

Just Do It

Voters want a firewall of independence

The city of Eugene will never have truly independent and effective oversight of complaints involving police unless city councilors and the mayor get a backbone. On Nov. 17, following the lead of Mayor Kitty Piercy and Councilor Andrea Ortiz, they Ignored two elections and five years of public input by sending the police auditor program back to the drawing board for ever more discussion, dilution, disservice, and – worst of all – delay.

What Council should have done was send the revisions to the police auditor ordinance to a public hearing and move forward affirmatively, once and for all, to ensure that the auditor can actually do the job the voters mandated. Council should have put an end to constant challenges, delays and undermining perpetrated by the EPD on the police complaint oversight program.

The Charter establishes the minimal threshold of authority the auditor and Civilian Review Board must have. Those decisions have already been made by the voters and must be implemented by the Council. Eugene citizens demonstrated, for the second time in three years, unwavering support for independent oversight. The Charter changes passed with an unprecedented 65 percent approval. That is a mandate under any circumstances; and in an election with 85 percent voter turnout, it is unquestionably the will of the people.

The Charter requires the council to authorize the police auditor to assume the powers and fulfill the duties described in the Charter. Council does this by adopting revisions to the auditor ordinance, spelling out how the program shall work.

The 12 draft revisions spell out the auditor's authority as mandated by the Charter. Most of the revisions directly address issues identified from EPD's continuous challenges to the auditor's authority to perform oversight duties. EPD's resistance has continued to escalate over the three years since the creation of the complaint oversight program: the obstruction, petty interference, serious delays; withholding of complaints, information, and access to complaint investigations; denying direct access to data and offices; inadequate evidence gathering and documentation; unwarranted secrecy; and frivolous accusations and litigation.

This is an ominous regression more worthy of a Jim Torrey-led council than a Piercy mayorship. Councilor Betty Taylor said: "If Jim Torrey had pulled a stunt like this, people would be up in arms, but because it is Kitty, people are just confused." After discouraging losses in the November elections, it is easy to imagine the delight of the conservative wing of the council as they sat back and watched the alleged "liberal" majority self-destruct.

It is unclear who pulled the plug.

Several days before the work session Nov. 17, there was at least one "private" meeting in the mayor's office which included Ortiz, Interim Police Chief Pete Kearns, city legal counsel Glenn Klein, the Lane County DA's office and the mayor. That weekend Ortiz announced she would make a motion canceling the public hearing and turning the ordinance revision process over to an insider committee, membership determined by her and the mayor, for more "process" and "stakeholder input."

Their hand-picked committee includes two police union representatives, two police commissioners and the interim police chief. No matter how you cut it, that is a very heavy police bias. In one quick and indecisive motion, Ortiz, Piercy and Zelenka aligned with the "conservative wing" to subvert the voters' will as well as undermine the "independence" in independent oversight. They ignored the decisive input of the ultimate "stakeholders," almost 50,000 Eugene citizens, in favor of asking the fox to remodel the hen house.

This maneuver keeps the auditor's office functioning with less authority and more ambiguity than the Charter mandates. EPD and city administration are determined to keep the auditor as far away from actual complaint investigations as they can, and their actions speak louder than their words. I see their fingerprints all over this latest maneuver.

Voters want a firewall of independence between the power of the auditors office and the power of the EPD (and city administration), not a firewall between police complaint investigations and auditor oversight. The council must revise the ordinance to institute the full authority vested in the auditor's office by the voters. The mayor and councilors need to get the message that they were elected to represent the people of this city, not the bureaucracy, and 65 percent is as close to "all of Eugene" they can hope for. So, tell them to just do it.

Bonny Bettman is a Eugene city councilor, retiring from her post in January.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DOLLARS ARE VOTES

With every dollar you spend you are making your real political beliefs known. When you choose to buy a book at Borders when you could buy it at Smith Family, you are choosing a corporation over a neighbor. When you buy a cup of coffee from a big chain over one of our fantastic local coffee houses, again you are choosing not to support our community. If you decide to shop with corporations you are using your dollars as votes for what kind of town you want to live in. If you complain about the loss of farmland, but shop in one of the big boxes that took it over, you are actually saying that sprawl is just fine with you.

In these very hard economic times this is just a reminder that it is now more important than ever to buy local. It is a very real decision you will be making to support our wonderful craftspeople, small farmers, local restaurants and local little shops, or not. If you want a cute, thriving downtown, it is up to you to use your shopping dollars as votes to make that a reality.

*Savona Cook
Eugene business owner*

QUANDARY ON THE LEFT

While I tend to appreciate John Zerzan's letter (11/13) chastising people for voting in the recent elections, I don't understand how not voting would improve anything.

In terms of genuine, meaningful sustainability, there is little difference between any of the mainstream candidates. And should any "progressive" candidate like Piercy, Handy or Obama begin doing the things necessary to put the human family on the desired trajectory, that candidate would be committing political suicide. Hence, nothing will change and Zerzan's basic argument is sound.

But, while there seems to be little difference between modern civilization going off the edge of a cliff at 70 MPH versus going off at 55 MPH, really, the cliff in question is not a sheer drop, but a steep,

bumpy slope and 15 MPH could make all the difference. Furthermore, there will come a time when the collapse we're facing becomes sufficiently undeniable that an informed enough constituency will enable our more progressive politicians to bring about the dramatic, sweeping changes that are necessary, while the lesser politicians could remain in denial.

Meanwhile, if readers of *EW* were to follow Zerzan's advice and simply not vote, we'd be looking at Mayor Torrey and a continued pro-growth, pro-development majority of county commissioners. Nationally, it could mean the difference between yet another Middle East war or not.

I'd like for Zerzan to spell out a positive vision for the future based on not voting.

*Robert Bolman
Eugene*

BOTTOMLESS POCKETS?

Why is EWEB choosing to heat its new \$85 million 100,000 sq. ft. building in west Eugene with fossil fuel, instead of using the most efficient and nonfossil fuel heating and cooling systems of the 21st century: ground source heat pumps?

Ground source heat pump systems are being used throughout the modern business world to heat buildings in major cities. In fact, there are ground source heat pump systems being used inside Eugene.

What is EWEB's argument for installing and using a fossil-fueled heating system? They might say that it's the up-front costs. Sure, installing a natural gas boiler system is cheaper, but that doesn't take into account the long-term costs of fuel or the real costs of providing, as well as burning, natural gas.

Installing a solar electric system will not even come close to balancing EWEB's fossil fuel carbon footprint or energy costs.

Does EWEB feel that the ratepayers have bottomless pockets to pay the fossil bills throughout the next 50 years or more?