

STATE OF THE CITY

Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy celebrated Eugene and outlined her goals for 2008 at her State of the City speech Jan. 8 to several hundred applauding people in the Hult Center lobby.

"I believe absolutely in the power we have individually and collectively to make change," Piercy said. "Cities are where it all happens; where people live, work, raise families, and establish roots."

In 2008 Piercy called for the city to work on: sustainability, climate protection, west Eugene transportation, homelessness, downtown, potholes, the Olympic trials, considering an independent performance auditor, locating McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center in Eugene, hiring a new city manager, creating a youth advisory board, protecting the Amazon headwaters and basin, and becoming an official Human Rights City.

Piercy played a public role in ending the "decades-long, acrimonious debate over the West Eugene Parkway" in favor of saving money, pollution, sprawl and wetlands. But she said the freeway was unlikely to be built anyway. "It was clear that the funding for this project was simply not there and that federal approval was likely never to occur."

The mayor called for "common ground" on downtown. She noted that "much of it is already doing well," including: Fifth Street Public Market, East Broadway, the proposed Beam redevelopment and the new Enterprise call center, WestTown affordable housing and KLCC offices. Piercy said to fix the rest, the city should "focus public safety efforts on our problem blocks, address rundown storefronts, tweak codes, increase cultural and recreational activities in the area, and look at parking restrictions."

Piercy said McKenzie-Willamette should be in Eugene where it can effectively provide health care for our community, support our tax base, and where, if needed, we can have some influence on significant health care policies."

The mayor called for "large reductions in building and transportation emissions" to address climate change. She said she hopes that with new state requirements that ODOT reduce carbon the state freeway agency "will respond to climate change and finite resources, allowing it to be more creative and energy-conscious, rather than simply laying more roads."

Piercy allowed city councilors to speak at the event if they chose. Councilor Bonny Bettman gave a "minority report" calling for an independent auditor, in-house city attorney, hiring a reform-minded city manager and terminating the city's urban renewal districts.

Bettman said an auditor is needed to provide the council unbiased information for policy making. She said citizens will have to be "vigilant" that the position is not "co-opted" to minimize its power, similar to what the councilor said happened with the new police auditor.

To avoid conflicts of interest with other clients, the city should hire an in-house city attorney like those employed by most cities its size, Bettman said. The council could direct the new city manager to do this, she said.

Bettman said the council should hire a manager who "confidently embraces reform" and is "not just another figurehead to assume the position at the helm of an entrenched organizational power structure."

Urban renewal diverts money from schools and government services and attracts speculators that neglect property while holding out for public subsidies, according to Bettman. "It is like having a hole in your pocket."

Councilor Betty Taylor also spoke briefly. She called for a living wage ordinance and a youth center downtown as well as a performance auditor and in-house attorney. See more on Piercy's State of the City speech, including a slideshow, at blogs.eugene-weekly.com — Alan Pittman

See Alan Pittman's blog for photos and the full text of the Mayor's speech.



'Cities are where it all happens,' says Piercy

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

RESENTENCING FOR LUERS CHANGED

The resentencing date for Eugene eco-arsonist Jeffrey "Free" Luers has been rescheduled for Jan. 15, from the original date of Jan. 8, according to Lane County Circuit Court.

Luers has been in prison since 2001 for setting fire to three SUVs. He is currently awaiting his hearing in Lane County Jail. His original sentence of 22 years and eight months was reversed in February 2007 by the Oregon Court of Appeals. He will get a new sentence with a possible reduction of 10-12 years.

According to the web page maintained by his supporters (www.freefreenow.org), the arson at Romania Chevrolet "caused only \$40,000 in damages and the cars were later resold." Luers was also convicted of at-

tempted arson at the Tyree Oil depot. The purpose of setting the fires, the webpage says, "was to raise awareness about global warming and the role that SUVs play in that process."

In an email announcement about the original hearing date, Luers' supporters asked that only family and close friends attend the hearing, due to limited space in the courtroom. They also wrote that "protest or similar activity would be acting against the wishes of Jeff and his family." — Camilla Mortensen

KICK-START AN INDOOR MARKET?

Eugene community activist and fundraiser Erin Ely is known for her involvement in Billionaires for Bush, the Village School and the Kutsinhira Cultural Arts Center, and now she's turning her attention to raising seed money for an indoor farmers market in Eugene. Ely has entered a national contest to win \$10,000 to kick-start the market.

"I know I am not the first person to have this idea," she says. "I'm just trying to increase the potential for making it happen. I was in New Mexico in November, and while

WILDISH GRINCH AWARD

Wildish Sand and Gravel will be presented the 2007 "Grinch of the Year Award" this week for the company's "attempts to take good union benefits away from local workers and for attempted union-busting," according to the Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice (ESSN).

ESSN members, local elected officials, and community members plan to present the award to the Wildishes at 2:30 pm Thursday, Jan. 10 at the Wildish offices at 3600 Wildish Lane, off Coburg Road in Eugene.

Wildish truck drivers, plant operators and mechanics are represented by Teamsters Local 206. The collective bargaining agreement between the union and Wildish expired April 1, 2007.

"Earlier generations of the Wildish family worked hard to earn a good name and

have been rightly honored in our community," reads a statement from the union. "But the third generation now running the companies is engaged in a serious attack on Teamster employees! Steve and Mike Wildish have hired a notorious union buster from Portland (Jim Frazer) to lead the recent negotiations."

The union says Wildish management has not budged from proposals to cut back on existing health insurance, pension benefits and security provisions. "Management continues to insist on taking away employees' good union health insurance and pension benefits and substituting inferior company plans," says Teamsters representative Stefan Ostrach. "Employees, whose average age is 47, would lose the opportunity to retire early."

Teamsters have voted to authorize a strike and a federal mediator is involved in negotiations. As EW goes to press, Mike Wildish and Steve Wildish of the Wildish management team have declined a request for comment.