

• **Moving the Lane County Fairgrounds?** Somebody responsible should do some number crunching before they get too excited. With construction prices now what they are, we doubt that selling the existing fairgrounds could come close to the cost of buying land and building all new buildings at a different site. Prospects for a bond measure to make up the difference also don't look good, given the county's long losing streak. There may be a way for the county to get some money from the city by trading/selling the butterfly lot, but don't count on city taxpayers wanting to give the county fairgrounds a big subsidy.

• **What are you doing to improve the good old U.S.A.?** Unfortunately, we couldn't get everyone we asked to respond to our cover story's questions (in some cases because despair about U.S. government ran too deep). But we'd love to hear more about what area residents do to improve our quality of life and to improve the country. Email us (suzi@eugeneweekly.com) with answers to the questions in the cover story, and we'll get you up on the website at www.eugeneweekly.com

• **Tickets are already near sold out** and/or costing hundreds of dollars, so next summer's Olympic trials could be heading for a public backlash. John Q. Public may not be so happy about the millions of dollars in state and local subsidies and traffic congestion if the trials become only something for Phil Knight and similar out of town elite to enjoy. How about a few free/low priced family events for us poor locals?

• **The Eugene police union's recent rages** against democracy and public accountability in *The Register-Guard* provide clear evidence of why independent oversight is sorely needed, and soon. What do they have to hide?

• **Check out the [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)** recent exposé on how Dick Cheney was behind the massive salmon kill on the Klamath River in 2002, "the largest fish kill the West had ever seen" (see News Briefs this week). The article notes how ranchers "took saws and blowtorches to dam gates" to protest against Endangered Species Act limits on irrigation before Cheney intervened in their favor. Hmmm. That sounds familiar. Didn't the federal government just convict a bunch of people for "terrorism" for using sabotage to "commit criminal acts with the intent of changing the policies of our government," as the FBI said? Maybe Republicans are exempt.



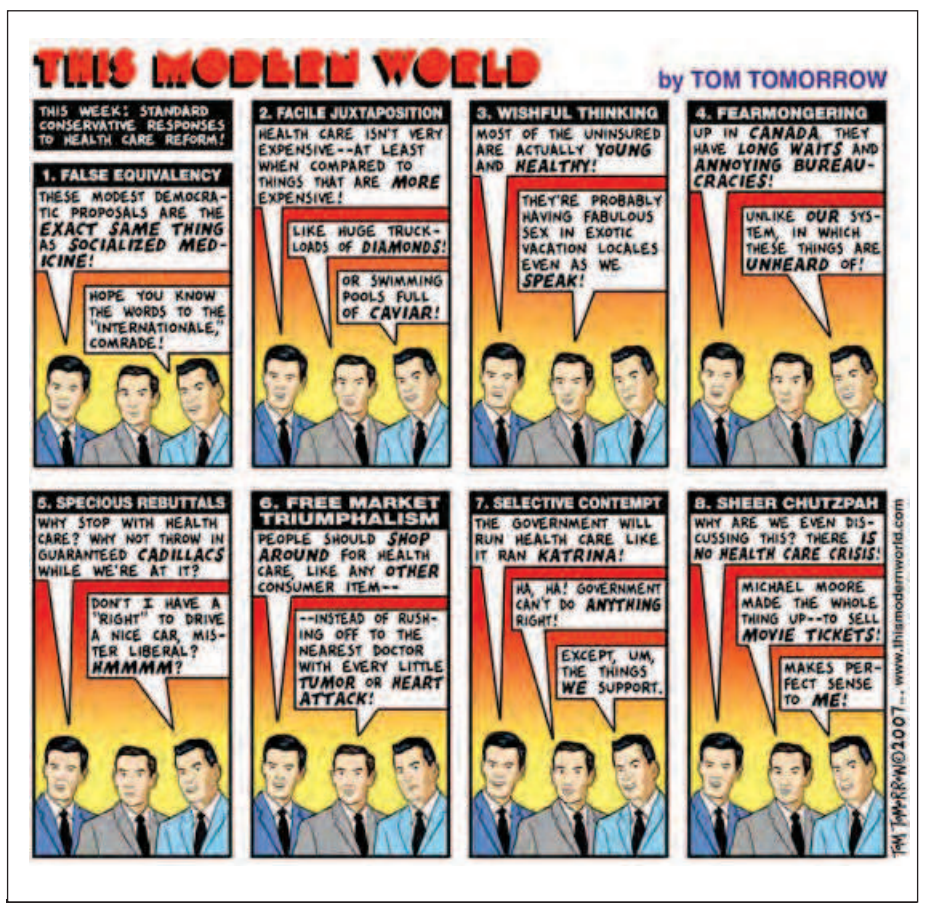
• **We hope the whole country sees *Sicko*,** the new Michael Moore film. We hope the film will have a similar impact as Al Gore's global warming movie. But standing firmly in the way is a multi-billion dollar health care/insurance industry that's devouring an ever greater share of the nation's economy. Take a look at the lavish new RiverBend and Triad's hospital plans. Just imagine of all the suffering that half billion dollars in local health care money could have alleviated if it had instead gone to help the tens of thousands of local uninsured and underinsured people here.

