

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

WETLAND ROAD COLLABORATION

Consultants hired to assess the conflict around the long-mired West Eugene Parkway (WEP) reported back last week recommending a collaborative process for a compromise solution.

"If the agencies and the community can rise to the challenge," the Osprey Group reported, a collaboration would "best address the current challenge of 'getting to a transportation solution for West Eugene that has widespread understanding and acceptability.'"

The consultants warned that staying on the present course to build the freeway through the wetlands would be "strongly opposed by many" and would have "the greatest potential of facing difficult and time-consuming agency reviews and litigation."

The Osprey Group confidentially interviewed 50 people in the area to research the report. It's unclear how the 50 were selected. About two-thirds of those on the list of interviewees are on record supporting the WEP and one-third are opposed to the project. About one-fourth of the 50 were citizens and environmentalists, about a fifth elected officials, a fifth business leaders and about a third government staffers and consultants. The Osprey Group also heard from 40 people at a drop-in session and received about 100 emails.

The report outlines the evolution of the decades-long conflict over the WEP. It discusses widespread opposition among local environmentalists and citizen groups and concerns expressed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers.

In the past state and federal transportation

planners have dismissed options that didn't include a freeway through the wetlands as not meeting their narrow (i.e., build a freeway) "purpose and need" statement for the project. But the Osprey report notes that federal highway planners recently proposed a broader purpose and need statement to "improve mobility" that could now allow real exploration of alternatives.

But the biggest obstacle to getting moving on compromise solutions may be state highway planners. The Osprey group quoted one interviewee, "ODOT is hard to start, hard to steer, and hard to get them to stop once they are moving."

The Osprey Group will hold a public meeting from 6 to 8 pm Thursday, May 11 at the Lane Events Center Performance Hall at the Fairgrounds on 13th Avenue.

— Alan Pittman

WEST COUNTY CASH RACE

The hot West Lane County Commissioner race pits big timber and development money against union and environmental donations.

Incumbent Anna Morrison reported a total of \$53,700 in contributions by May 4. Most of her money came from big donations from timber, gravel and urban sprawl interests.

Timber money for Morrison included \$2,500 contributions from both Seneca Jones Timber and the Swanson Group, \$1,500 contributions from both Timber Products Co. and Zip-o-Log Mills, \$1,000 contributions from both Murphy Plywood and Starfire Lumber and \$500 each from King Logging, Cadore Timber, Lost Creek Lumber and timber baron Ehrman Giustina.

Land speculators and development interests also kicked in big donations for Morrison including \$4,000 from Greg Demers, a major Veneta land holder, \$2,500 from the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, \$3,000 from the home builders lobby, \$2,500 from the Papé Group, \$600 from Hamilton Construction,

SLANT

• The stakes are high in the May 16 primary election, but the level of buzz is disturbingly low. Not a lot of fireworks, not many letters to the editor. Low turnout tends to favor conservative causes and candidates. Adding to our concern is that timber and development interests are being challenged in this election, and we predict a last-minute blitz of expensive radio and TV ads in support of Anna Morrison, Faye Stewart and Jennifer Solomon. What can we do about it? The answer is simple. Dig out those ballots and get them in the mail by Friday, or drop them off at a ballot box by 8 pm Tuesday. Act as though the future livability of our city and county were at stake. See our endorsements at a glance on page 11.

• Four pointers we could heed in downtown Eugene came from Jane Jacobs' obit in *The New York Times* April 26. Author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which the *Times* called "a book that challenged and changed the way people view cities" the famous writer and social critic made four basic recommendations for creating municipal diversity: 1) A street or district must serve several primary functions. 2) Blocks must be short. 3) Buildings must vary in age, condition and use. 4) Population must be dense.

• Friends of Willamette Repertory Theatre threw a fancy party last week to celebrate seven years of "providing the community with the best in live entertainment" and successful completion of the first capital campaign. MC Fred Crafts summed up the seven years when he described Artistic Director Kirk Boyd as an amazing combination of "smarts, charisma, and pluck." On to 14!

• We got a note from a reader in the Friendly neighborhood that black, white and blue SUVs are prowling his south Eugene neighborhood at night with spotlights on. He says he's seen glimpses of shotguns mounted in the front, but the SUVs have no police or military markings. He suspects the "goons" with dark glasses behind the wheels are feds, but what are they looking for? Anyone else seen such rigs?

• We hear Ward Churchill will be returning to Eugene at 7:30 pm Thursday, May 18 at the EMU Ballroom at UO. Few people speak with such power and conviction about the moral and economic corruption of our government. Churchill received more than 100 death threats after his statement regarding 9/11 was published: "If U.S. foreign policy results in massive death and destruction abroad, we cannot feign innocence when some of that destruction is returned." He was "uninvited" to a UO symposium (see *EW* archives, 2/24/02) during the height of the controversy. Expect a packed audience.

• Makes us proud. Kudos to the Lane County Darfur Coalition folks who are working to raise awareness of the ongoing genocide in the Sudan (see news brief 4/27). The group generated a good turnout for the local rally May 3 with talks by photojournalist Paul Jeffrey, Peter DeFazio, Kitty Piercy, Phil Barnhart and others. Hundreds of postcards were signed and sent back to Washington, D.C., to be personally delivered to the White House. A blanket drive collected 67 new blankets and \$500 and continues until May 21. For information, email ellenf@hotmail.com or beckyschench@yahoo.com

• Lots of ideas are kicking around for what to do about rising fuel prices. One of our favorites is to impeach Bush and Cheney. Well, we like that idea for probably 20 reasons. Regulating oil profits is an obvious solution. Another good idea is to do nothing and watch people alter their transportation and buying habits. Detroit will stop making SUVs if people don't want them. We'll buy more local food when it becomes cheaper than the food trucked in from 1,000 miles away. But every remedy has its unintended consequences. Those of us on bicycles can laugh at high fuel prices, but it's deadly serious for low-income folks struggling to stay afloat, or just trying to keep warm. Higher fuel prices mean higher prices for every product that arrives on wheels, from toilet paper to milk. Meanwhile, we can be assured that massive oil profits will be used to influence future elections and administrations.

• Eugene moms have the greatest choices for their day Sunday. Take a walk through 100-year-old Hendricks Park in east Eugene to see both the blooming rhodies and the native plants nurtured by volunteers from Friends of Hendricks Park. Give a grateful nod to the FoHP board: Joan Kelley, David Moon, Rachel Foster, Erik Fisher, Sandra Austin and Fred Austin. Walk down Birch Lane from the park to 1568 Fairmount Blvd. for artist Tim Boyden's studio sale and experience his whimsical yard. He sells garden art, interior furnishings, and wild stoneheads. And maybe you're one of Eugene's many militant moms and you prefer a family march Sunday. Join the Million Mom March "to show your support for our belief that all children have the right to grow up in environments free from the threat of violence." Starts at the EWEB Plaza at 2:30 pm. Bring a pie to share.

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