

• Eugene's **Police Employee Association** needs to be reined in if the embattled EPD is ever going to regain the respect and support of the majority of Eugene's residents. Several reactionary union rants in the *R-G* against civilian oversight of the police were followed by the latest arrogant idiocy sponsored by the union: a personal attack on Councilor Bonny Bettman. The disturbing website caricature and threatening words show not only a serious lack of judgment and discipline but also outright insubordination against an elected city official. Is this acceptable behavior for city employees in any department? The best action Police Chief Robert Lehner can do right now is to fire the responsible officers and discipline anyone in the chain of command who knew about it and said nothing. How powerful is the police union? We will find out if Lehner does nothing.

Attacks against Bettman are nothing new. Her persistent and assertive calls for transparency, accountability and environmental responsibility in city and regional government have made her a target for ultra-conservative interests. The cartoon drawing of Bettman on the union website (www.epea1971.com) was copied directly from the anonymous Gang of 9 cartoon campaign in the *R-G* back in 2001. Bettman was one of the targets of the secretive campaign against progressive city councilors led by John Musumeci and including Liz Cawood, Ed Anderson, Jennifer Solomon, Otto Glausi, Dave Hilles, Chuck McGlade, Bob Mylene and Susan Selig. None has ever apologized for the offensive and insulting cartoons.

• Is our city charter amendment regarding **External Review of Police** strong enough to survive future changes of leadership by Eugene's elected officials? As we go to press this week, we hear from Councilor Bonny Bettman that she intends to propose a council resolution that removes elements of choice in the amendment. Language such as "is authorized to" and "may" in the

charter would be replaced by "shall." Bettman says the changes, which would have to go to the voters, would ensure the "ongoing and consistent functioning of the Independent Police Auditor's Office and the Civilian Review Board." The police union and mayoral candidate Jim Torrey are adamantly against the independent oversight, preferring that the police police themselves.

• As first reported on our blog a week ago, the city of Eugene has proposed siting a new **McKenzie-Willamette hospital** on a downtown site centered on the Eugene Clinic. The excellent location would do wonders to revive downtown, reduce sprawl, traffic congestion and global warming and save citizens and the hospital money on infrastructure. An urban hospital design with parking garages could easily fit on the largely underused parking lots and one-story buildings downtown. In the interest of time, money, the community and reality, McKenzie-Willamette should give up on its golf-course design for a suburban hospital and jump at the chance to locate in this prime spot in the heart of the community.

• Now that the ashes have settled from the **fireworks of the May elections**, we can look forward to more smoke and flames in November. The primary once again showed the flaws in our election system. Democracy is not served by an expensive and distracting rehased campaign between Piercy and Torrey, or Green and Handy, but we're stuck with it. We are pleased to see movement toward campaign reform at the local and state level (see News Briefs this week for a description of instant runoff voting). Voter Owned Oregon is moving ahead toward publicly financed elections, along with the Citizens' Initiative Review that would objectively analyze ballot measures.

One state initiative likely to be on the November ballot is a variation on the open primary concept. Under this

proposal, the top two vote-getters in a state-level primary would go on to the November election, regardless of party affiliation. For example, in the secretary of state race, Democrats Kate Brown and Rick Metzger would complete against each other in November. The Republican candidate Rick Dancer, who got fewer votes than either Brown or Metzger, would get dropped from the ballot. Makes sense in this case. Dancer is wholly unqualified to be secretary of state. The only reason he's on the ballot is his Republican Party affiliation.

• **Disposable grocery bags** are doomed (see News Briefs last week). It's only a matter of time before we decide as a city or county to do something about the waste and pollution of handy-dandy bags. Sooner is better. If we are required to pay for grocery bags, we will stop using so many of them. Billions of plastic bags each year end up in landfills or floating around in our oceans. Paper bags are not much better, considering the costs and energy that go into their manufacturing and transportation. And here's a fee/tax with minimal impact on low-income people. Anyone, rich or poor, could avoid the cost by simply getting into the cloth bag habit.

Could the bag fee plan also generate much-needed funding for county services? Let's look at it.

• Did you notice that **Sen. Jim Webb** (D-Va) was the cover story in the May 18 *Parade* magazine inserted in both the *R-G* and the big *O*? A light little publication, *Parade* is one of the best-read magazines in America. Makes us wonder if Webb is running for veep on the Obama ticket. Not that two senators make sense, but Webb is a smart guy with the right national security credentials. He served in Vietnam; his son is in Iraq.

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

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