

DEMS PARTY IN THE PARK

Lane County Democrats added some spice to their politics with their annual chili cook-off in Alton Baker Park Sunday, Aug. 26. The gathering drew a crowd of about 100 under cool but sunny skies.

Surprise guests included U.S. Senate candidate Steve Novick, who is running in the May 2008 primary for the U.S. Senate, hoping to unseat Republican Gordon Smith. Novick is a Portland attorney with Eugene roots. He graduated from the UO at age 18 and graduated from Harvard Law School when he was 21.

Elected officials attending included Kitty Piercy, Pete Sorenson, Vicki Walker, Phil Barnhart, Paul Holvey, Terry Beyer, Chris Edwards and Nancy Nathanson.

The cook-off's favorites included first place honors for a spicy batch brewed by the LGBTQ caucus, the Gay Habaneros. Second place went to Rebecca Gladstone and her vegetarian chili from the "Bill and Phil's Beans and Bribery Bistro" booth. Betsy Steffenson of the Peace Caucus took third place with her "Impeachment Pies." Fourth place went to House District 14's "pulled pork" sandwiches.

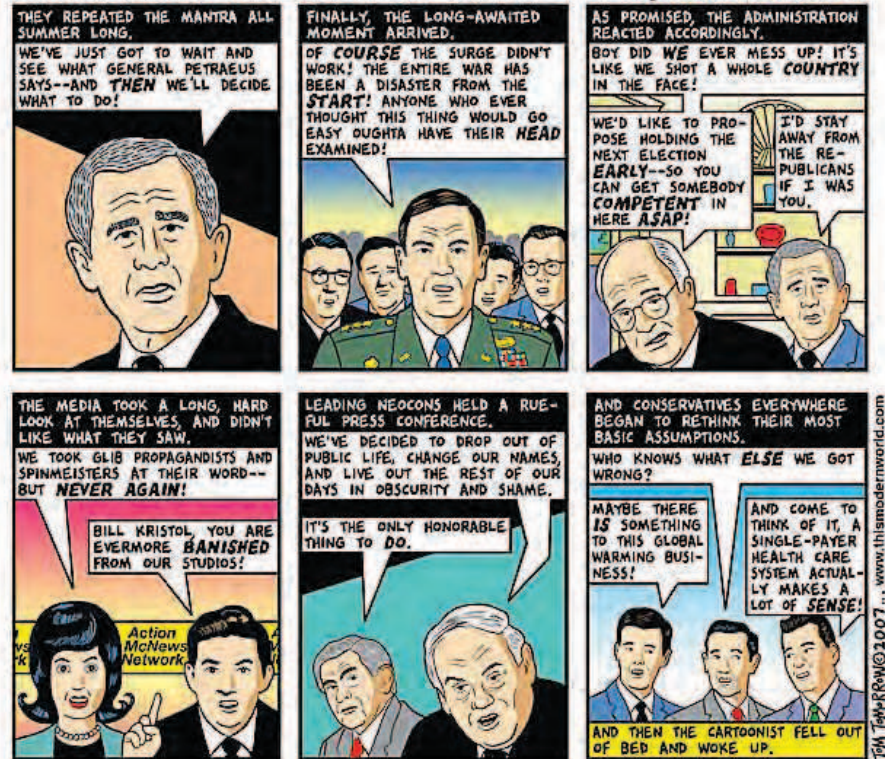


Rebecca Gladstone, secretary of the DPLC, serves her organic, vegetarian chili at the cook-off Sunday.

KATHRYN SCHUESSLER

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE SABOTAGED?

Two and a half years ago, the Eugene City Council set a neighborhood initiative as a major city goal, but now the city's neighborhood program has no staff.

It's not for a lack of money: The council increased the city's neighborhood budget to \$540,000 and authorized two full-time staff.

But one staff position was left vacant for months after city managers decided not to open it to external applicants and no internal applicants applied. The city never offered the full-time position, which requires many night meetings but includes the city's lucrative retirement and health-care package, to outside applicants from Eugene's generally highly educated but underemployed workforce.

That apparently led to the remaining staffer resigning in frustration. In an Aug. 21 letter of resignation copied to neighborhood leaders, city neighborhood manager Beth Bridges alleged that Planning and Development Executive Director Susan Muir was "undermining" the neighborhood program in a way that "contravened Budget Committee and Council policy direction."

In the past, the city's Planning Department has clashed with neighborhoods over development issues.

Asked about the neighborhood program problem, Muir referred to an Aug. 15 memo sent to the mayor and council. The memo acknowledged "staffing issues" with the understaffed program and said the city has tried

to assign a Public Works staffer to work on neighborhood issues part time. "We realize there is very important and critical work that needs to be done while we face this temporary situation," she said.

Kevin Matthews, president of the Southeast Neighbors, commented on the resignation in an email to neighborhood leaders, saying that the situation was a "terrible botch by the city administration."

Neighborhood Leaders Council Co-chair David Hinkley emailed the mayor and council alleging "a clandestine effort to phase out the neighborhood program." Hinkley pointed out that the council allocated ample funds but that staff did not spend them on neighborhoods. "The money was there; what seems to be lacking is a commitment to the neighborhood program," Hinkley wrote. "It is time for the City Council to get out of the mushroom shed and take a long hard look at how the Neighborhood Association Initiative and other City Council goals and policies are being advanced (or not) by city staff."

Mayor Kitty Piercy responded to Hinkley by email that she's "heard nothing that indicates" staff oppose the neighborhood program. "They are working hard," the mayor wrote. "Part of the problem is too many things on the burner at the same time."

But Piercy agreed that the unspent budget was a "point well taken" and said, "I know there is much that can and should be done better."

Meanwhile, a call to the city's neighborhood program was answered only by an anonymous taped message. —Alan Pittman

DEQ TO PUT A CAP ON BAXTER DIRT

In the latest effort to clean up contaminants in west Eugene near Roosevelt Boulevard, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has announced a "soil cap" will be placed over

WAR GAMES IN OREGON

Oregon did not experience any major large-scale emergencies last week; however, the U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) simulated a nuclear disaster involving Portland in order "to enhance homeland defense measures and military support to civil agencies during natural or man-made disasters."

The simulation was part of "Operation Noble Resolve" which worked with Homeland Security and FEMA to prepare the U.S. for terrorist attacks and other emergencies.

USJFCOM was able to save "time and money" by using "intricate computer-based models and high-speed, long distance virtual connections," according to their website. No actual troops or emergency personnel were deployed. This sort of simulation is known as wargaming.

The Noble Resolve scenario also involved Hawaii, Guam and Virginia. Oregon participants included the National Guard, Portland and Salem FBI, Immigration and Customs and other law enforcement agencies. According to USJFCOM's website, something called the "Twaltan" Valley Fire Department was also involved. *EW* assumes the U.S. military meant Tualatin.

Conspiracy theorists on websites like portland.indymedia.org are not happy with these war games. They argue that these military exercises have a history of coinciding with real world disasters.

The exercises wrapped up Friday, Aug. 24, with only a few "glitches," but Oregon is not done with war games yet. According to the Department of Homeland Security, Oregon will host "Top Officials 4" (TOPOFF 4) Oct. 15-24. TOPOFF 4 is another emergency management exercise involving weapons of mass destruction. In this one a "dirty bomb" releases radioactive materials in Portland. For more information on TOPOFF 4 (and to view the video promoting private sector participation) go to www.dhs.gov/xprepresp/training/gc_1179430526487.shtm

—Camilla Mortensen

