

news Briefs

CITY DERAILS BIG JAIL TAX

The Eugene City Council balked May 23 at a radical Lane County proposal to about double county cops and jail spending by drastically increasing property taxes and changing the structure of local government.

The council voted 5-4 against amending the Metropolitan Plan to allow Lane County to set up a countywide taxing district for law enforcement. The district would have allowed the county to circumvent property tax limitation measures and drastically increase property taxes.

Opponents argued that pursuing the district was a waste of staff time and money. The district would have required an eventual countywide vote, and with so many arguments against the controversial district, there appeared to be little chance it would pass. The county has failed eight times to pass tax increases for cops and jails, even when they lacked controversy among elected officials like the district proposal.

Under Measure 5 compression rules, the special district would rob the city of Eugene of revenue from its popular library and school support levies. The county said it would try to make up the lost revenue, but its record on revenue sharing has been controversial. City officials have been arguing for more than a decade that the county doesn't give city residents a fair share of the county's large road fund.

Much of the money for the new county levy would come from city residents who would subsidize rural law enforcement patrols that rural residents have refused to raise their own taxes to pay for.

It's also unclear that the money is actually needed. In the past the county has always had money to prosecute and jail political protesters and marijuana smokers for low level offenses. The county has also always been eager to give away its tax revenue and cash to corporations and developers in the form of subsidies and tax breaks. DA Doug

Harclerod has long complained that his office is drastically overworked, but he recently took a six-month vacation. Crime rates have been falling locally for the last decade, even without the big jail and cop taxes the county says it desperately needs.

The special district proposal isn't entirely dead yet. Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, the swing vote on the issue, said she's willing to continue discussing the district with the county and it could come up for a vote again.

— Alan Pittman

COUNCIL OKS FOREST PLEDGE

On May 23, the Eugene City Council passed a symbolic resolution to end the logging of mature and old growth forests on public lands in the McKenzie River Watershed. The Cascadia Wildlands Project (CWP), the Oregon Natural Resources Council and OSP-PIRG drafted the resolution, which passed 7-1, with only Councilor Jennifer Solomon opposing. Local business owners, former loggers, a university employee and a flyfisherman testified in support of the resolution.

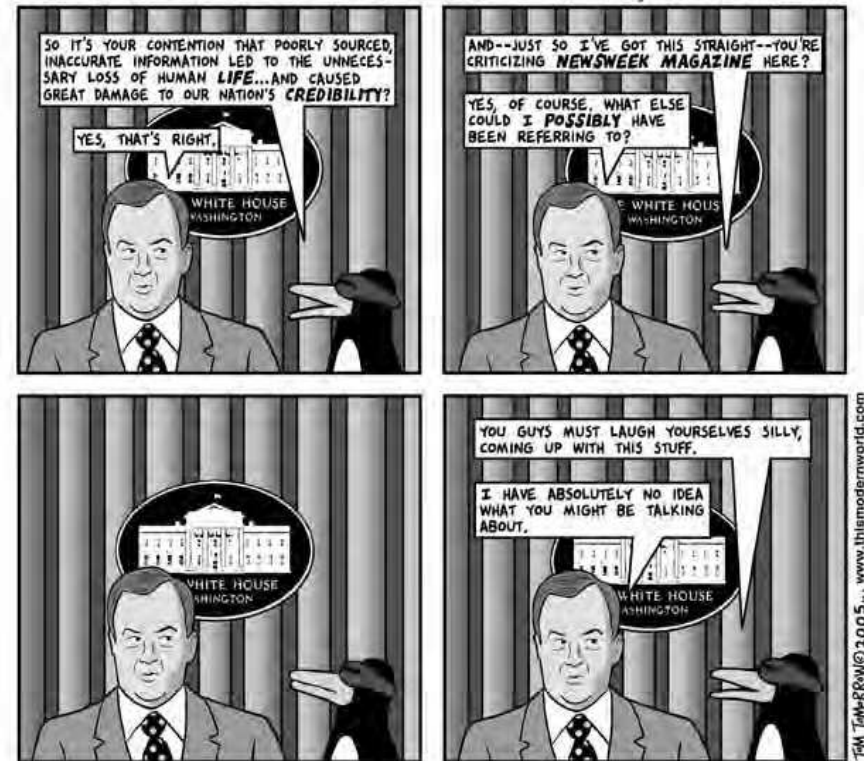
The resolution comes in response to Forest Service plans to log more than 3,000 acres of mature and old-growth trees in the watershed over the next two summers. According to CWP Campaign Coordinator Josh Laughlin, the logging plan would degrade both the quality of McKenzie River, which supplies Eugene's municipal drinking water (ranked best in the country by *Organic Style* magazine) and the recreational value of the forest (the McKenzie River Trail was voted second-best in the country by *Bike* magazine). "We want to make sure that the watershed's assets are recognized and not sacrificed for short-term profits," Laughlin says.

