

SLANT

• When George Russell stepped into the 4-J superintendent's office, he inherited big problems with Eugene's alternative school structure. Rather than ducking the issues, Russell led. He convened citizen committees to study the problems and recommend solutions. He gathered data. He presided over tough open meetings to hear from citizens.

Following this transparent and inclusive five-year process, he offered fair recommendations to eliminate inequities in Eugene's schools. (We wrote earlier that he didn't go far enough fast enough, but it was a good start.)

He mustered broad support from the Human Rights Commission, the teachers' union, both the *Weekly* and the *R-G*, and other players. But the politically savvy parents who benefit from the current system aggressively opposed his major changes. In the face of this opposition, the elected members of the 4-J board lacked the will to fully support their superintendent. Instead, the board mucked around, half adopted some recommendations, and essentially kicked the mess back to George.

He did his job well, proposing sound fixes for this district. In response, the board has left him with some schools that are, in his words "brownier and poorer" than they should be, with alternative and neighborhood schools sharing buildings, a situation that Russell recognizes does not work, and with a festering debate further dividing the community. The 4-J board should have vigorously backed their superintendent.

• Nice timing that the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza and statue were dedicated in Eugene this week. The crusty Oregon senator would have been proud of his follower Margaret Hallock, who orchestrated the end of the LTD/ATU bus strike last weekend. She's the director of the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics on the UO campus. Margaret first worked with the citizens committee out of ESSN/Jobs



Hallock

Mattiace, John Van Landingham, Bob Baldwin, Debbie Oresik, Gavin Light, Michael Regan, Ross McConnell, Jeanine Malito, Sebastian Zwicknagl, Wanda Gledhill, and Claire Syrett. After the buses stopped rolling, Hallock coalesced a second community group to work with the professional mediator and both sides to

with Justice that brought about postponement of the strike for 30 days. Chaired by Joan Pierson and Curt Bylund, that committee included James

overcome the small differences that separated them. That group was Mayor Kitty Piercy, David Piercy, Jack Roberts, Art Johnson and Hallock. Morse spent a good part of his life resolving labor disputes. He, like Hallock, would have been happy to see the LTD buses in the streets Monday morning.

• The "Oregon Fair Energy Bill" (SB 527) would require energy facility approvals to be based on regional electricity needs, prioritize renewable energy projects over fossil-fuel facilities and allow for more local input into land use decisions about energy facilities. We currently have

an energy surplus, and our energy supply is expected to hold steady with demand through 2011. That gives us time to set up renewable energy systems such as wind-mills, which can generate about 3.5 MW each and earn farmers \$10,000 a year while competing with current gas prices. Even better, they have no toxic emissions, while gas-fired power plants release hazardous compounds and contribute to global warming. This bill is an opportunity for Oregon to take the lead in smart energy planning. We encourage readers to contact their state senators to support SB 527, which will have its first hearing on March 28.

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

• In "NOAA's Ark" (3/3 cover story), the annual cost of Oregon's fish hatcheries to the state was reported to be \$50 million. The actual cost is \$23 million. The article also reported that "six marine scientists hired as consultants for NOAA Fisheries stated in the March 2004 issue of *Science* that the agency instructed them to eliminate a part of their report stating that hatchery fish impede wild salmon survival." NOAA Fisheries reportedly did censor the scientists' findings on hatchery salmon, but they did not state so in the *Science* forum.

• In our news story (3/3) on school choice, we reported that Eugene School Board member Craig Smith questioned whether the problem with neighborhood schools wasn't funding but the quality of teachers at those schools. Smith clarifies, "I have no opinion that there is a difference" in teachers from alternative and neighborhood schools. "My assumption is that they are of equal quality."

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-Rob Widmer

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Other hefes out there? Also accented. Sometimes in an accent we can't understand.

-Kurt Widmer