

news Briefs

HYNIX BREAKS CAPPED, MAYBE

The Eugene City Council voted 7-1 April 20 for an enterprise zone program that could give Hynix another \$120 million in tax breaks if it completes planned expansions.

But the council did potentially limit the program by voting 4-4 with mayor Kitty Piercy breaking the tie for a per-job cap on future tax breaks.

The cap could substantially reduce the tax give-away. Hynix has received a total of \$50 million in tax breaks, or about \$50,000 for each job at its plant. But a lot remains uncertain.

It's uncertain if the cap will hold up in court. The state enterprise zone law was written to favor corporate welfare. In 1999, Hynix successfully sued and threw out an attempt by the city of Eugene and Lane County to reduce the estimated \$170 million in tax breaks for its planned three-phase plant by \$13 to \$19 million.

Councilor Bonny Bettman, who proposed the cap, says she believes the cap is legal and has been used successfully in a Portland enterprise zone, but she lacked details.

If the cap is thrown out, it's unclear if that will mean the whole enterprise zone will be disbanded or just the cap on hand-outs. In the 1999 lawsuit, the enterprise zone was left in place.

The city has so far not sought a legal opinion on the matter. The private law firm that does the city's legal work has also worked for Hynix.

Another uncertainty is the level at which the cap will be set. The City Council left that decision for later.

Bettman noted that in 1997 a city committee studying the enterprise zone recommended a per-job cap of \$15,000 for the three

years of enterprise zone tax breaks. A pro-big business committee appointed by Mayor Jim Torrey last year discussed a cap of about \$35,000, but did not recommend it. Bettman says she will be "looking for some middle ground" in setting the cap.

Councilor Betty Taylor was the lone vote against the tax breaks, even with the uncertain per-job cap. Taylor said the breaks were rushed without a public hearing, lacked public accountability, created jobs for people moving here rather than locals, were given to corporations who would have moved here anyway, offered low-paid jobs and robbed the city of tax revenue to pay for the schools and new services demanded by the growth the tax breaks created. "What we're doing is subsidizing growth," Taylor said.

Another provision passed by the council would potentially reduce tax breaks by 25 percent for companies that did not provide high quality jobs. But in the past, the job quality criteria have been set so low that Hynix and most other companies still qualified for their full tax breaks. The council also left details of the criteria for later meetings.

The council's enterprise zone program application now goes to the state for approval.

— Alan Pittman

SPRINGFIELD UNDER ATTACK

The Oregon Bus Project, known for its effective door-to-door campaigning for progressive candidates in the 2004 elections, is now mobilizing for the upcoming Springfield School Board elections. In a message to supporters, the Bus Project says "The Springfield School District is under attack."

"Springfield is a town which is off most people's radars," says the e-mail. "But, what if you knew that the religious right and the Republican Party were funding challengers to unseat three respected school board members? What if you knew that their main objective was to reverse three years of work on a diversity policy? What if you knew that they are targeting the best superintendent

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Springfield has ever had: a woman who is above reproach, who has brought new energy and momentum to a district besieged by budget cuts?"

The group is organizing a canvass for candidates Bill Medford, Jonathon Light and Al King beginning at 10 am, Saturday, April 30. They will meet at the OEA office on Coburg Road, a block past Costco on the right. Participants will canvass several neighborhoods in Springfield and return by 2 pm. RSVP to 914-0293 or jamesmattiace@yahoo.com

LRAPA BOARD SEAT CREATED

Care about the air (see cover story last week)? Here's a chance to get proactive. Due to the growth of Eugene's population, the city is seeking applicants for a new position on the Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority (LRAPA) Board of Directors. Mayor Kitty Piercy will nominate a candidate and submit

the nomination to the City Council for approval. Applications are due by 5 pm Friday, May 6. Mail or deliver applications to the City Manager's Office, room 105, 777 Pearl Street, or fax to 682-5414. For more info, visit www.ci.eugene.or.us or contact Mary Walston at 682-5406, mary.f.walston@ci.eugene.or.us

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

This year's Take Back the Night rally and march to end sexual and domestic violence begins at 6:30 pm Thursday, April 28 at the EMU Amphitheater on campus at 13th and University. The rally at UO is followed by a march downtown ending with a speak-out at 8th and Oak.

Speakers/performers include Mayor Kitty Piercy, Erin O'Brien, Austin Shaw-Phillips, Judith Castro, Cindy Hirschorn, and Margo Schaefer of Womenspace.

Take Back the Night is a collaboration of

SLANT

• The 4J School District is currently wrestling with its 2005-06 budget and we're pleased to see more money being allocated to poor neighborhood schools to help narrow the achievement gap. It's a step in the right direction. The budget process is hampered this year not only with equity issues and the usual challenges of squeezing as much education as possible out of limited funds, but also by the district not knowing exactly how much money will be available. The Legislature has yet to nail down its funding for K-12 education, contract negotiations are beginning with unions representing teachers and staff, and even the proposed public safety tax district could squeeze local school funding if it passes. Meanwhile, ballots go out next week for local school board elections. Which candidates can best deal with the complex education issues on the horizon? Does it matter whether we elect progressives or conservatives to our non-partisan school boards? Look for our analysis and endorsements next week.



Jeffrey "Free" Luers

• We're still outraged by the prison sentence of 22-plus years handed down to Jeffrey "Free" Luers for his protest torching of three SUVs in Eugene in 2001. Now we're hearing from www.democracynow.org that a California Institute of Technology graduate student named Billy Cottrell was sentenced April 17 to eight years in prison for setting fire to an SUV dealership and destroying about 125 SUVs. Cottrell was ordered to pay \$3.5 million in retribution. Cottrell is reportedly affiliated with the Earth Liberation Front. Arson is always a bad idea, but credibility in our justice system requires that the punishment fits the crime. Luer's long sentence is not justice. It's an absurdity, and should be an embarrassment to everyone who calls Oregon home. Protests focusing on Luers' case and other injustices are being planned for the weekend of June 10-12.

• We'd all like to think that issues of racism and cultural bias were all resolved by the Civil Rights Movement, but

of course we know better. Bigotry has a long half-life. Our Q&A column this week on cultural competency (see page 10) is timely in that a protest is being planned at 3:30 pm Wednesday at the College of Education (e-mail coaction@hotmail.com for info). Also, UO is beginning "Community Conversations" next week on a draft Diversity Action Plan. The plan is intended to "enhance campus diversity, make the UO more representative of the various communities it serves, increase cultural competency and strengthen community relations," says Gregory J. Vincent, UO vice provost for institutional equity and diversity. The sessions are Monday, May 2 at the EMU on campus, Wednesday at Gerlinger and the following Monday, May 9, at the EMU. Call 346-2084 for details. Across town, LCC has just published a fascinating collection of essays on race and culture called *Community College Moment: The Diversity Issue* with readings and discussions planned for 5 pm Friday, May 6 at Tsunami Books. These are all good opportunities to identify and confront our personal biases – yep, we all have them.