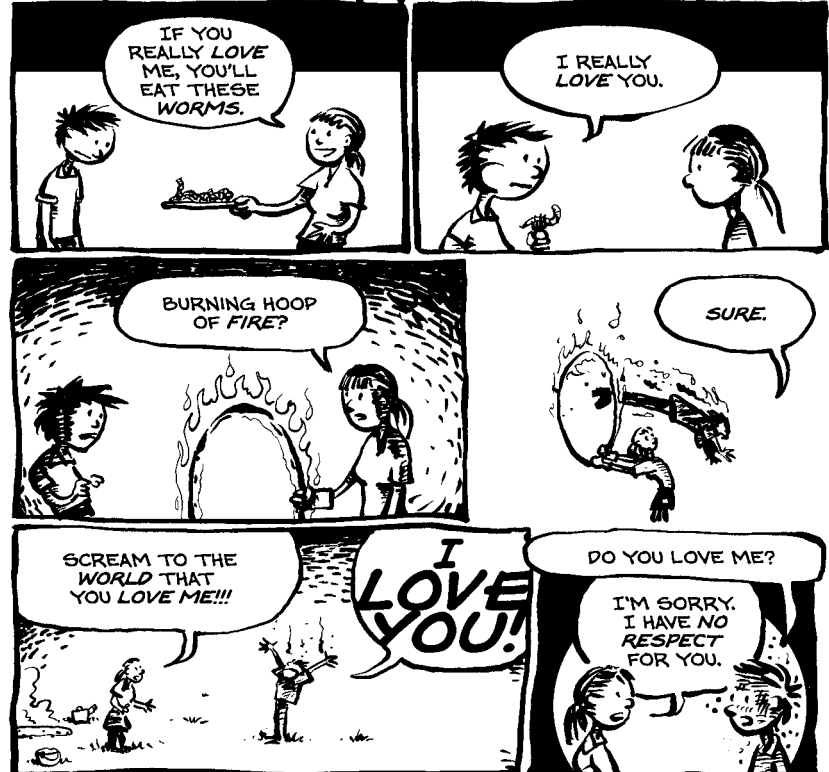


How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



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MY OPERA IS OUT AND WE'RE GETTING GOOD REVIEWS! WWW.TMCM.COM/OPERA

news Briefs

MANAGER JOB HOPS FROM CRITICS

Eugene City Manager Dennis Taylor, who's hopped through five jobs in 15 years, has applied for a manager job in Lawrence, Kan., after three troubled years in Eugene.

Taylor's performance reviews by the City Council have been decidedly mixed. While five councilors have generally praised his work, three veteran, progressive councilors have been critical.

Councilor Bonny Bettman gave Taylor his lowest marks during his council evaluation in May. Bettman was especially critical of Taylor's failure to launch an internal investigation into the police department's failure to stop years of sex crimes by police officers Roger Magaña and Juan Lara.

"The stalling and lack of accountability on this debilitating corruption is serious enough to warrant termination," Bettman wrote. "The same 'circle the wagons' and 'code of silence' culture that contributed to six years' proliferation of Magaña/Lara crimes is part of the city culture all the way to the top."

Bettman also faulted Taylor for opposing the creation of an independent police auditor, and then seeking to control the auditor's staff after voters passed a measure to create the function.

Taylor told the council this week that his dissatisfaction with the creation of the independent auditor function lead him to apply for the Kansas job.

Councilor David Kelly wrote that Taylor had not improved his low performance from the year before. "The manager's generally poor performance in furthering council goals, responding to council direction, and providing council support has not changed."

Taylor's critics faulted him for failing to accomplish the top city goal of locating a hospital near downtown, failing to get the Oregon Research Institute development downtown, withholding information from elected officials, forbidding staff from talking to councilors, putting the city bureaucracy's interests over the community's and setting policy instead of following council direction on policy.

Taylor "doesn't really run the city, Jim Carlson and a handful of white male executive directors run the city," said Bonny Bettman. "The city is practically on autopilot," she said. After Taylor was hired, "there was no new leadership; he's almost like a figurehead."

Carlson, who served as acting manager for a year before Taylor was hired, is one of the most powerful assistant managers the city has ever had and at times has been referred to as Taylor's "co-manager."

Carlson has clashed with progressive councilors in the past over proposals for an in-house attorney and city performance auditor, open government and council power. Carlson apologized in April for sending a "disrespectful" and "unprofessional" email to Bettman. If Taylor leaves, Carlson could again become acting manager if Mayor Kitty Piercy appoints him.

