POLICE COMMISSION SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON 'CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT'

The Eugene Police Commission (PC) has had a tough time getting citizens to show up at forums on more mundane police policy issues, but the upcoming sessions on police complaints might stir a better response. The agenda includes discussion on "civilian oversight," which reform advocates see as an opportunity to push for a truly independent police review board.

The first forum in the series will be from 7 to 9 pm Thursday, Aug. 5 at the Eugene Public Library Bascom/Tykeson Room. The session will be facilitated by Marion Malcolm of Community Alliance of Lane County and Councilor Bonny Bettman, and will be co-sponsored by the ACLU, CALC and the Eugene Human Rights Commission. Additional sessions with different sponsors and facilitators will be scheduled after students return in the fall.

Bettman says the top priority of the PC in 2005 is refining the complaint process, and the commission hopes to have a report to the council, police chief and city manager by September 2005. The commission is seeking additional funding for staffing and outreach for the project.

Bettman says she hopes the sessions will provide "the broadest possible range of feedback" and will result in "more accountability" for the police department.

The 12-member PC, appointed by the mayor and council, has been criticized in the past for being too "police-friendly" and not advocating for stronger reforms of EPD, despite widespread allegations of excessive force, discrimination and sexual abuse. Two former EPD officers were recently convicted of sex crimes committed while in uniform.

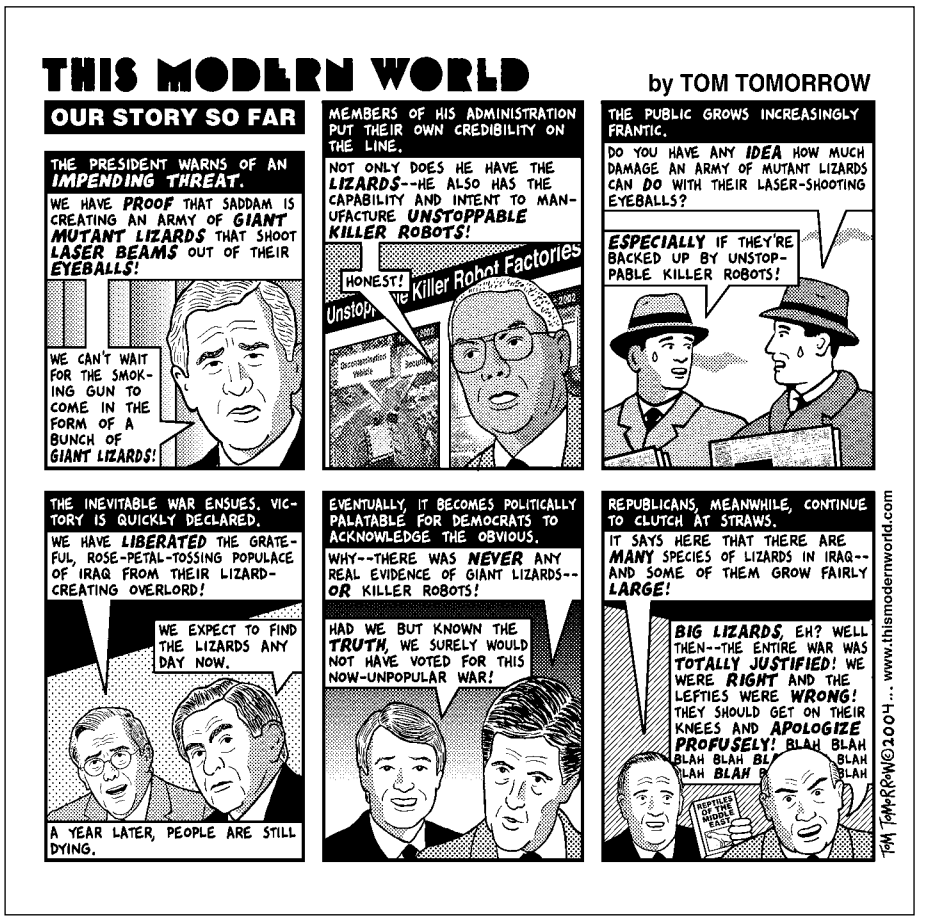
Bettman says the commission has a mix of conservative and liberal members and has made progress in several areas, including media access during protests, SWAT policies, use of "spit hoods," recruitment protocols, and refinements to the MATRIX system.

"Of course, anyone looking for complete police reform will not be satisfied with the incremental improvements the PC has been able to affect from working within the system," says Bettman.

Whiteaker neighborhood leader Majeska Seese-Green says she's pleased to see "review of various civilian oversight models" listed on the flier advertising the Aug. 5 forum. "This is an opportunity to make comments in support of strong independent oversight," she says. "But if people don't know that is on topic, they are far less likely to take the opportunity."