The resolution is a non-binding recommendation from the city of Eugene to the McKenzie Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest to protect old trees, end road-building and logging and support restoration projects in mature and old-growth forests on federal lands in the watershed.

"Eugeneans want to see their treasured forest safeguarded and they want to see their historic landscapes restored to generate economic opportunities," Laughlin says. "Future generations will appreciate this recommendation, as these forests will provide solitude, recreational opportunities and clean water for years to come." — Kera Abraham

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LRAPA BOARD GETS GREENER

The Eugene City Council voted May 23 to appoint Drew Johnson to a newly created Eugene at-large position on the Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority (LRAPA) Board of Directors. Johnson, an environmental engineer, was a permit writer for LRAPA until last February, when he was laid off due to a budget shortfall. Mayor Piercy nominated Johnson from a field of six candidates. The council approved Johnson with a 7-1 vote, with Councilor Poling opposed.

"Drew was by far the best candidate," says Oregon Toxics Alliance Board President David Monk. "I think the mayor recognized that the LRAPA board needed a person with some knowledge of how the agency operates."

The LRAPA board will select another at-large appointee in June. The two candidates who submitted applications by the deadline are Springfield residents Barbara Allen, a retired special educator, and Marie Richey, a former information technician. Both candidates expressed interest in establishing greater trust in the agency by holding polluters accountable and reducing negative health impacts from pollution.

— Kera Abraham

CPA MARKS 10TH YEAR

May marks the 10th anniversary of Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA), an organization of progressive Eugene-area activists who originally came together to fight the siting of the Hyundai computer chip factory in wetlands of west Eugene, and have since gone on to other environmental causes and campaigns. An anniversary party and reunion of all the people who have been associated with the small, but influential group is planned for June 2 at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive St.

The evening begins at 6 pm with food and socializing, followed by a program at 7 including testimonials on CPA's role in Eugene over the last decade; a slide show of major events of the times; visual displays; music by Emily Fox; and a presentation of CPA "lifetime activist" awards to Eve McConnaughey and Ray Wolfe.

"When you think about it, it's amazing what CPA has accomplished over the last decade," says Bob O'Brien of the group. He offers a partial list:

CPA took on one of the world's biggest industrial conglomerates (Hyundai), and won major changes in the siting, environmental, tax subsidy, and other aspects of the project. CPA and the Sierra Club sued Hyundai for violations of the Clean Water Act and won a settlement of \$250,000.

SLANT

• Will McKenzie-Willamette/Triad ever build at the EWEB site? It's becoming a puzzling mess with so many unanswered questions regarding access, whether EWEB will stay or not, the wisdom of building a hospital between a river bank and railroad tracks, delays, etc., that we're beginning to wonder if will ever happen. Meanwhile, both hospitals are investing heavily in their existing facilities. Triad appears loathe to talk about Plan B, but maybe it's time.

• In our downtown story last week we referred to an "ugly façade of a medical supply store at Broadway and Willamette" that was once an indoor farmers market. George Carlson of the family owned SHAWMED Inc. called to tell us the store is actually at Broadway and Charnelton.

But more importantly, he says, his family has spent more than \$100,000 remodeling the building and \$5,000 painting and repainting the outside, which is a constant target of graffiti taggers. He objected to the "ugly" reference, particularly in light of what the building looked like 10 years ago. "It was a train wreck before," he said. "We're trying to make things better for downtown."

• Robert Redford's Sundance Group is going to open a chain of theaters for independent, documentary and foreign-language films, as well as some studio projects, according to a short in *The New York Times*. How about one in downtown Eugene? Anybody have a direct line to Redford? Speaking of film, if you can spare 110 minutes out of the nice weather, catch *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the*

Room at the Bijou. A great lesson in how the country runs these days, it's also a remarkable documentary, so well done that it is not even a downer.

• All of us citizens are supposed to take positive action to make the American press more responsible. Organize citizen groups to watchdog the press. Don't dare settle into a state of "alienated self-absorption." That's the advice of Jay Harris who gave the prestigious Ruhl lecture on the UO campus last week. He's director of the Center for the Study of Journalism and Democracy at USC in L.A. Our first action is to urge owners of the American press to go for less profit and more depth. Our second action is to urge editors to beware of Carl Rove in his scapegoating of the press as a diversion from actions of the Bushies.