

The Politics of Indifference

Anna Morrison's extreme record alienates Mom and Pop.

West Lane County Commissioner Anna Morrison's recent remark that "I don't look at myself as being extreme" has county watchers scratching their heads.

Speaking at the county's recent 2005-06 budget-setting Feb. 25 Leadership Team meeting, Morrison loudly proclaimed, "I would not have heartburn around getting rid of Lane County Extension; I would not have heartburn around WIC [Women, Infants & Children] or teen pregnancy," almost gloating over possible painful service cuts to thousands, in keeping with her proposed cuts of April 2005.

Morrison now appears to be attempting an image make-over. Coming on the heels of a March 17 local press interview in which she claimed that her attempts (rejected by a board majority in favor of a 9 percent budget trimming) to axe 18 vital programs in the county's current 2004-05 budget were simply motivated by a desire to give more money for county tax collection, a look at those pesky ol' facts is in order!

While there are few things shorter than some people's memories, some outrages don't just fade away. *EW's* Slant column of Jan. 8, 2004 and other local reporting documented Morrison's failed attempt to virtually dismantle and eliminate 18 key programs from county funding. What were these proposed eliminations (most, certainly related to the County Strategic Plan's "Life, Health and Safety" criteria), contained in county budget documents for all to verify?

Among Morrison's 18 "lower priority services" proposed for total county funding elimination this year were: the Public Health Department's high-risk pregnancy and infant care protection program, HIV testing of high-risk citizens, treatment of mandated adult sex offenders under the county's Parole/Probation department, the county's Victim Services program, Lane County Extension and its 200 4-H clubs, electronic supervision of criminals and teen pregnancy prevention. To add insult to injury, Morrison also proposed total funding elimination for the Lane County Animal Regulation kennel and rescue services and, in a gesture at open government, called for terminating the county's public information officer and Metro Television coverage. These programs reach across Lane County touching thousands: WIC is a program serving 8,300 clients per month focusing on reducing infant mortality, preventing low birth weight, getting pre-natal care, identifying failure to thrive infants, and screening for domestic violence and endangering drug/alcohol issues.

The county's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program gives annual exams, birth control and couple planning and is credited with averting about 470 unintended pregnancies and 250 abortions per year. "Lower priority"?

The High Risk Pregnancy Program gives intervention/prevention home visits and is a front-line service to at-risk infants, often in extremely dangerous home conditions.

Victim Services serves some 2,200 citizens each year, around 200 per month, seeking protective court orders involving battered women and elderly abuse, giving police arrest authority in potentially deadly situations.

HIV testing of people at high risk for disease transmission helps reduce this deadly viral epidemic.

Eliminating parole/probation sex offender treatment is a recipe for real danger. Close contact and strict accountability (including polygraphs) of pedophiles and other offenders protects the public, especially vulnerable children, from repeat crimes.

OSU/Lane County Extension gives front-line service, working with FOOD For Lane County at emergency food centers, such as in Junction City, Santa Clara, Veneta, Florence, Blachly and Triangle Lake – all in Morrison's district. Nutrition assistance and food safety programs directly impact some 14,000 people. 4H youth programs involve more than 700 kids and hundreds of adult volunteers, veering youth away from at-risk behavior. Extension Services affect 50,000 Lane County residents.

Not extreme? Morrison's environmental record is among the worst in Oregon. Along with a 2000-01 conservation rating of 0 percent (OLCV) and blindly embracing resource extractive industry agendas on federal issues, her local record has recently gone from awful to atrocious. This year she tried to kill the mainstream McKenzie Watershed Council's Blue River area Simmonds Creek fish passage culvert replacement project, supported by private sector representatives and \$300,000 of federal/state funds that will open up four to five miles of great spawning habitat for trout and Chinook salmon. In 2003, she attempted to prevent the Green family bargain sale of its 75-year-owned spectacular 856 acre Green Island (at the confluence of the Willamette and McKenzie rivers) to the McKenzie River Trust involving private/state/federal-and non-profit funding, despite a 4-1 County Commission supportive vote.

