

CITIZENS

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Below is the text from the fourth annual Citizens State of the City Address given Jan. 10 at the Eugene Public Library.

This version has been edited for length and the complete text is online at www.eugeneweekly.com

The event traditionally serves as a counterpoint to the Mayor's State of the City Address and highlights issues of pressing importance to Eugene, as viewed by citizen groups in the community. Speakers this year were Lisa Arkin of Oregon Toxics Alliance, Rob Handy of River Road Community Organization, Gary Gillespie of Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network, Kevin Matthews of Friends of Eugene, and Hope Marston of the Lane County Bill of Rights Defense Committee.

Eugene as a Sustainable Community

By Lisa Arkin

A few days before the end of 2004, I awoke to the patter of voices from a local radio station. I listened to a public-service spot where the announcer

urged listeners to rush out and buy new SUVs before Dec. 31 so they could take advantage of the administration's tremendous tax credits and other economic incentives.

The message defied common sense. Remember last summer's astronomical gas prices? Those low-mileage SUVs would only add to more dependence on an increasingly erratic international oil supply. And what about Eugene's own challenges surrounding land use, pollution, and transportation? More SUVs would pump yet more pollutants and climate-changing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Fourteen of the past 20 years have had lower than average rainfall, a situation that prompted EWEB's recent rate increase. And 2004 will go down in the books as Eugene's second-driest year on record.

Now, imagine an entirely different morning broadcast, a public-service message that really paid the community a service: "The city of Eugene has committed to purchasing 100 percent wind and geothermal power by the year 2010. Eugene residents can take advantage of tax credits and no-interest loans for investing in home and business energy conservation."

Eugene can join dozens of other communities acting with conviction at the local level to create forward-looking civic policies that respond to a changing world. Simply put, we are obligated to act not only on our own behalf, but also to meet the needs of generations to follow.

To its credit, Eugene already has a variety of policies, goals, and resolutions relating to sustainability. The recently released brochure titled "The City of Eugene and Sustainability" refers to habitat, energy, water, economy and more. The city now needs to develop a comprehensive sustain-



Lisa Arkin



Rob Handy



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Hope Marston

ability mandate and identify a timeline for its implementation.

An extremely valuable consensus-building tool is the principle of *fore-caring*. That is "fore" with an 'e,' as in forethought, beforehand, and foresight. Fore-caring includes identifying those things we all value and acting together to protect and maintain them. Fore-caring would embed shared community goals and values into all city policies and practices.

An excellent example is the Lane County Food Coalition's project at Sheldon High School that brings local organic produce to our school children. The coalition also is forming a permanent council that will advocate for local farmers and food processors.

Working at a grassroots level, the United Methodist Church is leading an interfaith movement to support local farmers called "That's My Farmer!" In the words of Pastor John Pitney, this program "puts a neighborly face on our food." The congregation is recruiting 500 families to join Community Supported Agriculture, a program where people buy weekly food boxes directly from local farmers.

Another example of fore-caring is the preservation in the Whiteaker neighborhood of two local grocery stores, the Red Apple and the Red Barn Natural Grocery. The Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO) prevented the closure of these two businesses because they are convenient and neighborhood-sized, and they help define the character of the neighborhood.

The city of Eugene has a unique chance to practice fore-caring by teaming up with River Road and Santa Clara residents to preserve their neighborhood's character as each one makes the "transition" from semi-rural to urban.

We applaud Mayor Piercy's plan to set

up a Sustainability Advisory Commission and recommend that the commission first turn its attention to developing a Eugene Sustainable-Community Code. The code should be comprehensive, covering several basic areas: community health, neighborhoods, labor, energy use, the environment — as well as, but not limited to, our economy.

Moving toward a sustainable code means leadership from the city but also participation from "green" businesses, traditional businesses, neighborhoods, nonprofits, and the interfaith-religious community.

We can learn from several nearby cities that are living by their sustainable-community codes and are reaping the economic and social benefits. Portland recently applied the concept of fore-caring to its municipal weed-management system. Just last month, the city announced the establishment of several pesticide-free parks along with a pilot program using chemical alternatives such as vinegar.

Both Portland and Seattle have approved sustainable-paper policies requiring that all paper products be chlorine-free and made from post-consumer, recycled content by 2006. The city of Eugene could purchase tree-free paper for stationery from our local company, Living Tree Paper.

It is time for our business community to practice fore-caring and acknowledge that our land and our air are common spaces, shared by plants, animals, and humans alike.

Neighborhoods

By Rob Handy

What makes a neighborhood a desirable, livable place to call home? What makes a neighborhood more than simply

geographical boundaries on a map, but a living, breathing community of people with common values and interests?

At the inception of American cities, neighborhoods grew up around industry. Generally, the people who lived in these neighborhoods either worked nearby or provided services to the same neighborhoods. These communities were very stable and their populations shared similar values and concerns. Neighborhood public schools were the pride of a community, often doubling as social and educational centers.

Today it is more challenging to identify interconnected community within a city and its neighborhoods. Increasingly, residents choose to work, shop, play, and school their children in different parts of the town than where they live. As our lifestyle choices increase, what is the glue that holds together neighborhood residents and businesses with a sense of place?

Oregon was a pioneer in codifying public involvement as Goal 1 of our trail-blazing state land-use guidelines. The visionaries of that bipartisan effort understood that involving the public at the beginning phase of planning was vital to the success of any plan, and a foundation for our democracy.

For many Eugene planners and decision makers today, engaging energetic public involvement seems to have become an afterthought. It may be seductive to believe that policy creation and implementation can skip over community involvement, yet still find success and support as a top-down exercise.

Are residents really just reactive and ignorant? Or are there flaws in what passes for our current public-involvement processes? Are Crest Drive-area residents just against street widenings? Or maybe we are hearing them voice their shared