back, an end to 401(k) company contributions, reductions in medical benefits and other cutbacks, according to Randi Bjornstad of the Guild. Two other unions representing press operators and typographers agreed to similar concessions.

The three unions account for about 75 percent of the newspaper's 350 employees, according to a Jan. 15 *R-G* story by Ilene Aleshire. The story says the company lost "several million dollars in 2008," but Bjornstad says "we were told it was $5 million" in negotiations, "and that the industry projection was that we could expect half as much losses this year." Daily newspapers nationwide lost about 15 percent of their revenues in 2008 and are projected to lose another 8 percent in 2009, she says.

The daily had already cut 32 full-time positions before what COO David Pero described as a "perfect storm" of events in late 2008 with lost advertising and increased paper costs. The new labor contracts are an attempt to maintain current staffing, according to the *R-G* story.

Before the contract negotiations last July and again in January, the *R-G* had provided "fabulous" medical benefits "for a very long time," says Bjornstad. "We felt we really couldn't, in good conscience, delay settling over that issue. … We knew we needed to make some concessions there." The Guild agreed to a "straight-forward 80-20 plan with a $1,000 deductible."

The company had asked for permanent concessions in several areas, she says, but all the bargaining units independently held out for a one-year limit, with hopes that the economy will improve.

Bjornstad says management and non-union employees are experiencing a different set of cutbacks, including a wage freeze.

The unions at the *R-G* have suffered through traumatic bargaining sessions in years past, particularly when notorious Tennessee union buster Michael Zinser represented management at the table. Editor and publisher Tony Baker was at the table for last July's Guild negotiations, and "it was much more of a collaborative process than we've had in the past," says Bjornstad. — *Ted Taylor*

WAR DEAD

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003
(last week's numbers in parentheses):

- **4,260 U.S. troops killed*** (4,259)
- **31,131 U.S. troops injured*** (31,118)
- **177 U.S. military suicides*** (177)
- **1,123 U.S. contractors killed** (accurate updates NA)
- **99,622 to 1.2 million civilians killed***** (99,500)
- **$607.2 billion cost of war** ($605.3 billion)
- **$172.7 million cost to Eugene taxpayers** ($172.1 million)

** through March. 23, 2009; source: icasualties.org; some figures only updated monthly*
*** sources: icasualties.org, defenselink.mil*
**** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 (Lancet survey, 2006) to 1.2 million (Opinion Research Business survey, 2008)*

LCOG PUSHES COMPUTERS OVER SAFETY

With pedestrian deaths in Eugene and Springfield making recent headlines along with big federal stimulus checks, you'd think some of the money could go to solve the deadly problem.

But not if you're the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG). In a March 12 meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC), LCOG staff opposed spending any of the $6.6 million in federal stimulus money it controls on pedestrian safety. What was a higher priority? A half-million dollars in new computer software for LCOG staff.

The MPC, composed of delegates from local elected and unelected bodies, quickly approved the recommendation unanimously.

Pedestrian projects are "handled better at the local level without federal dollars," LCOG manager Andrea Riner told the MPC.

That may be news to LCOG's counterpart in Portland. Metro Council, an elected agency, allocated more than $2.4 million of its stimulus money to sidewalks, flashing school zone signs, wheelchair curb cuts and other pedestrian safety improvements.

MPC member Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy argued in support of LCOG's emphasis on roads over sidewalks and crosswalks. "A lot of people walk on our roads, so when you fix a road you're actually meeting pedestrian need," she said.

But Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson appeared more concerned. "People are being killed on our roads," he said. "It's very dangerous."

LCOG's citizen advisory committee to the MPC also recommended using stimulus money for pedestrian safety, but LCOG staff dismissed the recommendation.

Riner was more excited about spending stimulus money on a new LCOG office computer system. She called for spending $500,000 of the stimulus on a new "state-of-the-art" software system for modeling transportation and land use decisions. LCOG's current system is "the transportation planning equivalent of a typewriter," she said. With the stimulus, "this is a golden opportunity to do this."

