

news Briefs



EWEB SITE STILL ON TOP

News of the Lane County Fairgrounds' decision to consider selling and moving has stirred a frenzy of speculation about where McKenzie-Willamette/Triad will build its new Eugene hospital, but both city and hospital officials are continuing their pursuit of the EWEB property.

"Everything I know says that everyone's focus for the hospital location continues to be the EWEB site," says Eugene Councilor David Kelly this week. "I have no idea whether the Fairgrounds will or will not relocate. If it does, that site would be a tremendous opportunity for residential or mixed-use infill — and could open up a significant piece of land in the central city, increasing density and complementing the existing neighborhood."

In addition to the uncertainties of the Fairgrounds site, the major parties are all heavily invested in the EWEB site. McKenzie/Triad is pursuing a certificate of need from the state, and has committed \$500,000 in design work on access to the site

in anticipation of a \$12 million underpass. The road work would be paid for through urban renewal tax increments on a hospital facility expected to cost at least \$85 million.

EWEB is committed to more than \$1 million in studies to examine the costs of relocating all or part of its operations to west Eugene.

The City Council is also unanimously committed to a full-service hospital in the downtown core. Kelly says city officials have many reasons to be involved in the siting of a hospital downtown. "It's critically important for the population's health and quality of life, and the community's economic vitality that we have high-quality health care services," he says.

And why downtown and not 2nd and Chambers or the Fairgrounds site? Kelly once favored the Chambers location, but now prefers the EWEB site because of its proximity to existing doctors' offices and clinics, its anticipated boost to downtown shops and restaurants, the existing infrastructure, and the aesthetics of having a hospital in a scenic location. Doctors like the riverfront site, he says, and will want to go there and send their patients there.

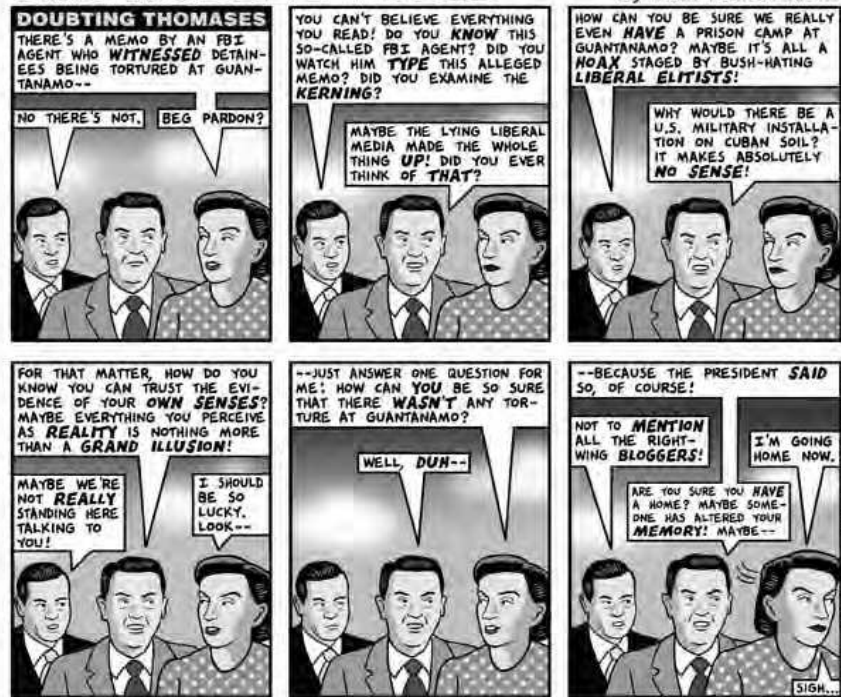
Councilor Bonny Bettman agrees, saying, "If we can facilitate the development of the hospital in such a way as to fulfill other city goals such as minimizing sprawl, maximizing the use of alternate transportation modes, securing large employers near the downtown core, and redeveloping brownfields, then there are even greater public benefits in addition to our primary goal of facilitating the provision of medical services."

Kelly and Bettman both talked about the memorandum of understanding with McKenzie/Triad. The MOU promises more public access to the river than currently exists, and provides for riparian restoration.

