

• In his July 25 exit interview with *The Register-Guard*, former Eugene **City Manager Dennis Taylor** said he is considering becoming a politician back in Montana. That explains a lot. In Eugene Taylor already was a politician in the worst sense of the word, routinely crossing the line from administration into policy making in ignoring and misleading the City Council. The big difference here was that Taylor never had to stand before voters and be accountable in an election. Such is the sad state of Eugene democracy.



• Congrats to **Eugene illustrator Jesse Springer** (see News Briefs 7/5) for winning first place honors in a political cartoon contest sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists. Springer has

drawn hundreds of cartoons and illustrations for *EW*, the *R-G* and other publications. Political cartoons can make powerful statements, and Springer has shown himself to be a master of this medium. See his work at springercreative.com and now uscusa.org. Shown is his winning cartoon.

• **Downtown Portland and downtown Eugene** have a lot in common when it comes to the challenges of creating and maintaining a safe and viable district where people want to go to shop, eat, hang out and live. The scale is different, but the challenges are similar. Eugene can take some lessons from its big neighbor to the north if we pay attention to the reported successes of the Portland Business Alliance and the Street Access for Everyone (SAFE) collaboration. Mike Kuykendall, VP of downtown services for the PBA, was in town last week to talk to City Club about how the alliance has helped clean up downtown and make it a friendlier, safer place to live and do business.

Some ideas that have worked for Portland? The PBA hired 22 retired cops to walk downtown streets as security officers along with funding three extra city bicycle police officer positions. Uniformed officers became ubiquitous. Part of the punishment for petty crimes is community service: cleaning up downtown. The SAFE program identified 200 chronic offenders and discovered 85 percent of them were homeless. Getting many of them into housing programs reduced this group's crime rate by 71 percent. Day shelters and lockers were established for homeless people, benches were provided to keep people off sidewalks, 24-hour public toilets were provided at City Hall and panhandlers were "killed with kindness," says Kuykendall. Friendly security officers mingled with panhandlers daily, in effect driving them away.

All of these things take resources. What can Eugene do with our limited city and private business funds? We can start by thinking bigger. How about taking some of the \$50 million in tax breaks and cash we're considering to subsidize big redevelopment downtown and using it to make downtown more attractive to smaller investors who don't demand free land and more parking garages?

• Speaking of **downtown subsidies**, should this really be our top priority as a city? Downtown needs help, but it's improving on its own through smaller scale private investment. What about the growing dilemma of pollution in the Trainsong Neighborhood of north Eugene? Do we not have a moral and perhaps legal obligation to invest in the clean-up of our most toxic urban areas?

• We expect to hear a lot of **contentious debate on Measure 49**, the Legislature's compromise "fix" of Measure 37 coming up on the Nov. 6 special election ballot, and a lot of criticism will come from progressive voices who want Measure 37 completely voided. We're still studying this measure and looking at its implications. It's hardly a perfect solution to a flawed ballot measure that rips apart Oregon's land-use rules and regulations, but it deserves a closer look. We also need a reality check. The majority of Oregon voters are not ready to toss out Measure 37, despite its abundant flaws, so some kind of compromise appears necessary. So dig in for three months of acrimony and probably a lot of misinformation and exaggeration on all sides. We have three months to sort it all out. A lot of useful information, including links to newspaper articles and editorials, can be found at yeson49.com.

• As we go to press we hear that **Tolly's restaurant in little Oakland, Ore.**, one of our longtime favorite spots to stop as we travel south on I-5, has been sold to some as-yet-unnamed Eugene folks who apparently have some related business here. Carol and Terry Tollefson started Tolly's in 1968 and are retiring due to age and health reasons. The restaurant was set to go on the auction block Aug. 1. The Tollefsons plan to continue operating the business until Sept. 15 when the new owners take over. Tolly's is known for not only good food, but also its collection of antiques, fine art and an old-fashioned soda fountain. Let's hope the new owners carry on the tradition.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

WILL EUGENE SUBSIDIZE SPRINGFIELD?

The cities of Eugene and Springfield have all but merged their fire departments through an automatic aid agreement that has Eugene firefighters routinely responding to calls in Springfield and vice versa. But does that mean that Eugene taxpayers are subsidizing fire services in Springfield?

Eugene Fire Chief Randy Groves doesn't think so. "The disparity has been relatively small, particularly in view of the lifesaving spirit of automatic aid," he wrote the council July 11 in response to questions.

Last year Eugene responded to 33 calls in Springfield, but Springfield responded to 23 calls in Eugene. That would indicate a substantial subsidy for the expensive service. Eugene taxpayers pay \$20 million a year for firefighting.

But Groves wrote that in previous years the situation was reversed. For the previous four years, Springfield responded into Eugene 195 times, but Eugene responded to only 101 Springfield calls.

Springfield spends about \$8 million a year on its smaller fire department. But per resident, Springfield spends \$144 a year on firefighting, slightly more than Eugene's expenditure of \$139 per resident.

However, Springfield taxpayer-

ers appear to get much more for their money than Eugene taxpayers. Springfield's average response time of 5:19 minutes is more than a minute less than Eugene's average of 6:35. Eugene pays about 26 percent more per on-duty firefighter than Springfield, according to *EW* calculations.

Chief Groves blames Eugene's slower response times on geography and Eugene's greater number of calls per capita.

Groves' memo does not compare capital expenditures for expensive new fire stations and trucks. Nor does the memo discuss whether the shared firefighting policy could eventually mean that Eugene taxpayers end up subsidizing Springfield's urban sprawl in the rapidly growing Gateway area.

In the end, whether Eugene taxpayers subsidize Springfield may not matter much to many Eugene firefighters. According to city data from the 1990s, two-thirds of Eugene firefighters don't live in Eugene and don't pay Eugene taxes.

— Alan Pittman

COUNCILORS GET NEW OFFICES

A proposed new City Hall hasn't been built, but the city of Eugene has started a remodeling project on the old City Hall to add offices for city councilors.