Bettman said that she's "not surprised" Taylor is looking for another job given the negative evaluations he's received. She also noted that he's been frequently out of town at professional gatherings, apparently "networking."

After he left his last job as manager in Billings, Mont., after three years, Taylor explained his short tenure to an online critic. "There is a half-life of a city manager, and one needs to recognize it before everyone else does and move on." — Alan Pittman

BRIDGING THE TRAIL

On a cool, cloudy Saturday, a small group of Southeast Neighbors ran their hands over milled beams of Alaskan yellow cedar, a wood so durable that it can last up to 40 years in the in the green wet recesses of the Amazon headwaters forest without chemical preservatives. By 2 pm on Sept. 16, the volunteers too were beaming — they had just installed the third and final bridge

SLANT

• Eugene City Manager Dennis Taylor probably had one of those "Oh, shit!" moments last weekend when he found out his name had been released as a finalist for the city manager job in Lawrence, Kan. He may not get the job, but regardless, it's good that his frustrations with Eugene are now out in the open. And it's good to shine some fresh light on the issues regarding our city manager form of government. Taylor's biggest mistakes in Eugene have been to not recognize the flaws in our outdated form of city management and not to go along with the citizen and council movement toward reform. He got caught up in the fray and tried influencing policy, which is not his job. His legacy in Eugene could have been assisting the writing of a more democratic charter for the city, one that brings legal services in-house, creates an independent performance auditor, and other substantive changes that bring more accountability, efficiency and transparency to city government. Instead, Taylor and the city attorney dug in their heels in fear of losing power. Meanwhile, we heard Councilor Bonny Bettman say it doesn't really matter if Taylor stays or goes since the city is actually run by Assistant City Manager Jim Carlson and his department head cronies. If that's true — and we've long believed that it is — that's one more huge reason for an independent performance auditor.

• One of the reasons Dennis Taylor cited for applying for the city manager job in Lawrence, Kan., is that the Midwest town has a vibrant downtown, while Eugene does not. Well, the reason Lawrence, along with Corvallis, Salem, Ashland and many other cities, has a vibrant downtown is because city managers and planners long ago recognized the need to restrict shopping center developments on the outskirts. Eugene has never had such restrictions.

• So what's happening with downtown development? It appears we are somewhat at the mercy of regional and even national increases in building costs. A *New York Times* article Sept. 19 says construction costs for a big Los Angeles mixed-use development have jumped 40 percent in three years, and "That jump is consistent with construction cost increases along the West Coast over the same period." So what happens if Whole Foods bags its grocery store plans or decides to build smaller at a different location? We imagine the adjacent and contentious city parking garage project will get the axe as well, saving city taxpayers millions. But we also predict city planners will eventually propose some kind of new parking facility to serve the developing area near the new federal building. Hopefully that project will have more public input and public benefit than what we saw with the Whole Foods garage.



• Republican gov-hopeful Ron Saxton's campaign says rumors are not true that Saxton is hauling in \$1 million each from Eugene timber baron Aaron Jones and southern Oregon's JELD-WEN corporation. Detailed campaign donations reports get filed Oct. 2. Don't be surprised by six-figure donations from Jones and JELD-WEN's Wendt family, who were big givers in the past. Meanwhile, Saxton is touting himself as a lifelong education advocate. Ironically, one of his mailer ads that went out last week had "Saxton for Governor" as the headline. A Portland ninth-grader caught the spelling error and posted it at www.blueoregon.com

• Most people like, or at least tolerate, children, so it's a safe bet to tout education in campaigning for state legislative offices. But while the candidates are busy hugging hapless people puppies to persuade us that they are the most outrageously dedicated candidates to ever run for office, voters are yawning. It's all very predictable. The R's are saying schools need to be better managed with existing funds, and more money for schools will come eventually from growing the economy and creating jobs. D's are saying we need to pump more money into schools now through retaining the state corporate tax kicker, establishing a rainy day fund and collaborating with the conservatives in Salem to try to find some fuzzy solutions to funding schools. The R's say invest in the economy and education will follow. The D's say invest in education and the economy will follow. Neither side is recognizing the 800-pound kid hulking in the back of the classroom: the gross inequities conservatives have built into our state tax system over the years, inequities that lubricate big corporations while dragging us ordinary citizens in the dirt. And those of us with five-figure incomes are feeling overtaxed and balk at voting for any new taxes. It's a vicious cycle that can only be broken by Democrats in control of the Legislature. Even that is not an immediate solution, but at least the D's are open to shifting a more fair portion of the tax burden back on corporations.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com