In a memo to the MPC, LCOG estimated that the $500,000 would create approximately five to six jobs. But the memo also describes the software as labor saving and

SLANT

• Is the **Lane Regional Air Protection Agency** worth saving? Like all agencies, LRAPA has positives and negatives. The agency, funded in part by Eugene, Springfield and Lane County, has been pummeled by all three governments, each in turn threatening to pull financial support for various political and financial reasons. The 40-year-old agency has survived internal and external turmoil — primarily because it has accomplished some success in raising air quality in our valley. The alternative is the state Department of Environmental Quality, which has a long history of under-enforcement of Oregon's environmental laws and a poor track record on collecting fines (see our cover story 11/20/08).

LRAPA now has a better representation of environmental interests than it has had in the past when industry interests called the shots, but problems remain, as came up in the City Club talk last week by LRAPA Director Merlyn Hough and Advisory Board member Larry Dunlap, M.D. Not enough monitoring stations are operating, our air is still too dirty for our health, wood stove smoke remains a problem and some of the really dangerous toxins in our air are not being adequately documented and addressed.

And now, LRAPA is looking at approving a big biomass cogeneration proposal from Seneca Jones Timber Company that would add 26 tons of particulates into our air each year, along with 480 tons of other pollutants. Dunlap is worried and notes that even "the best technology in the world" planned for the Seneca plant could still produce and vent unintended hazardous compounds, in addition to the planned emissions.

Our valley's exceptionally high asthma rate is related to air quality. Dunlap says he doesn't have dollar costs for Eugene and Springfield, but statewide the direct and indirect costs of asthma total about $372 million a year. Such costs are rarely calculated in analyses of industrial development. Preventing pollution is easier and cheaper than cleaning up existing pollution.

• We're not convinced by arguments that donors fund the **big AIG-style bonuses at the UO**. The UO is apparently planning to pay its new president three quarters of a million dollars a year, its new athletic director another half million and its new football coach about $3 million a year, all this while crying poor, squeezing English professors to reduce their low salaries and screwing students with yet higher fees. The UO should ask the donors to support academics instead and/or require a percentage of donations or athletic revenues go to academics, like at other universities.

• In **our search for good news**, we hear the Oregon Built Environment & Sustainable Technologies Center has announced a public/private partnership that will invest $1.6 million in green-building research conducted at OSU and PSU. New labs at the two universities will investigate green building materials and study the performance of building assemblies and completed green buildings. OSU will be studying hybrid poplar lumber, eco-friendly concrete, insulation made from recycled plastic and other innovations.

Two Eugene companies are profiting from the $1.3 million solar energy demonstration project along I-5 near Tualitin. **Advanced Energy Systems** is the "solar power specialty designer and installer," and **Good Company** is the "community and sustainability specialist." See www.oregonsolarhighway.com for information on what ODOT calls "the nation's first solar highway."

And we just heard that the independently owned **CD World** in Eugene is still going strong after 20 years in business. Congrats!

• We're happy to see something new in the space formerly occupied by the Phatty Snak Shak: **Albee's N.Y. Gyros** opens today, Thursday, March 26, at 391 West 11th. If the name looks familiar, it's probably because Albee's N.Y. Dogs has been at the corner of Olive and Broadway for some time now. The hot dog stand — a boon to late-night revelers — was voted the third-place best food cart in last year's Best of Eugene readers' poll.

• Is someone **ripping off stacks of our papers?** Last week's cover story on the retaliation lawsuit against the UO made for an unusually popular paper on campus, even with students fleeing for spring break — either that or some crook snatched stacks and buried them in recycle bins. We've heard from two readers that some of our campus boxes and stacks were raided soon after delivery last Thursday, but no one witnessed the crime. If anyone knows anything, please let us know. Meanwhile, copies of the popular March 19 issue are available at our offices, and it can be read online at eugeneweekly.com.

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*