

Green's Expense Account

Handy campaign critical of Green's use of public money

Bobby Green



several expensive lunches at the Ambrosia restaurant in downtown Eugene, including \$26 on Nov. 27, 2006, \$38.50 on Jan. 3 last year and \$16.50 on Aug. 1 last year.

Green's publicly funded local meals last year also include a \$20.20 breakfast at the Valley River Inn, a \$28 lunch at the Sushi Station, a \$25.20 breakfast at the Original Pancake House, a \$29.40 lunch at the River Ranch Steakhouse and a \$45 "reception" at King Estate winery and restaurant.

Even for expenses that may have a public purpose, Barkhurst questions whether the public could have saved money and still got the job done with cheaper food and lodging. In backing tax increases or service cuts in recent years, Green has repeatedly said publicly that the county has little fat left after years of spending reductions. "I don't know how much more we can cut," he told the Eugene City Club this month.

But while apparently attending county-related conferences or on lobbying trips, Green has stayed in some expensive rooms at taxpayer expense. Last September Green spent one night in a \$377 room at the Marriott in Washington, D.C. He spent two more nights in the hotel at \$223 a night.

Since September 2006, Green has charged the county for at least \$640 worth of fuel from local gas stations.

This year, Green returned to D.C. for six nights in the Omni Shoreham at \$217 per night for a total cost of \$1,332. On a similar D.C. trip in 2006, Green spent \$1,474 for seven nights at the Hilton. Five nights at another Hilton in Chicago cost the county up to \$322 a night for a total of \$1,378.

Barkhurst said she also requested expense information for other commissioners. Each commissioner is given up to \$10,250 a year for expenses, she said. But Green had about three times as many expense items as other commissioners, with many more questionable items, according to Barkhurst. "There's a great contrast between him and the other commissioners."

Green's expenses are a relatively small amount compared to the millions in the overall county budget. But with the lack of justification and accounting for Green's items, Barkhurst said, "It just raised a lot of issues of how the county monitors public money."

Linstromberg asked, "Is this the tip of the iceberg?"

Barkhurst and Linstromberg said county officials have yet to provide them with more than \$5,500 in missing Green receipts after repeated public records requests over the past four months.

Barkhurst said she felt like they had reached "a dead end" with the county. "This is supposed to be public record," she said. **EW**

Members of Rob Handy's campaign for county commissioner have questioned whether incumbent Commissioner Bobby Green has inappropriately used county funds for gas, meals and hotels.

"I felt this was bad use of county funds in times of financial crisis," said Handy Campaign Manager Phyllis Barkhurst. "There's a pattern of using those [county] funds for personal use."

Commissioner Green said the criticism of his use of public funds came from his political opponents. "I won't dignify those comments with a response," he said this week.

As evidence, Barkhurst pointed to a thick pile of Green's work expense receipts from the last two years that she obtained from the county under the Oregon Public Records law.

The receipts do not appear to provide conclusive proof of illegal spending of county funds. But the records do show that Green regularly charged the county for gas and meals without an apparent documented public purpose and stayed in expensive hotels while the county said it was in a budget crisis.

Since September 2006, Green has charged the county for at least \$640 worth of fuel from local gas stations. Dates for the 17 different fill-ups, often at a 76 Station on Highway 99, were sometimes a week apart.

In 2007, Green charged the county for \$34.60 in gas on Jan. 20; and another \$17.94 on Jan. 27. On Feb. 12 he charged the county for \$30.50 more in gas. The next month he charged taxpayers for \$31 in gas on March 15 and \$40.40 on March 25. Barkhurst said it is unclear from the receipts whether the gas was for county or personal use.

The same is true of many of Green's meal expenses, according to Handy Campaign Treasurer Mona Linstromberg. She said she's helped on financial audits before, and normally the records include some work justification for expenses. With many of Green's expense records, "there's absolutely no indication," she said.

According to the county expense records, Green charged taxpayers for expensive dinners while away at county-related conferences, including \$49.75 at the Fong Chong Restaurant and \$37 for the Brazil Grill, both in Portland. Green charged

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