

• **The fate of the Amazon** headwaters is still in limbo this week after Mayor Kitty Piercy asked the Eugene City Council to delay discussion of eminent domain to acquire two properties targeted for development. Makes us wonder what's going on behind the scenes. Piercy and progressive councilors appear to be running into resistance from the city manager, city staff, anti-environmental councilors and the development community. A delay is not necessarily bad; this acquisition needs to be done right.

Meanwhile, let's look at the arguments. Does south Eugene already have too many parks and open spaces? Not if you don't count Laurelwood Golf Course and regional parks such as Hendricks Park and Amazon Park. And the Amazon headwaters will not be a park in the traditional sense; its real value is in preserving an ecologically fragile area and the source of Amazon Creek. But isn't Amazon Creek already irreparably polluted? Every year progress is made in cleaning up the Amazon and its riparian habitat, and polluting its source is a step in the wrong direction. Isn't eminent domain a shameful violation of property rights? It's been used before in Eugene for the public benefit, the last time to acquire property for the new U.S. Courthouse. Shouldn't people be allowed to build on their property zoned for housing? Hillside development on wet, unstable soils can lead to landslides (as it has recently in Springfield), and the city could be held liable if housing is allowed on these properties, and the city has been warned. Solid science has shown the danger of slides in this area.

• **Merging of Eugene and Springfield** fire departments? The more we look at this hasty proposal, the worse it sounds, particularly since Springfield has decided to go its own way on urban planning (see our cover story last week) and could quickly sprawl by as much as 1,000 acres. Sprawl puts a big and expensive burden on emergency services and makes it harder to keep response times down. It's difficult to predict what the long-term financial implications would be with a merger. How does Springfield's fire equipment and fire infrastructure compare to Eugene's? What happens if Springfield voters (or Eugene voters) turn down future tax levies to support fire and EMT services? Who gets left holding the flaming bag? Eugene and Springfield already have mutual aid agreements. Let's take our time before committing to a financial partnership.

• **PeaceHealth is denying rumors** that the RiverBend Medical Center project is way over budget and donors are being offered "special incentives" to write big checks. Au contraire, says PeaceHealth spokesman Brian Terrett. "We've made a couple of adjustments based on cost inflation, but we are still well within our original contingency budget," he says. "The capital campaign is only focused on purchasing new technology and equipment that will help make the new Sacred Heart Medical Center a state-of-the-art hospital. Even if there were overruns, fundraising wouldn't be used to cover those increases." Construction on the \$350 million rural north Springfield hospital began in July 2005, and the opening is expected to be in August 2008.

• **Speaking of PeaceHealth**, a *Weekly* staffer recently had some surgery at the old Sacred Heart. The staffer was surprised when, a few weeks before the surgery, a letter appeared in the mailbox asking for payment of half the estimated cost of the surgery (after insurance) *before* the procedure. Though there's a disclaimer saying not to put off or cancel the procedure because of the pre-bill (instead, the letter suggests, call and work out a payment plan!), we wonder just how many people do that. The staffer, who grew up Catholic, doesn't remember learning about payment-must-be-received-before-we-help-you in all those years of Catholic schooling. Perhaps that was simply a lapse in the staffer's Catechism?