Seese-Green figures the low turnout at some past PC meetings is due to "skepticism about the independence of the commission, and thus the value of bothering to attend or comment. … Related to that is a feeling that it is utterly impossible to affect real change at the Eugene Police Department."

Citizens who attend the sessions will be invited to talk about the complaint process and how it can be improved. One question being tossed out for comment is, "What, if anything, would prevent you from filing a complaint with the police department?" Comments can also be submitted by e-mail to jeannine.parisi@ci.eugene.or.us or mailed to the commission at 777 Pearl St. Room 106, Eugene 97401. — *TJT*



COUNTING DOWN UNTIL BUSH IS GONE

How much time does George W. Bush have left in office? Just check your button, says Matteo Luccio of Eugene. Luccio is a partner in a new company, Time Left LLC, offering fanciful 3-inch buttons with a display that counts down the days, hours, minutes, and seconds to the end of the Bush presidency — when the election polls close Nov. 2.

The digital device will then reset itself and count down to the inauguration of our 44th president at noon Jan. 20, 2005 . This "Button for a New Era" can be worn or displayed on a desk.

The button's brushed-metal artwork places the inscription "Countdown to the Day When Bush Goes Away" over an image of the inner workings of a pocket watch.

Luccio is one of four partners around the country involved in the project. One of his partners is Fabio Meacci of Boston, an electronics engineer who came up with the countdown idea and found component manufacturers. Luccio takes credit for the button idea, and he will also process and ship orders nationwide out of Eugene. Single buttons can be purchased on-line at www.timeleft.us for $9.95, with discounts for multiple and bulk orders.

Luccio says a dozen prototype buttons were hand-made in Boston by Meacci and enthusiastically received by delegates at the Democratic National Convention this week. The first manufacturing order will be 1,000 buttons.

Time Left LLC has offices in Wyoming, North Carolina, Massachusetts and Eugene. — *TJT*

CITY PANELS LOOKING TO FILL VACANCIES

The city of Eugene is seeking volunteer applicants for committees that advise the City Council, and for one intergovernmental committee.

The recruitment period opened July 19 and continues through Sept. 24. The City Council will decide on appointments Oct. 25, and the appointments begin Nov. 1.

The following groups have vacancies to fill: Budget Committee: two vacancies; Planning Commission: two vacancies; Human Rights Commission: five vacancies; Toxics Board: three vacancies (must meet specific criteria); Historic Review Board:

• The Democratic National Convention is totally scripted and finely crafted to energize Dems and swing skeptics, but it's still a good show. Will John Kerry's words tonight (Thursday) match the power of Bill Clinton's "Send Me" speech Monday night? Does it matter? Clinton stole the show as the convention began (he probably couldn't help himself) and few expect Kerry to exude that level of charisma tonight. But we predict Kerry will hold his own and maintain the momentum that is driving the highly motivated and surprisingly unified Democratic Party ahead to Nov. 2.

• Some Eugene city councilors are working this week to get a charter amendment on the November ballot that should have great appeal to conservatives on the council, but for some reason doesn't. The measure would establish an independent performance auditor following the unanimous recommendation of the Charter Review Committee two years ago. Would an independent auditor have uncovered the sexual abuse of women in our community by Eugene police officers? Maybe, maybe not. But independent auditors in other cities spend a lot of time looking at their cop shops in terms of both efficiency and accountability. As we go to press, the council is looking at putting a charter amendment on the November ballot to establish an independent auditor — a position that answers not to the city manager, but rather directly to the City Council. We urge the council and staff to charge ahead with this referendum and get ballot language prepared for approval at the Aug. 9 council meeting.

• Just two hours after we queried Don Kahle this week about rumors that he was shutting down *<wink>/Comic News*, he sent out a press release announcing that he's putting the weekly humor magazine on the market. He's closing down for the month of August and will print his 500th issue just in time for the Eugene Celebration. Looks like the national subscription version will continue, but we hope the free little local paper keeps going as well. Anybody want to buy a job?

• What's the noise down at Hempfest headquarters? A messy internal fender-bender appears to have followed the screeching halt of this year's annual educational gathering and celebration (see story 7/15). But the smoke has cleared and Executive Director Dan Koozer says he's still in the driver's seat, and down the road he sees a revived festival Sept. 25-26 in Washington-Jefferson Park. Koozer says the bumpy road ahead has a $400 pothole from vendor fees that were paid in advance and spent on expenses. Bob Jensen of the Wild Duck and Big Green Events are reportedly involved in steering the September fest.

DO SOMETHING

House Parties July 29

Hobnob with **John Kerry/ John Edwards** fans at one of several Democratic Convention parties happening Thursday evening at private homes or at public venues such as the Vet's Club and Cozmic Pizza. Get info at https://volunteer.johnkerry.com/event/search or call 342-8594 or e-mail grosscup@usalocal.com