

Nasty weather didn't faze unpermitted carolers downtown Christmas Eve.



ARIA SELIGMANN

Expression Downtown, which has been meeting regularly to come up with ways to overturn the ordinance.

Attorney Brian Michaels and the ACLU's Dave Fidanque drafted a letter to the city, outlining ways in which the ordinance violates city code, and requested a reply by Dec. 19. The city did reply by that date, and "the letter was quite conciliatory" says Michaels.

At this point, the city is considering imposing the permit requirement only on commercial gatherings, but definitions and details have yet to be worked out. It may be discussed at the Jan. 12 City Council meeting.

Last Wednesday evening's protest was organized largely by members of the Bill of Rights Defense Committee. Carolers gathered at Cozmic Pizza, then walked outside, stood in a downpour, and began singing as organizers handed out both traditional and non-traditional lyric sheets. The crowd included children and grandmothers.

"How dedicated these people are to show up in the rain," said Michaels.

Carolers warmed up their voices with Peter Chabarek's version of "Deck the Halls:"

*Deck the Halls with Mayor Torrey/Fa la la la la, la la la la/This new ordinance you'll be sorry/Fa la, etc./Don we now*

*our freedom of assembly/fa.../Lovers of freedom have no enemy/la la.../City Council, what are you thinking/fa la la.../This decision's really stinking!/fa.../Violation our Constitution/fa la.../Vote you out, no hesitation!*

Slug Queen Accordiana accompanied on her squeezebox.

From 8th and Charnelton, carolers moved en masse to Broadway Plaza, where they sang "Imagine" in front of the Ken Kesey statue. Next it was on to the Federal Plaza, where the group became factionalized as Accordiana began to entertain the crowd instead of holiday caroling and others stayed near the street where they could be more visible, breaking out into another version of "Deck the Halls."

While some carolers began to leave, because they were soggy or perhaps they had Christmas Eve plans, other latecomers straggled up, keeping the group sizable. At the final singing stop — the police station — carolers broke into a hearty round of:

*You better watch out/You better not shout/You better not pout/I'm telling you why/John Ashcroft knows where you live./He's making a list/He's checking it twice/Gonna decide who's naughty and nice/John Ashcroft knows where you*

*live./He sees you when you're sleeping/He knows when you're awake/Don't question our police state/We're at war/for goodness sake.*

During the entire protest, there wasn't a single cop in sight. "No one wants to make this arrest," said one caroler.

Even so, as the group wandered the empty downtown streets, everyone hesitated near intersections, not knowing whether to jaywalk — despite the fact they were already breaking the law — or abide by it and wait for the little green guy.

About 45 converged back at Cozmic

Pizza to hear Brian Cutean, who performed for free, and drink hot cider or consume pizza and beer and debrief on what organizers called "a highly successful event."

—Aria Seligmann

**CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS**

A news story Dec. 24 incorrectly reported the cost of converting Willamette Street to two-way traffic from 13th to 20th avenues. The conversion will cost \$13,500. The total cost of one-way to two-way conversions on Willamette, Lawrence, Lincoln and Charnelton streets is \$169,000.

**NO EXIT**

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**SLANT**

• *The Register-Guard* some time ago pledged to do more investigative reporting but we haven't seen much worth noting since the *R-G's* big blow-out story on developer John Musumeci that unfortunately ran the morning of Sept. 11, 2001 when nearly all of us were super-glued to our TV screens. The latest series by Diane Dietz on the money behind local and regional politics is worth reading. The series documents in detail what *EW* has been writing about for many years — the political clout of old timber and real estate money in Eugene, and how that money is used strategically to promote unfettered growth and sprawl. Only a few parts of the series raised our eyebrows. Labeling some local elected officials "pro-business" implies that other officials are "anti-business," and that's deceptive. Everyone we know on the City Council and County Commission supports healthy, sustainable business, but they don't all support irresponsible development and secret deals that raise taxes and drain downtowns. And it was peculiar to read that Mayor Torrey and other conservatives fear the power of *EW* and feel the need to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to compensate for *EW's* "free campaign coverage to liberal candidates." With our 84,000-plus readers in Lane County we probably do sway some close elections with our endorsements. But much of our political coverage is dedicated to filling in the gaps — providing our readers with information they are not getting in the daily paper and on television. Who's get-

ting the most free coverage? Our mayor milks local media like a pro, reading to kids, losing 40 pounds on the Atkins diet, stumping statewide for education — any slow news day means Torrey gets a headline, a photo, and a blurb on the evening news. One enthusiastic local TV news crew even followed the mayor around one day, covering everything but his potty breaks.

• This year has been difficult and painful for many people we know and care about. About 40 people are directly involved in *EW* and when we add friends and family we are an extended circle of several hundred people. This has been a rough year for illnesses and accidents. Just this week we heard the tragic news of the death of Merlyn Thornton, the son of one of our route drivers, Will Thornton. Merlyn was just 16 and still a student at Siuslaw High. He died in a single-car accident in Florence Dec. 21. He is described by his family as a young man who "loved skateboarding with a passion that got him a lot of bumps and bruises. He was a very bright light to all who knew him for any amount of time, and he will be missed." Our condolences go out to all the families who are finding too little to celebrate this holiday season.

*SLANT* includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the *EW* staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com