

COP CHIEF TALKS JAILS, ABUSE

Eugene's acting police chief Pete Kerns told the City Club Eugene should increase local jail capacity by up to 20 fold — without saying how he'd pay for it.

Kerns claimed that fewer jail beds led to increased crime, but FBI statistics show the crime rate in Eugene has dropped sharply in the last decade and that Eugene is one of the safest cities in the nation.

Lane County now has between 75 and 100 jail beds, down from 450 due to budget cuts in recent years, according to Kerns. "It's like not having a jail at all," he said. "We should have a jail that can hold between 1,000 and 1,600."

A 1,600 bed jail would cost roughly \$160 million to build and \$50 million a year to operate, based on the costs of other facilities.

Kerns appeared to recognize that a new mega-jail isn't likely. "I don't know if the county will ever have the capacity," Kerns said.

Kerns claimed that a lack of jail capacity had led to a "spike in armed robberies here." But 2007 FBI data show that Eugene's robbery rate has declined 51 percent since 1997. According to the FBI, Eugene's violent crime rate has fallen 53 percent and its property crime rate has fallen 43 percent since 1997. Out of 398 cities with more than 100,000 people, Eugene ranks 280th for violent crime rate and 90th for property crime rate, according to the FBI.

Eugene has a similar overall crime rate and population to Salem. But Eugene's police budget is about one-third higher, according to city budget documents.

Kerns did say that the city could do more to inform neighborhoods of rashes of burglaries, within the police department's existing budget. Eugene has a "well-staffed crime prevention unit," he said. "We can do that."

Eugene City Manager Jon Ruiz appointed Kerns as acting police chief in October, ignoring an allegation that Kerns had failed to act on a sex abuse complaint against Roger Magaña. One of Magaña's dozen victims alleged under oath in his criminal trial that she told Kerns and two other EPD officers about the sex abuse, but Kerns and the other officers did nothing.

Asked why EPD failed to act to stop Magana's six-year sex abuse spree, Kerns said, "It was impossible for us to believe that could happen."

Kerns called the police oversight system twice passed by voters in the wake of the scandal "a good one." He said the system had led to improvements in training. He said the police union, which has attacked independent oversight, has "a duty to protect the labor rights of every member in their organization." But he said union leaders "do not always speak in a way that reflects the values" of every member of the police department.

Kerns also said police jail many mentally ill people because "Lane County doesn't have enough mental health care." He made a call for an increase in mental health treatment beds similar to his call for increased jail beds.

Whether or not marijuana should be legalized "is a really good question," Kerns said. "Alcohol does far more damage to our society than any other drug," Kerns said. "I'm more concerned about that." — *Alan Pittman*



Pete Kerns



news Briefs

RIVER ROAD PARK DISTRICT EYES CHOICES

The River Road Park & Recreation District has received supplemental funding from the city of Eugene for the past 24 years, but that funding is about to dry up due to budget tightening by the city. According to district manager Dale Weigandt, the organization has two options to replace the \$100,000 that will soon be gone from the district's \$3 million budget: a five-year serial levy in May that would increase the taxes paid by in-district residents; or expanding the district.

Out-of-district residents who currently use the pool, fitness center, community center and other activities pay a higher fee to compensate for not paying district taxes. Community use of the recreation center has been increasing in recent years, along with operating expenses.

"There are folks out in the Santa Clara area that are in the city, and a lot of folks

that are out of the city. So what we would be doing is expanding our district out to the end of Santa Clara." The district is meeting with community groups and also looking into legal issues involved in changing district boundaries. Weigandt says a questionnaire might be sent to Santa Clara residents soon "to see if they'd be up for it, and we'd proceed from there."

The district currently runs north from the Chambers connector to Beltline. The west boundary is the NW Expressway, and the east boundary is the Willamette River.

The original source of city funding was to compensate the district for lost revenues when part of the River Road area was annexed into the city 24 years ago. "We were in a 20-year agreement to begin with," says Weigandt. "That agreement ended, so year by year they gave us \$100,000, which was a little bit less. This last year we met with the City Council, and they had instructed the city manager to reconstruct the budget and cut us out. ... We've been in discussion with the council and have come up empty."

The topic is expected to be on the agenda when River Road residents and community groups get together for a mid-winter celebration from 1 to 5 pm Saturday, Feb. 7, at the River Road Rec Center, 1400 Lake Dr. At 1:30 pm will be a discussion

of the River Road Park District; and at 3:15 pm will be a discussion of "creating a livable neighborhood." For more information, call 686-6761. The district's website is rrpark.org — *Ted Taylor*



happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEL

DAVID TAM

Born in 1976, shortly after his parents arrived from Guangzhou, China, David Tam was the only non-white kid in his class through grade school in Depoe Bay and high school in Lincoln City. "My parents owned a restaurant, a hotel, and a tavern," he says. "I was cleaning hotel rooms when I was 8." Tam first fell in love with Eugene when he came to town for a high school track meet. He returned to earn a UO degree in business and economics in 1999 and now works as an independent broker with Lincoln Financial. "Growing up in a small town, I learned how to deal with cultural identity issues," says Tam, who mentors a group of teenage Chinese Lion Dancers every Saturday at Westmoreland School. "I can relate to the challenges of youth." Currently president of the Chinese-American Benevolent Association and the Asian Council, Tam is in his fourth year as chairman of the Oregon Asian Celebration. "It takes nine months of planning," he notes. "We have a committee of 30 that works year-round." This year's 24th annual celebration, "Heart of Asia," is scheduled for Feb. 14-15 at the Lane County Fairgrounds. Find a complete listing of activities and events at asiancelebration.org.



Lane Area Herbicide Spray Schedule

- From **Triangle Lake to Lorane**: Seneca Jones (461-6245) will aerially spray 174 acres near Lake, Fish, Camus, Barlow, Letz creeks and Siuslaw River with 2,4-D, Triclopyr ester, Velpar, Atrazine and sulfometuron methyl starting Feb. 23rd (#50075).
- Near **Fox Hollow and Lorane Highway** area: Transition Management Inc. (484-6706) will ground spray 289 acres with Triclopyr ester, glyphosate, Imazapyr, Metsulfuron/Sulfometuron and Hexazinone plus Induce, MSO and Crop Oil adjuvants near Doak, Fox Hollow, Coyote and Preacher Creeks starting immediately (renewal of #50265, 50757, 50765-66).

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