If the EWEB site is sold for non-hospital development, such as proposed by Arlie &

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Co., fewer restrictions could be applied. Private proposals will likely seek to rezone the site, says Bettman. "Once private property is rezoned, the city doesn't dictate the details or design, the code does that. Commercial and mixed-use zones are very permissive so the site could be developed in many different ways, or the owner could get the rezoning and resell the property." — *TJT*

VOLS NEEDED FOR CAMPAIGN

Two ballot initiatives dealing with campaign finance reform are in the works and local organizers are meeting in Eugene next week to organize volunteers. The meeting will be from 4 to 8:30 pm Tuesday, July 5 at Growers Market, 454 Willamette, room 207.

Two initiatives are planned for 2006 elec-

tions and organizers need help gathering signatures at public events throughout the summer, phone-banking to raise funds for the campaign, and doing administrative work in the campaign office.

Oregon currently has no limits on political campaign contributions for any state or local race, and is one of just five states without limits, says Brooke Robertshaw of the Fair Elections campaign. "The result is that corporations dominate politics in Oregon," she says. "They outspend labor unions by 5-1 and massively outspend all other groups and causes put together, including those for more health care, environmental protection, human and civil rights, decent and living wage jobs for all, consumer protection, and sufficient funding for education and other needs."

Robertshaw says corporations have pushed up the total reported spending on political races in Oregon from \$4.2 million in 1996 to \$49 million in 2002 — a factor of 12

SLANT

EUGENE Weekly
IMPEACH BUSH & CHENEY
HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE
EUGENE VS. SPRINGFIELD



• The Black Sheep Gathering at the Fairgrounds this past weekend reminds us once again how great it is to have the Fairgrounds within easy walking and bicycling distance for so many Eugeneans. But it's easy to forget that the Fairgrounds is a Lane County facility and a real pain to reach for Springfield and east county residents. Would a Glenwood location draw more people and more money to support the facility? Or would the high cost of developing a new site anywhere not be recoverable in the next 50 years? Would voters approve a bond measure to finance a new Fairgrounds and maybe convention center? That would be a hard sell considering that the existing facilities, despite wear and tear, are still quite serviceable. Let's look at this from all the angles, including the management of the Fairgrounds over the years.

• We've railed on the Eugene's Police Commission's tepid work in the past, but the PC has spent the last nine months researching different models of police oversight, and we are pleased to report that some substantive issues are being addressed as we come down to the wire. The commissioners will give their recommendations to the City Council July 25, and there's still time for public

input. At 7 tonight (June 30) is a "Presentation of Civilian Oversight Model and Public Comments" at the Hilyard Community Center, 2580 Hilyard. The group is looking at improving the police complaint process, independent review models, the need for a professional auditor, transparency and other issues. If you can't make it to this last public forum, e-mail comments to jeannine.parisi@ci.eugene.or.us or mail the commission at 777 Pearl St., Eugene 97401. Website is www.ci.eugene.or.us/policecomm

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• We were sad to hear that cancer has cut short the life of Roxanne Ostroff, 53, the senior staff member of the Community Center for the Performing Arts, aka the WOW Hall. "Her honesty, intelligence, dedication and sense of responsibility were a constant inspiration to everyone who worked with her," reads a statement from the organization. Roxanne had worked for the WOW Hall off and on since the 1970s and was also known for her involvement with the Oregon Country Fair and her Knish Bliss food booth.



Roxanne Ostroff

She died June 21 after several years of battling cancer. A memorial gathering is planned for 7 pm July 2 at the WOW Hall.

• What is the Iraq War costing taxpayers? The total this week is nearing \$180 billion, according to www.costofwar.com which keeps a running tally and also breaks it down by states, cities and what the money could pay for if it were dedicated to peaceful purposes. For example, \$180 billion would buy more than eight million four-year college scholarships, or provide basic immunizations to every child in the world for 59 years.

Oregon's share is about \$1.5 billion. Corvallis taxpayers are coughing up about \$18.2 million so far; Salem residents \$55.6 million. Eugene's share is not listed. The website also has a link about how to set up a cost of war LED sign in any town. Eugene could use such a sign. What about the human cost of the war? The website www.iraqbodycount.net tracks civilian fatalities in the war and the latest estimates exceed 22,000. Not counted are the permanently maimed and psychologically damaged Iraqis. American casualties are growing and Iraqis are killing each other in increasingly fervent violence that portends civil war. What the hell are we doing in the name of "national defense"?