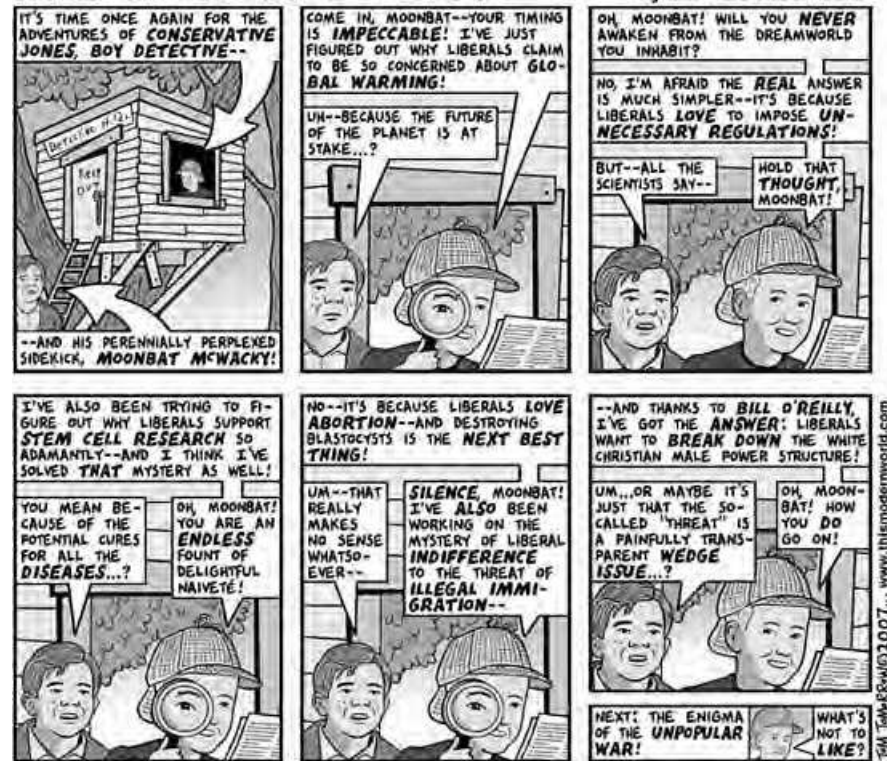
• **The more than half a million bucks** being spent resurfacing rural Seavey Loop Road out toward Mount Pisgah has gotten a few people wondering about county priorities. That road doesn't get much traffic other than park-goers and local residents. Speculation regarding the road includes Wildish Co. reviving plans for a big RV park north of Pisgah, but that rumor appears unfounded at this point – though the fate of the Wildish land north of Pisgah and along the Middle Fork of the Willamette is still uncertain. A more credible rumor is that a longtime resident of Seavey Loop Road is filing a Measure 37 claim and wants to build 88 houses on idyllic farmland not far from Mount Pisgah/Buford Park. Stay tuned.

• **Puzzling decisions that appear to contradict** each other came out of the U.S. Supreme Court this week. On one hand, the court ruled that a key provision in McCain-Feingold campaign financing reforms of 2002 restricts free speech; on the other hand, the court ruled it's *not* free speech for a student to display a sign ("Bong Hits 4 Jesus") that his principal found offensive, even if the act is off school grounds and after school. What's this all about? Conservatives on the high court are flip-flopping on the First Amendment depending on how it suits their political and religious purposes. Nothing new here, of course, but such blatant judicial activism erodes the public's faith in our court system.

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

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs



PIT PUPS ARE LOVE-A-BULL

There's a new "Pit Crew" in town. The No Kill Community Coalition (NKCC) has formed a committee to promote the adoption of pit bulls in Lane County.

According to Robin Loving, a member of the Pit Crew, pit bulls make up more than half of the dogs found in shelters. One of the goals of the NKCC is to find homes for adoptable animals, in addition to providing low-cost spay and neuter services and educating pet owners.

"There is so much disinformation and outright lies" about the dogs, said Sondra Arrache, another member of the pit bull committee. "It makes it difficult to find homes for them."

In order to help pets find homes in Eugene, a local group called Save the Pets has teamed up with Lane County Animal Regulation Authority (LCARA) to list adoptable animals online. Save the Pets also brings animals to off-site adoptions like the one every Sunday from 10 am to 3 pm at Key Bank, 1380 Coburg Rd.

Arrache pointed out that the media contributes to the pit bull problem, often misidentifying dogs as pit bulls in order to make more dramatic headlines. A recent *R-G* (7/3) article about "vicious dogs" featured a dog muzzled on the front page. Arrache said 20 people she spoke to thought it was a pit bull. The dog discussed in the article was not a pit but was in fact a Chesapeake Bay Retriever.

The goal of the pit bull committee is to get the word out that pits make good pets.

"They are good family dogs because they

trust everybody," said Liesl Wilhardt of Luv-a-Bull dog rescue. She speaks from experience – she often has more than a dozen pits at her rescue.

"Pit bulls," said Wilhardt, "make good therapy dogs."

"They are a very successful breed for rescue," Wilhardt said. Many potential dog adopters worry about adopting an adult dog because they are afraid they won't bond." Not a problem with pits, according to Wilhardt.

"They can bond extremely deeply and very quickly," she said. "That's something people need to know about these dogs. They just love people."

To find out more about the NKCC and the "Pit Crew," go to www.nokillcoalition.org/ For information on adopting a pit contact Liesl Wilhardt at lieslw@rio.com Or go to petfinder.com where you can find the dogs from Luv-a-Bull as well as the dogs from LCARA listed by Save the Pets.

– Camilla Mortensen

W. EUGENE GROUP GATHERS

The West Eugene Collaborative, aka WE Group, is having its next set of meetings this week in Eugene. The group is seeking to bring together many people representing local government, businesses and residents to