

news Briefs

CAL YOUNG SEES COUP

In a rare display of power politics for a neighborhood group, conservatives packed a meeting of the Cal Young Neighborhood Association (CYNA) Jan. 27 to vote out the association's current president.

Former Mayor Jim Torrey and conservative Councilors Gary Papé and George Poling and more than 100 other people packed the meeting to overwhelmingly vote out Charles Biggs and install John Brown as the new CYNA president.

The Cal Young coup could have citywide impact. Neighborhood associations often meet infrequently, only advise the city and are often ignored. But new Mayor Kitty Piercy and other councilors have discussed giving the neighborhood groups real power. But what if that power is taken simply by whoever can best pack a meeting?

Biggs had angered Torrey last summer when he wrote an opinion piece in the neighborhood newsletter critical of the lack of citizen involvement in the downtown visioning process. Torrey championed building a new police station as the central part of a downtown vision. Voters rejected the police station proposal by a 20 percent margin last November, including a heavy "no" vote in the Cal Young area. Brown, a Torrey supporter, was a leading backer of the new police station.

"I have no problem with losing an election" as neighborhood president, Biggs said, but he said he did have concerns about what happened last week.

Biggs said the roughly 100 Brown supporters who showed up pressed to move the election to first on the agenda and then promptly left after the vote, skipping items on neighborhood history, tire slashings and hate fliers and commercial signs at Sheldon High School. "It was very disrespectful of the association and the guest speakers."

Such power politics are unusual for neighborhood associations, Biggs said, "I don't see the neighborhood associations as playing politics in that regard." Most of the quarterly Cal Young meetings are attended by about 30 to 40 people, including many regulars. When he was first elected two years ago, "I was asked to take the position and I said I would. It wasn't like I ran an election."

Biggs said he heard some concerns from meeting regulars that they "didn't like the impression that an outside force was coming in and imposing their will on the neighborhood."

Many of those who voted were not neighborhood residents, but representatives of businesses in the neighborhood including the Arlie development company and Wildish Sand and Gravel, Biggs said. Such business representatives are allowed to vote, but have rarely done so in the past, he said.

Biggs said before the ouster he was a "vocal voice" around city and neighborhood concerns. "Maybe it's a way of silencing those concerns."

Biggs is co-chair of the city Neighborhood Leaders Council, a group which often takes progressive stands. He said it's so far unclear whether or not he will have to give up his two-year appointment to that official city group.

Brown said he sent out letters to draw supporters to the meeting, but sees nothing

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



wrong with what happened.

Torrey was "unhappy" with Biggs' criticism of his civic center vision process, but he said Torrey did not put him up to throwing Biggs out. "That's absolutely wrong."

It's not unusual or disrespectful for people to leave a city meeting when items they are interested in are over, Brown said.

Brown said he'd like to look at splitting up the neighborhood, which he said is too large to draw active interest in meetings. "There hasn't been a lot of involvement in the past," Brown said. "Nobody goes to a meeting unless they have a dog in the fight."

Biggs agrees with Brown's goal of getting more people to meetings. "I just hope this transition strengthens the Cal Young Neighborhood Association and increases participation over all." — Alan Pittman

PEACEHEALTH PANS FEAR OF FLOODING

A Springfield resident and longtime river pollution watchdog is calling PeaceHealth's plans to build a huge medical center along the McKenzie River "absolutely insane." David Rodriguez lives along the McKenzie and says the natural meandering nature of the river will likely eat away at the setbacks proposed for the hospital.

"Any setbacks set today only apply to the present river configuration," Rodriguez wrote to Springfield city officials. "What can be 100 feet today can easily become 20 feet or less after bank failure due to river realignment tomorrow. All of the trees and buffer would be gone."

SLANT

- Applause from all of us in "the public" to the transit union and Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network for generating the LTD/ATU Community Committee to encourage postponing a strike for 35 days and sending an auditor in to examine and explain the numbers that have triggered this conflict. Although the most vulnerable members of our community are served by the buses, we citizens have no leverage on the LTD board. Unlike the EWEB board, members are not chosen by and thus accountable to the public. They are appointed by the governor. We repeat last week's Slant call for Gov. Kulongoski, a former labor lawyer, to weigh in on a solution. His actions aside, both LTD and the ATU have a 35-day opportunity for new initiatives. Just do it.
- Our Slant blurb last week on low-income housing next to the WOW Hall stirred up a couple of folks. Kathy Ging of the West Eighth Avenue Group objected to our praise for the recommended Metropolitan Affordable Housing proposal. "It's not a good plan," she tells us. "They are trying to shut down the WOW Hall." We doubt that Metro has that outcome in mind, but Ging says cities nationwide are enforcing

noise ordinances to the detriment of performance venues. And city staffer Richie Weinman, longtime advocate for the homeless and low-income housing, says we did a "disservice" to the members of the Housing Policy Board (HPB) Allocations Committee by "suggesting that the proposals didn't get enough scrutiny." Weinman tells us committee members studied the three proposals in depth and gave the West Eighth Avenue Group 30 minutes to talk about their plan and answer questions in a public meeting Jan. 11. Weinman says he's convinced that the Metro plan is "likely to enhance the WOW Hall's important presence in our community." The Feb. 7 public hearing of the HPB will not be in the Atrium but rather at noon in the McNutt Room of City Hall. Opportunities to address the City Council will be Feb. 7 and 14 in anticipation of a March 7 council decision. Copies of the three proposals are now available at the library as well as the Atrium.

- What's up between developer John Musumeci and CHOICES, the public interest group tracking land use issues and fighting PeaceHealth's hospital plans? We

hear Musumeci's attorney sent a letter to CHOICES newsletter editor Rob Zako demanding retractions. It seems Musumeci doesn't like being called a "land speculator" instead of a "real developer." Read all about it, and much more at www.efn.org/~choices

- One of our favorite winter outdoor activities is joining the Stream Team to plant native trees and shrubs along local waterways. The next opportunity is from 9 am to noon Saturday, Feb. 5 at Kickerbocker Bridge. The next is from 12:30 to 3:30 Sunday, Feb. 13. Call 682-4850 or e-mail lorna.j.baldwin@ci.eugene.or.us for details.
- We were disappointed to see that nine white men spoke and two white men moderated on the stage of the Economic Forecast 2005 meeting Tuesday afternoon at the Hilton. Not one woman or person of color was to be seen except, of course, in the audience of 500 that packed the ballroom. Seems that the UO College of Arts and Sciences, the R-G, and the Chamber of Commerce could have found at least one "other" who knows something about economics. And as we predicted last week, most of the material presented side-

stepped the huge economic issues of today and tomorrow: poverty, economic justice, sustainability and the environment. Our skewed state tax system is another big piece of the economic puzzle that was ignored. Only UO professor Ed Whitelaw attempted to address the reasons behind the growing gap between Oregon's rich and poor, due in part to our state's disengagement from social services, early education and training. Kulongoski, in his opening remarks, did offer lip service to education, and did say that one role of government is to protect our environment and quality of life, which has a positive impact on business. But where's the leadership to turn our state around with some substantive initiatives, such as tax reform?

- Late news: Two important public meetings are happening Thursday, Feb. 3 regarding the city of Eugene and efforts to establish an independent police review process. The new assessment of police oversight models has arrived and will be discussed at a noon meeting at WOW Hall, 291 W. 8th Ave., and at a special Police Commission meeting at 6 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.