• **The Democratic State Legislature** made big strides on funding education this session. But Eugeneans may remember it more for poking a stick in their eye by passing a bill that may require more local urban sprawl and by refusing to even consider a ban on field burning. Another glaring failure is the Legislature's failure to even consider plans for universal health care.

• **Should the Eugene council use eminent domain** to purchase and preserve two parcels of pristine forest in the Amazon Headwaters? Lots of indignation being expressed. But if eminent domain is such a big deal, why wasn't there any fuss over the council vote to proceed with eminent domain on two parcels in Santa Clara for a city park? The vote took place only 10 days before the controversial Headwaters vote. Springfield is playing the domain game as well. The Springfield School Board voted June 25 to condemn about 18 undeveloped acres in southeast Springfield. The reason? Development and sprawl. The board expects to soon build a school in this area where a lot of growth is expected.

• **Doctors on the move?** Medical offices tend to follow new hospitals, and both PeaceHealth and McKenzie-Willamette are bound for the distant suburbs. We heard from one of our readers this week who describes herself as "financially challenged" and who relies on public transportation to get around. She received a letter from her doctor who used to have a small office just two blocks from the downtown Eugene bus station. "New convenient location and plenty of parking!" the letter said. The new office is in the area of Bellline and Delta Highway. "This just about sums up how doctors feel about their financially challenged patients and how everyone feels about downtown," she says. "It's time to go 'doctor shopping' again."

• **Who's going to take charge** of the pups and kitties at Greenhill? Word is that Executive Director Johnni Prince is getting married and moving to Kansas City. Prince plans to leave at the end of September. Insiders think the next leader of the pack will be former local Fox TV anchor Katie Dyer. Dyer is currently Greenhill's director of marketing and development.



news Briefs

BROADWAY PUBLIC BUCKS COMING UP

Eugene residents recently received in the mail a half-page postcard titled "Downtown Urban Renewal Plan Amendments" announcing a public hearing at 7:30 pm July 16 at City Hall. What's it all about?

The hearing regards a proposal to double the millions of dollars the city of Eugene diverts from schools and other government services to subsidize development downtown.

The Eugene City Council has proposed increasing the spending cap on its downtown urban renewal district to \$73 million from the current \$33 million cap. Most of the current urban renewal money went to build the downtown library. The \$40 million in additional money will help fund about \$50 million in planned subsidies for a proposal by Portland developers KWG and Beam to redevelop about three blocks along Broadway.

City staff had initially proposed nearly quadrupling the urban renewal cap to \$128 million at a May 29 meeting, but the council balked.

"Wow, what are these people smoking at City Hall?" said Councilor Bonny Bettman in reaction to the "drastic" increase. Bettman said she didn't know anyone who would think it was justifiable to transfer that much money away from school, county and city services.

Councilor Alan Zelenka also said he was "surprised" at the big increase and said it could "kill the momentum" supporters of the

KWG/Beam redevelopment "carefully" put together. Zelenka's motion to change the cap to \$73 million passed 6-2 with Bettman and Councilor Betty Taylor opposed.

Taylor questioned whether the council wasn't circumventing the public process in pushing ahead with the funding. The council plans to vote Aug. 13 for the urban renewal expansion. That's two weeks before a citizen advisory committee is supposedly to report to the council on what the KWG/Beam project should be. "What's the purpose of the committee if it's all been decided?" she asked.

Taylor said she supports an earlier KWG proposal to refill the Sears pit across from the library with condos, "but I'm not willing to turn over to them the fate of our existing businesses, the fate of our downtown and huge amounts of taxpayer money."

In addition to the urban renewal funds, the council also plans to use roughly \$10 million in federal money to subsidize the KWG/Beam projects, which may include some affordable housing. The federal money (BEDI/HUD) was given to the city for brownfield redevelopment and housing and other programs to help the poor.

The \$73 million urban renewal plan includes \$300,000 a year in administrative costs.

Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA) has planned a public meeting in advance of the hearing to try to educate the public about the complicated and high-priced proposals. The CPA meeting, titled "Public Benefit vs. Public Subsidies," will be at 7 pm Monday, July 9 at EWEB.

Rob Handy of CPA is on the 11-member Citizens Advisory Committee that the mayor has named to advise the council about the downtown development. At the meeting, Handy will talk about what the newly formed committee has done so far and how it intends to involve the public as the design process moves forward.

More information about the draft ordinance and West Broadway redevelopment can be found at www.eugene-or.gov/downtown — Alan Pittman