

TORREY

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chance to create a new home for some of the city's most important administrative offices.

"I want you to think, and I want you to dream and I want you to talk about what might be," Torrey said.

Torrey also expressed regret that little progress was made on the goals he set in the previous year's address. He had hoped to improve road maintenance in Eugene and Lane County, relieve the understaffed police department and provide free access to city libraries for children living outside city limits, whose households currently pay \$80 per year for access.

Torrey ran quickly through his review of the past year — emphasizing the inadequate funding for education in Oregon — before moving on to his broad vision for the new year.

Though he said money for transportation improvements in the state are at a minimum, Torrey asked that the best bridge possible be built to replace

the one on Interstate 5 that crosses the Willamette River. The new bridge, he said, should have off-ramps to Franklin Boulevard and into Springfield.

"There is an opportunity to revitalize and connect our two cities in a positive way," he said to applause. "We need to work together to make it happen."

Torrey's second goal was for the city to update the economic development strategy that was last revised in 1984.

"Downtown Eugene is not alive," he said. "It's a long way from being alive."

In conjunction with the Eugene and Lane County communities, the city needs to examine its economic opportunities and its strengths and weaknesses, he said.

Finally, Torrey proposed a vision for a Eugene Civic Center. He asked the city to create a committee to "think outside the box" and explore opportunities for relocating the Eugene Police Department, City Hall offices, the municipal courts or other local bureaucracies.

He shared his idea of tearing down the existing City Hall on Pearl Street,

building a police department in the nearby parking lot and constructing a combined city, county and 4J School District administrative building.

"None of this may happen, but I don't want to see the opportunity escape us," he said. The mayor did not say how much this project might cost.

Eugene City Councilors will eventually be in charge of approving and developing any of the mayor's plans into policy.

"Those are his broadly stated mayoral goals," Ward 7 Councilor Scott Meisner said. "The Council has yet to come up with its own set of goals."

Meisner added that the speech raised no "alarm bells" in his mind and said for the most part, the mayor talked about ideas that are shared by most of the council.

Ward 3 Councilor David Kelly, who represents the University area, said he was "very pleased" with Torrey's emphasis on the need for partnerships, though Kelly was cautious about endorsing any ideas without details, facts or input from the City Council.



Tim Bobosky Photographer

During the State of the City Address at the Eugene Hilton on Wednesday, Mayor Jim Torrey said that among other things, he would like to develop Eugene further economically.

"Every issue he raised is certainly worth further work," Kelly said.

"The question, as always, is if there is enough money. Will the voters be

willing to pay?"

Contact the city/state politics reporter at nikacarlson@dailyemerald.com.

WAGE

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Senior Paul Manokore said the increase was good news.

"In a good way, it will really improve my budget," Manokore said.

He was quick to add, however, that the positive effects depend on whether or not there would be increases in the price of commodities.

"If they raise (minimum wage), they have to subsidize it with something," he said. "If wages go up, prices go up."

Junior Kimberly Schwarm, who works two part-time jobs, said she is excited to get more money, but feels the increase will not make much of a difference.

"I'm kind of frustrated because tuition is rising," Schwarm said. "The 15 cents isn't going to make up for the

\$200 I have to pay."

She said the last wage increase hardly made a difference because regular consumer goods seemed to get more expensive.

"It makes me wonder why we have one of the highest minimum wages and we're one of the poorest states and one of the hungriest," she said.

Departments around campus had

to readjust their payrolls for the new wage and are still trying to determine what the repercussions of the increase might be.

University bookstore Human Resources Manager Natalie Eggert said it is too early to state how much the wage increase would cost them financially.

"The increase this time isn't going to be as significant as the last time," Eggert

said, referring to the 2003 wage rise to \$6.90 after it stayed at \$6.50 since 1999.

While the increase comes during a period of challenging economic times in the state, Eggert said she doesn't believe it will affect the bookstore negatively.

"We're pretty strong financially, and so I don't think it will have a big impact," she said. She added that it is unlikely the store would hire fewer students, but there may be some areas where the business might have to try to cut costs, such as shipping charges.

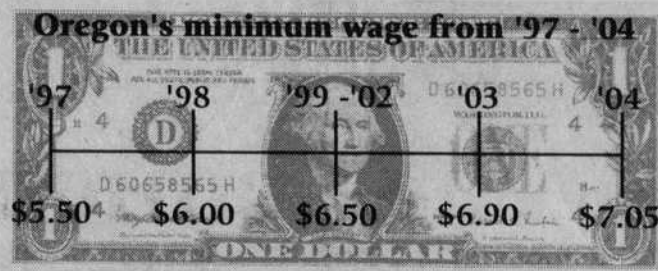
According to an article on the Oregon Employment Department Web site, <http://www.qualityinfo.org>, some consequences of higher wages may be decreased employment in some sectors, reductions in raises or workers fringe benefits, or higher consumer prices.

"Minimum wage affects mostly retail

and services that compete locally, so costs can be passed on to consumers," said Brian Rooney, the Oregon Employment Department's regional economist for Lane County. He added that some agricultural services might hurt more from labor cost increases because they compete internationally.

Economics will determine if minimum wage will increase next year. According to Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries Web site at <http://www.boli.state.or.us>, starting this year, the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries must calculate annual adjustments to the wage for the following year, based on any increases to the U.S. City Average Consumer Index for All Urban Consumers for All Items.

Contact the news editor at ayishayahya@dailyemerald.com.



Source: Bureau of Labor & Industries
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