

tor, but by the city manager.

That could set up a situation where the independent auditor couldn't directly ask his secretary and assistant to do anything. The auditor's staff could oppose the existence of the auditor and be hired and controlled by a manager who also opposes the independent auditor.

The charter amendment (20-106) authorized the City Council to hire and supervise an auditor, but made no provision for the auditor to hire and supervise his or her staff, the city attorney's memo argues. Under the charter, all city employees are hired, supervised and assigned tasks by the manager unless otherwise specified.

"I think it's an attempt to undermine the independence of the police auditor's office," said Councilor Bonny Bettman, a leader in the campaign for the measure.

Bettman said that when the measure was crafted, the city attorney assured her that the wording of the measure would allow the implementation of the council's independent police auditor model, which assumed that the auditor would hire and supervise his or her own staff. Had the attorney mentioned the staffing issue earlier, it could have been included in the ballot measure.

The situation will make it difficult for the council to attract a high caliber auditor, given that the auditor will have to work with support staff but can't supervise them, Bettman said. "From a professional point of view, that's highly unusual."

Bettman said she questions the legal reasoning behind the attorney opinion, but to fight it under the city's powerful manager form of government, she would have to pay to hire her own attorney.

It's unclear whether the city could find a way to legally finesse the issue. For example, could the council hire an auditor as a contractor who would then subcontract parts of the work to the staff? The city manager generally doesn't hire and supervise subcontractors. The city's attorney did not return a call requesting comment.

— Alan Pittman

HEFTY PAY-OUT FOR HAMM

On Feb. 9, the Lane Transit District board awarded former General Manager Ken Hamm a \$112,000 settlement in a severance package that includes nine months' salary, car allowance, taxes, insurance and attorney fees. Hamm announced his resignation on Dec. 2 and stepped down on Jan. 27 after weathering mounting criticism from LTD employees, riders and community leaders. The agency is funded by payroll taxes.

LTD Board Chair Gerry Gaydos called the settlement "reasonable and realistic," but union leaders question why Hamm should receive any settlement at all. Hamm's employment contract with LTD stipulates that no severance payment shall be made if he resigns or is terminated with cause.

"If [Hamm's] contract does not provide for any severance, then why are we even talking about it?" asked Amalgamated Transit

Union 727 Executive Board Officer Carol Allred, who represents unionized LTD drivers and mechanics, in December. "The district holds the bargaining unit to our contract."

LTD spokesman Andy Vobora declined to comment, and neither Gaydos nor Hamm responded to calls by press time. Assistant General Manager Mark Pangborn will assume Hamm's former duties while the board conducts a search for a new general manager, with a target hire date in the fall.

— Kera Abraham



A chocolate Stonehenge wins favor at a Camp Fire fund-raiser.

JEFFREY STOUT

ALTERNATIVES TO GARAGES

The Eugene City Council is moving forward with plans to spend about \$30 million on parking garages downtown to subsidize developments for the Connor/Woolley/Opus and the Whole Foods/Giustina partnerships.

That's a lot of taxpayer money — about what it cost to build Eugene's popular new downtown library.

Here, based on the city's own cost estimates, are some other things the city could use the taxpayer money for:

- Preserve 200 acres of ridgeline and 65 acres of riverfront for natural area parks, improve natural area access, buy land for a new natural area in West Eugene and buy land for nine new neighborhood and community parks for \$19.9 million.
- Fund the city's property tax levy to reduce classroom size for two and a half more years.
- Cover most of the cost of a new \$36 million police station.
- Build a new city office building that's one of the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly buildings in the world — \$25 million.

- Unearth the historic millrace through downtown and build a \$4.5 million rail bridge over the canal and path.

- Install a new indoor swimming pool downtown (based on other cities' costs).

- Buy all of the 40 luxury homes and mansions on the local Home Builders Association's 2004 and 2005 "Tour of Homes" to house the homeless.

- Write a \$130 tax refund check for every man, woman and child in Eugene.

— Alan Pittman

LESSONS IN BLACK HISTORY

As Eugene residents, we like to think of our city as progressive, open-minded and free of discrimination. But a history of racism still manifests in local social and institutional structures.

"The state of Oregon was founded on the principal of exclusion," says Mark Harris, the coordinator of the multicultural substance abuse prevention program at LCC. "Eugene was like a Southern town."

The Heilig Theatre, the predecessor of the Hult Center, was the place where Japanese-Americans were brought before being sent to internment camps, and the same theater showed a Ku Klux Klan film in the 1920s. Springfield had laws on the books until the 1950s that made it illegal for blacks to be in public at night. Another law forbade Eugene's early African-American residents from owning property within city limits, forcing many to live in a tent city on what is now the site of Lithia Nissan on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Practices and events like these created an infrastructure that today supports, at the very least, a misunderstanding of the issues faced

by people of color. And Harris says that local media, including *EW*, are partly to blame.

"You don't get much coverage of (multicultural) events unless they're controversial," says Greg Evans, special projects coordinator for LCC's multicultural center.

Harris and Evans agree that media coverage of multicultural events and issues is amplified during the month of February. But, as Evans says, even last week's "Classical Music and the African-American Experience," celebrating Black History Month, didn't get the coverage the show's award-winning star, Elizabeth Lyra Ross, deserved. It was hoped that 300 people would show up to the free afternoon concert, but only around 100 attended.

But LCC will be putting on two more events to celebrate Black History Month. On Feb. 18, "Remembering Our Roots: Eugene's Tent City Revisited" will take place from 1 to 4 pm at Lamb Cottage in Skinner's Butte Park. On Feb. 21, author J.L. King will speak about his books, *On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of 'Straight' Black Men Who Sleep with Men* and *Coming Up From the Down Low: The Journey to Acceptance, Healing, and Honest Love*. A Q&A and book-signing will follow his lecture. — Tim O'Rourke

CHOCO-DRUIDS

Eugene Weekly's very own Jef Stout and Molly Templeton took home the coveted "Most Imaginative" award at this past week's A Chocolate Affair fund-raiser for Camp Fire USA.

Their reinterpretation of Stonehenge received odd looks throughout the carving. While keeping mum on their design plans, they were given guesses ranging from Autzen Stadium to a crossword puzzle. A minor injury forced Stout to the sidelines and a kind woman stepped in as a designated carver. Stout later returned to the task, bandaged and in pain but revitalized after nibbling chocolate shavings.

Relying on excellent teamwork and creative, spur-of-the-moment problem solving, they completed a 1/50 scale model of Stonehenge.

For pictures of the creative process and final product, see www.fileh.com/automator/Images

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

- In last week's Morsels column, The Vintage's hours were listed incorrectly due to changes since the menu was printed. The restaurant is open 11 am to 10 pm Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 am to midnight Thursdays, 7 am-midnight Fridays, 9 am-midnight Saturdays and 9 am-3 pm Sundays.

- In last week's news story on Whole Foods, the correct size of the proposed store should have been 50,000 sq. ft. Also, we wrote about the city "giving" the store an \$8 million parking garage, but the city would own and pay to maintain the garage and it could serve the entire neighborhood. The developers and Whole Foods, however, have demanded that the city pay them to build the attached garage as a condition of the project.