Why the antagonism to Lane County's most vulnerable? Why the lack of respect and courtesy to thousands of area volunteers and citizen group members? Morrison's extreme politics of indifference is extremely disappointing!

Mona Linstromberg lives in rural Lane County south of Veneta, and is a constituent of Commissioner Morrison. Information on Morrison's record can be found at www.co.lane.or.us/bcc/boardordersminutes.htm and also at www.annamorrison.org



TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STUCK IN EUGENE

Last week my son Jeffrey graduated from Northwestern University. He was a member of the Dean's List several times and I am proud of his accomplishments. Taking loans, scholarships and work study, he worked hours to gain his degree. He is continuing on with a masters in forensics.

While he spent his high school senior year in Eugene he attempted to gain employment at numerous stores and vet clinics and was continually denied. Graduating top of the class at South with honors he was never deemed worthy by the citizens of Eugene to be given the chance for employment. My son to this day will not set foot in the town again.

Not only was he denied employment, but after attending the UO in graduate classes, I also have been unable to obtain a decent job in the community. Both of us owe *nothing* to the city of Eugene. I unfortunately am stuck here due to a recent marriage but am working to remedy that as fast as possible.

*Emily Wille
Eugene*

ILL-FATED WEP

Your columnist Mary O'Brien hit the nail on the head (Natural Resistance, 6/2). ODOT's proposed \$169 million West Eugene Parkway (WEP) project isn't passing muster with the Bureau of Land Management. Ditto for the Army Corps of Engineers, another project partner. Still another cooperating partner, the Federal Highway Administration, holds its nose at this proposal and turns the other cheek.

Yet ODOT continues to fritter away taxpayer dollars planning for a project that is going nowhere, and has diminishing support by the month.

Eugene needs an integrated transportation and land use alternative that will address connectivity challenges along Highway 126/West 11th, can solve future congestion issues, and preserve the west Eugene wetlands. ODOT's proposed WEP fails on all counts.

ODOT needs to account for the concerns and values of all of this project's cooperating agencies, including the businesses and residents of the city of Eugene. ODOT has a cur-

rent agreement with the Oregon Consensus Program, which helps facilitate collaborative agreement-seeking processes among various stakeholders. ODOT should use them.

The WEP will never be built. It's time ODOT faced their denial and accepted their part in prolonging the pain this community has endured around this ill-fated project. It's time for ODOT to stop wasting taxpayer dollars planning a dead-end project and support exploring alternatives that all stakeholders can live with.

*Rob Handy
Eugene*

RESPECT FOR LIFE

Lance Jacob's letter (6/16) has more falsehoods than I care to note. He attempts to refute Chris Calef's claim (Viewpoint 6/9) that Jeff "Free" Luers received a sentence exceeding that of most murderers, noting that "Since Measure 11 was passed, the minimum sentence for murder is 25 years, two years longer than Luer's arson sentence." The truth is (and this is apparent to anyone who's done the research) that most people who commit arson (and often worse) receive much less severe punishment than Jeff.

In 2003, some of Jeff's local supporters sponsored a project comparing sentences and found that many people convicted of arson, manslaughter, and even rape and child molestation, received sentences significantly lesser than Jeff's (sometimes ranging from two to five years). This project prompted the Eugene Human Rights Commission to write a statement supporting a sentence reduction for Jeff (details available at www.freefreedom.org).

I'm not sure if Jeff "attempted a much larger arson than what occurred" but everyone familiar with the case knows that Jeff did not intend to hurt anyone, he actively tried to avoid hurting anyone and nobody got hurt. What is truly disturbing is that people who deliberately hurt others often get much better treatment than Jeff, whose actions were actually motivated by respect for life. Now that is what's "simply unacceptable to this peace-loving community" or at least it should be.

*Steven Gider
Eugene*