

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

HUGE ROAD TAX DESPITE NO VOTE?

After voters slammed a \$2 million a year pothole repair tax in the last election, the city council has turned around and plans to ask voters for a \$8 million a year pothole tax in May.

The new tax, a 10-year, \$81 million bond paid by property tax increases averaging \$109 per home owner, would be the largest tax increase in the city's history.

The property tax increase has been pushed by the Eugene Chamber of Commerce and council conservatives. Business interests pushed the property tax as a substitute for an earlier proposal for a tax on parking spaces that would have shifted more of the tax burden from home owners to big box stores that generate high road use.

Ironically, the conservative councilors who are the strongest backers of the pothole tax have some of the most anti-pothole tax constituents in the city.

Voters in Councilor Jennifer Solomon's Ward 6 in Bethel voted 78 percent against the gas tax for potholes on the November ballot. In Councilor Mike Clark's north Eugene Ward 5, 64 percent opposed the tax increase for roads. In Councilor George Poling's northeast Eugene Ward 4, 63 percent opposed the tax increase for roads. Solomon, Clark and Poling won their seats in largely unopposed elections.

Overall, 56 percent of voters opposed increasing taxes to pay for road repair. But on the council, support for the bigger tax in-

crease appeared unanimous.

To pass the big tax, "we as a city council have to be behind it 100 percent," said Councilor Chris Pryor. Pryor argued that more voters will support a property tax than a gas tax. "A bond measure to rebuild streets is more clear and more persuasive than a gas tax."

But Councilor Alan Zelenka said the failure of the gas tax is a good gauge of how the larger property tax may fair. "The gas tax is very analogous here." — Alan Pittman

LAS POSADAS IN EUGENE

From Christmas to Solstice to Hanukkah to the Islamic *Eid ul-Adha*, December is the month of festivals. If you want to branch out beyond sitting on Santa's lap and demanding gifts this year, there are a couple of places in Eugene where you can go and experience the traditional Mexican Christmas celebration of *Las Posadas*.

*Las Posadas* traditionally takes place over nine nights and reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for an inn (*Las Posadas* in English is "the inns") in which Mary could give birth.

Each night a party is held and each night the *peregrinos* (pilgrims), carrying candles and figurines of Mary and Joseph, come to the door and sing, requesting lodging. After the *peregrinos* have been turned down at two houses, they are allowed in at the final house and evening ends with singing and the breaking of *piñata*.

The celebration takes place from Dec. 16-24, and on the final night, Christmas Eve, an image of the Christ child is carried in. The nine-day celebration is said to have been introduced by Catholic missionaries in 1587 not only to celebrate the birth of Christ but to replace the Aztec celebration of the birth of the war and sun god Huitzilopochtli that took place in December.

To celebrate *Las Posadas* in Eugene, go to the Gather Room at Oak Hill School at 6

- Saving the **Amazon Creek headwaters** continues to swim upstream against city staff and conservative opposition. Corporate PR person Liz Cawood and Councilor and Republican political operative Mike Clark recently sought to torpedo protecting the natural area by apparently publicizing inflated numbers from confidential city property appraisals. It's amazing that the majority of local elected officials support saving the natural area from development, but staff and conservative activists have stymied preservation for more than a year. So much for democracy.

- Angry armed men are on the prowl in Eugene demanding huge amounts of money from citizens. Local residents are advised to hold tightly to their park, planning and library budgets lest the **Eugene police** make off with even more of their cash to dramatically increase cop numbers despite falling crime rates.

- That was **Pat Farr** at Rob Handy's press conference last week in the Lane County Courthouse (see News Briefs last week). State Sen. Vicki Walker introduced and strongly endorsed Rob as the candidate to boot Bobby Green off of the County Commission in 2008. Handy spoke of his experience as a small businessman, neighborhood advocate, environmentalist and fiscal conservative, taking the opportunity to poke at several soft spots in the county ledgers.

Republican Farr stood out in the crowd dominated by Democrats, including Mayor Piercy. Farr now works for Republican political operative Rick Lindholm, whom Green previously employed to gerrymander his district.

- **Looking ahead:** With Tom Kemper pulling the plug on his downtown Eugene redevelopment plans, will LCC end up with a new building downtown? It could be cheaper to convert a building to LCC classrooms and offices rather than plumbing-intense residential use. Might there be some other civic uses for downtown buildings currently under city options? UO student housing would be great downtown, and those kinds of public projects don't rely on commercial banking.



At the county, relocating the fairgrounds will likely be a big issue in 2008 along with routing LTD's EmX bus through west Eugene. Every proposed route has problems. Will LTD try to run the route on new pavement along parts of Amazon Creek? More budget cuts coming at the county level? Restoring federal funds for counties remains a crap shoot, and a bad roll could mean 20 percent cuts at the county.

At the state, big battles over Measure 47 implementation are brewing despite the legally specific language in the measure. And of course the 2008 general election ballot will be staggering. We'll be picking a president, lawmakers, councilors and mayor and probably voting on 20 state measures. Some reasonable-sounding but insidiously destructive antigovernment initiatives are certain to make it on the ballot with the hope that voters will not be paying attention.

- A small but hardy group of adventurers showed up on the stormiest day of the year Dec. 2 to **attempt a hike into Devil's Staircase**. Our outdoors writer James Johnston organized the expedition to the remote and nearly inaccessible Wassen Creek waterfalls in the Coast Range. He's been wanting to familiarize people with an environmentally sensitive area targeted for logging under the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR). The group carpooled two hours to the trailhead and took off on foot, he says, but soon turned back amid crashing trees and flying branches. Later that day a landslide closed the highway they had traveled. Johnston says the hike will be rescheduled, probably in early spring. Visit [northforkphotos.com/wassenotes.html](http://northforkphotos.com/wassenotes.html) for more information and to get on Johnston's email list.

- Cable TV is now running **The Day After Tomorrow**. Remember this 2004 flick? Millions of Americans die in an apocalyptic ice age triggered by global warming. The movie on TV has commercial breaks, and guess what's being advertised between scenes of mass destruction? You guessed it: SUVs and big vans with multiple DVD players. After all, we will need four-wheel drive rigs to escape the coming catastrophe.

- We're happy to report that the **EW: A Blog!** ([blogs.eugeneweekly.com](http://blogs.eugeneweekly.com)) is getting some attention. What's on EW A Blog! these days? Check out Taserung pregnant women, Albertsons' weird new plastic bag policy, "dens of inequity" vs. "dens of iniquity" and "Aliens, brothels and Chuck Norris." The hits keep coming.

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](mailto:editor@eugeneweekly.com)