



officer during an anti-pesticide rally on May 30 of last year, and witnesses say that another officer dragged him by the hair and slammed his head against the ground. He has pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor charges of obstructing traffic and resisting arrest.

Recently more controversy has arisen in the case, with the Eugene Police Department suspending its investigation of officers' actions until after legal proceedings are finished.

At Tuesday's hearing, Judge Jack Billings allowed the defense access to the Taser records of all officers at the scene. Fine said that hard drives within the weapons record when they are fired and should clear up confusion about when Van Ornum was first Tasered. The DA said only one Taser was deployed, but Fine requested records of all Tasers carried by officers at the rally. Fine said Van Ornum was shot twice while he was prone. Some witnesses report seeing him Tasered once while he was standing, in order to "get him down," Fine said.

Billings also granted the defense access to some EPD disciplinary records, if they exist, of any prior unlawful and excessive use of force by the two officers involved in the case. Fine argued for access to all complaints of unlawful or excessive force by the involved officers, but the judge said that he would allow access only to complaints against the officers that had been "affirmed and sustained" by an internal review.

The defense will also be able to use interviews conducted by agents of the state or the city of Eugene, said Billings. That means the defense will be able to use any reports given to the police auditor by witnesses sympathetic to its case.

The judge granted access to officer Bill Solesbee's department cell phone records, if available, after Fine requested a recording of Homeland Security's two calls alerting the officer to the rally. Because the calls

went to a cell phone, the DA said they were not recorded. The times of the calls would show up on the cell phone records.

Among the requests Billings denied was one in regard to an officer who came forward 11 days after the incident saying she had witnessed Van Ornum during the setup of the rally. Fine said coming forward 11 days after in incident was unusual and wanted to see if it was in response to an internal memo or email. The judge ruled that request irrelevant after the DA said it would require searching through hundreds of documents. He also denied a request for a time record to see if the officer was at the rally when she said she was.

Judge Billings also said the question of whether Solesbee's possible service as a police officer for a contractor in Iraq prior to Taserings Van Ornum was not relevant. According to a 2007 story in the *New York Times*, many contractors are coming back from Iraq with the same kinds of combat-related mental health problems that afflict United States military personnel.

A trial date for Van Ornum is currently set for Feb. 10.

— Jessica Hirst and Camilla Mortensen

4J SEEKS INPUT ON BUDGET

Eugene School District 4J is preparing for significant budget cuts due to the worsening Oregon economy and declining projections for tax revenues. The district is asking students, parents and community members to weigh in on priorities via an online survey posted on the district's website: www.4j.lane.edu. The survey will be open through Sunday, Feb. 1.

The district is expecting a budget shortfall of \$14 million to \$17 million for next year. That's about 10 percent of the district's operating budget, or equivalent to the cost of operating two of the district's high schools for one year.

• **How is RiverBend doing** in this economic crisis? Hospital bed census is running at a respectable 80 percent, but we hear rumors that the facility is losing money and is planning layoffs of 10 percent of its management ranks. That's an exaggeration, says PeaceHealth's PR person Jenny Ulum, but she does say some 13 people in administration are losing their jobs, and some other unfilled positions are now on hold. Managers are also taking a 4.5 percent pay cut between now and June. What's going on? Ulum says more patients are showing up without insurance, and people are delaying medical procedures because of the economy. It all has an impact on PeaceHealth revenues.

Ulum says patient care staff will not be cut at RiverBend, but rumors persist of overworked and overstressed nurses and aides.

• Economic worries could also interfere with PeaceHealth's plans to relocate its **Nurse-Midwifery Birth Center** from its current location at 511 E. 12th Ave. to a new facility planned near RiverBend. Advocates for the move are lobbying for the new center at PeaceHealth's corporate board meeting in Washington state June 30 and have gathered 523 signatures on a petition. Not everyone's happy with losing the center at its handy 28-year Eugene location, but one source tells us she's worried PeaceHealth's board might see the Birth Center as redundant and simply close it and not build the new \$417,000 facility on its \$600,000 one-acre lot. However, the Birth Center appears to be a priority for the hospital's foundation. Advocates for the move have a blog at www.lanecof-bc.blogspot.com

• How can **Eugene's form of government** be improved? Eugene is a city that's too large for a manager/council model where the council only sets policy and the unelected manager has power over everything else. The issues were outlined at the monthly Brewhaha political gathering Jan. 21 sponsored by The Lane Bus Project and *EW*. On the panel were Steve Candee, an LCC political science prof; Bonny Bettman and Paul Nicholson, both former councilors; Josh Foster, UO grad student; and Gary Gillespie, union activist.

Several points stand out from the discussion: Meaningful oversight and transparency are more important than our form of government, and our current system has little of either. The trend nationwide is to move away from our current manager/council model, and a growing number of cities are adding independent performance auditors and bringing legal services in-house. We'd have a more balanced and democratic city government if we gave our mayor a vote on everything (instead of being just a tie-breaker), allowed our council to vote on major contracts and the hiring of key department heads, paid our councilors a living wage and provided councilors with staff support.

All these things, and more, can be done by updating our current form of government.

• **Springfield's elected officials** are eager to grow the town in land size and population, but do the residents of Springfield understand what it means for them? Developers and speculators will rake in short-term profits, but property owners will pay long-term higher taxes to fund expanded sewers, streets, public safety and schools. And higher property taxes mean higher rents.

One reason cited for expanding Springfield's urban growth boundary is the need for industrial land, but will recruiting new manufacturing to Springfield help or hurt the city's economy? Some lessons can be learned from the jobs rollercoaster caused by Hynix, Sony and other large manufacturers who have come and gone.

Here in Eugene, economic hard times are generating a desperation for jobs, and unscrupulous profiteers and politicians are circling to prey on that desperation. Will a new Lowe's on the edge of town "create" more jobs? No. There's only so much stuff local people will buy. Such big chain stores are more likely to take jobs from already existing local businesses. Will tax breaks for a university area housing developer create jobs? No. If there is demand, the housing would have been built anyway. With the economy sick, people should be wary of those who are selling snake oil.

• **Sam Adams** this week decided to not resign as mayor of Portland, and this is good news. Portland has a multitude of challenges that far exceed the significance of hanky-panky that appears to be consensual and otherwise legal. We suspect the hullabaloo is driven by political agendas more than moral outrage. Let's get past this distraction of pubic business and get on with public business.

• A new blog gives us a peak inside the large brain of UO economics professor and scientist **Bill Harbaugh**, who's currently on sabbatical. Harbaugh's interests are exceptionally broad. He writes about everything from neuroeconomics (what's that?) to improving access to Oregon public records. You can also find quirky comments from Harbaugh's students. Check out harbaugh.uoregon.edu

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