

Growth Gorilla

Chamber of Commerce raises big election bucks from developers.

The Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce has thrown a 1,000-pound gorilla into local elections to pursue its pro-sprawl and anti-environmental agenda.

The chamber's political action committee (PAC) reported that by April 1 it had amassed a \$32,700 war chest for local elections next month. The Chamber is backing Nancy Nathanson for mayor and Maurice Denner, Tom Slocum, Scott Meisner and Chris Pryor for the City Council. Pryor is unopposed in Ward 8.

Developers, construction companies, land speculators and other pro-sprawl development interests have written most of the checks for the Chamber's PAC, contributing nearly \$30,000 over the past two years.

The Papé Group was the largest contributor to the Chamber PAC, giving \$5,050. Papé sells heavy equipment to de-

Hynix Semiconductor gave \$1,000. The city has given Hynix more than \$40 million in tax breaks and permits to fill and build on a large swath of wetlands.

The Gaydos, Churnside business law firm and Pepsi Bottling Company gave \$1,000 each.

PeaceHealth, now moving its hospital to Springfield, gave \$500.

Many of the Chamber PAC's biggest donors are also big contributors to George Bush and right-wing politics. The Giustinas recently gave \$50,000 to the Republican National Committee's efforts to re-elect George Bush and his friends. The Wildish family recently gave \$2,000 to Republicans nationally, \$5,000 for the pro-West Eugene Parkway campaign two years ago and \$2,000 to the Gang of 9's attack ads against City Council progressives. Warren has given almost \$3,000 to the state and national Republican parties and

Almost \$9 out of every \$10 contributed to the PAC came from 22 large companies and wealthy individuals who gave \$1,000 or more.

velopers and road builders and owns the Sanipac garbage company.

The Giustina timber family and their various companies were the second largest contributor to the PAC. The Giustinas have speculated on large tracts of land on the edges of Eugene and could stand to make millions from urban sprawl.

The Giustinas gave \$2,050 to the PAC directly. Thousands more came through a PAC opposed to taxes to repair roads. The Giustina's contributed \$3,000 to the Repeal Unfair Taxes PAC. The Unfair taxes PAC then gave \$4,466 to the Chamber PAC in in-kind and cash donations.

Carolyn Chambers, owner of Chamber's Construction and Chambers Communications (KEZI), gave \$3,500 to the Chamber PAC. Hamilton Construction gave \$3,000. The Delta, Egge, Eugene, and Wildish sand, gravel and construction companies each gave \$1,000, except for Wildish, which gave \$1,200.

Developer Hult & Associates gave \$2,150 and developers, land speculators and timber barons at Giustina Resources gave \$2,050. Bennett property management company gave \$2,000. Duncan & Brown real estate appraisers gave \$3,000.

Rexius and Jerry's Home Improvement, suppliers for developers, each gave \$1,000. Lumberman J.P. Hammer gave \$1,000.

Businesses opposed to environmental, safety and quality of life regulations and in favor of yet more tax breaks were the other big funders of the Chamber PAC, kicking \$18,366 into the pot.

Michael Schwartz, owner of M. Jacobs Furniture and other companies, gave \$3,000 to the PAC. Charles Warren, owner of Excalibur Cutlery gave \$2,000.

George Bush over the last four years

Many Chamber donors also gave big donations to Nathanson's mayoral campaign. Giustina, Hamilton, Delta, and Wildish gave similar big donations to Nathanson.


The Chamber reported spending \$18,613 so far for the May election. The biggest chunk of the money went to Edgewater Strategies, a local political consulting and surveying firm. It's unclear whether Edgewater was in fact doing work to benefit Nathanson and other candidates. The Chamber PAC reported donating \$1,500 directly to Nathanson and \$750 to Denner. As of April 1, the PAC had \$14,085 in cash. Much more money is likely to pour into the Chamber PAC this month with the next spending report due May 6.

As of April 1, Kitty Piercy lead Nathanson in mayoral fund-raising \$38,446 to Nathanson's \$24,360. But if the Chamber throws its money fully behind Nathanson, the conservative candidate's financial backing will far exceed Piercy's.


In the past two years, the PAC has spent a total of \$14,430 on political work by Edgewater, \$4,500 on surveys and \$12,500 on direct donations to candidates. About \$5,000 has gone to catered fund-raising events.

Although the Chamber of Commerce has thousands of members (including *Eugene Weekly*), only a small group of pro-sprawl interests funded the PAC and apparently decide how the money is spent. Almost \$9 out of every \$10 contributed to the PAC came from 22 large companies and wealthy individuals who gave \$1,000 or more. If politics follow money, these are the few special interests that run Eugene.

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