

# news Briefs



## POLICE AUDITOR UP FOR GRABS

The Eugene City Council is in the middle of selecting a new independent police auditor to keep an eye on the cops in the wake of officer sex abuse scandals.

One key goal of the auditor position is to increase the transparency of the police complaint process. But the city staff and Council decided to keep the entire auditor hiring process secret without allowing the public to attend meetings or the press to report on them.

The selection of the auditor will play a key role in determining the success of the independent police review charter amendment passed by voters last November by a wide margin. Some Council conservatives have advocated for hiring a former Eugene police officer for the position, but progressives said such an auditor would have little independence from the police department or credibility with the public.

The Council voted to bar candidates who have worked for the EPD for the last 20 years. But the Council is considering hiring applicants from other police departments. It's unclear how independent an auditor hired from another police department would be. Police unions affiliate with each other through national organizations and often refer to themselves as part of a wider "brotherhood." Local police reform advocates have criticized a past review of complaints by the state police as lacking sufficient independence.

The Council also barred candidates that have prior relationships with the EPD that "might create actual or perceived bias for or against the Department or Eugene Police Officers." This provision would appear to bar a local prosecutor or police union official but also could bar a local lawyer who has sued

the EPD or someone who has advocated for police reform locally.

In response to a national call for candidates, the city received 91 applications for the new position. A Council subcommittee screened the list down to 35. On June 19 the Council met behind closed doors to select six candidates to bring to Eugene for interviews on July 24 and 25. A citizen panel selected by the council and a panel of city staff, including police and local law enforcement officials, will also interview the candidates and make recommendations to the Council. The Council hopes to hire someone before it goes on break Aug. 17.

It's unclear whether the Council will have worked out important details of the auditor position by then. When voters passed the charter amendment to create the auditor, many assumed that the auditor would have the power to hire and supervise his or her own secretary and assistant. But after the election, City Manager Dennis Taylor, who previously opposed an independent auditor, has claimed that he will have the power to select and supervise the auditor's staff.

The manager said he's willing to delegate that authority to the auditor, but police reform advocates remain concerned. Taylor has imposed a policy of "one city, one voice" with city employees that may make it difficult for auditor staff under his authority to act with the independence voters intended. Last week the Council delayed discussion of the auditor staff issue until next month. — Alan Pittman

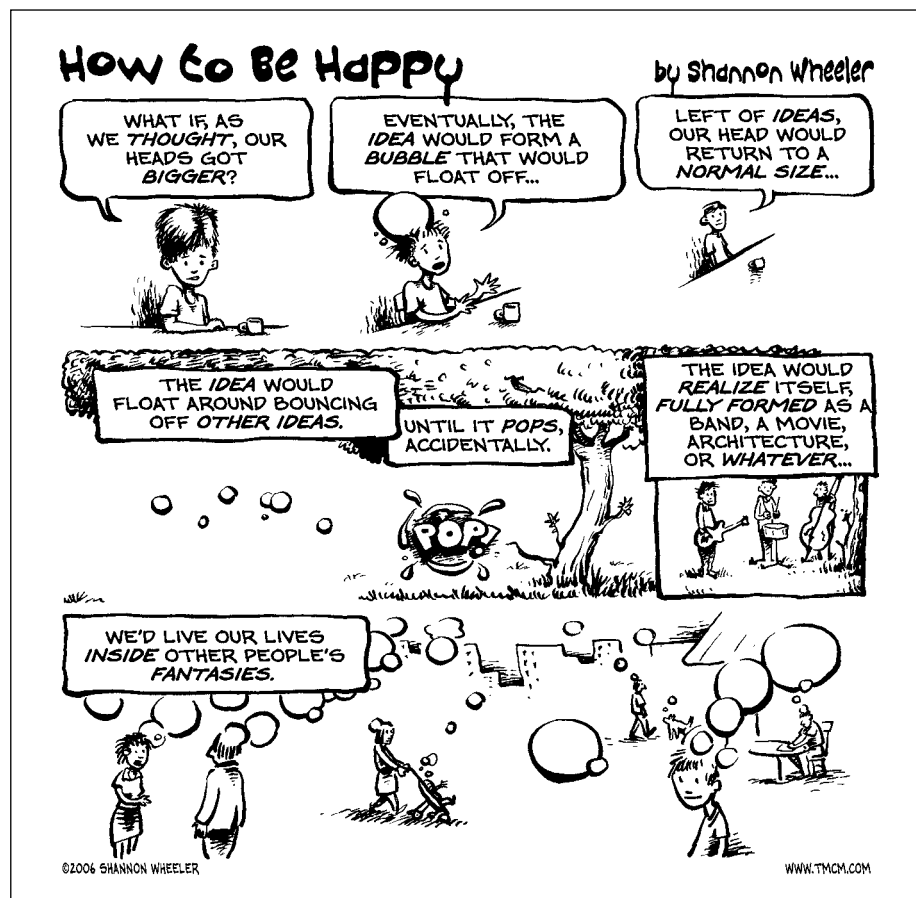
Black sheep gather at the Fairgrounds this weekend.



