city of Eugene, also said it was too bad that many local residents were taken unawares.

"It was really unfortunate that it occurred that way," Olshanski said. "It really is the result of a lot of work happening very quickly."

He added that it is important for concerned citizens to attend another public forum scheduled for Monday, July 2, at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Presbyterian Church at 555 E. 15th.

"A lot depends on what the public senses and what they're feeling out there," he said.

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