## BLEATING HEARTS

Fiber enthusiasts, wool growers and sheep lovers alike are gearing up for the 32nd annual Black Sheep Gathering this weekend at the Lane County Fairgrounds. The free gathering Friday, Saturday and Sunday is "all about educating the public on the ancient and contemporary fiber crafts, which turn wool into wearable and beautiful art," says Annie Dochnahl, one of the fiber artists involved.

Of all the fiber festivals in the region, the Black Sheep Gathering focuses on natural colored sheep and the wool they produce. "The conventional county and state fairs still emphasize white sheep in their competitions, thus losing out on the rich diversity of hues and breeds that create silver, caramel, ocher and deep chocolate colored wools," Dochnahl says.



Visitors can get an up close and personal look at how wool becomes finished garments. On the west end of the fairgrounds will be hundreds of sheep and other fiber-producing critters (goats and bunnies) with their human guardians on hand to share their knowledge of the particular breed. Other buildings are loaded with bags of wool (for judging and for sale) and tools of the trade.

mous: *Hell no.*

More than a half-dozen UO student organizations, including the ASUO and the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, have come out against the sale. The UO Senate has twice passed resolutions opposing it. Eugene Citizens for Affordable Housing leads community opposition, which includes three neighborhood associations. Six local politicians, including Sens. Floyd Prozanski and Bill Morrisette, have flexed their political muscle to slow or stop the sale.

Yet the university pushes on. In late May, administrators announced a tentative deal to sell Westmoreland to local developer Michael O'Connell for \$18.45 million. The sale won't be final, however, unless the State Board of Higher Education, which owns the property, approves it at its July 14 meeting in Portland.

The state board recently held three public hearings in Eugene to gauge community feedback on the proposed sale. Opposition was overwhelming at all three, with only UO administrators defending the university's position. At the most recent hearing, on June 13, a long line of speakers spoke out against the sale, while only one — UO administrator Frances Dyke — defended it.

A student mother with an infant grandchild broke down in tears, saying she'd have to drop out of the UO if she couldn't depend on affordable housing. Her story reflects that of hundreds of international, graduate and non-traditional students who enrolled at the UO with the understanding that they would be able to live at Westmoreland, where rents range from about \$400 to \$500.

Despite its low rent, Westmoreland generates a profit for the UO, helping pay down debt on the newer and more expensive Spencer View apartments.

Even if the state board approves the sale, the deal may not be sealed. Westmoreland is zoned for public use, meaning that only a public or nonprofit agency can own it. Before O'Connell can buy the property, the city must re-zone it for private ownership, a process that requires public input.

"It also creates another legally challengeable decision," writes Eugene Citizens for

About 80 vendors are found at the trade show, offering drop spindles, spinning wheels, dyes, books, already spun yarns, and more for sale. The fiber arts gallery highlights the handiwork of fiber artisans.

"You'll see everything from multicolored blankets and whimsical felted bags to sumptuous sweaters and fine lace shawls," Dochnahl says.

A complete schedule of events is at [www.blacksheepgathering.org](http://www.blacksheepgathering.org)

## STILL FIGHTING UO HOUSING SALE

Eight months after the UO announced plans to sell its only low-rent student housing complex, feedback remains virtually unani-