

Police Stymie Independent Taser Probe

In an apparent violation of the City Charter, Eugene police have refused to allow an independent investigator of a Taser incident to interview police officers, causing the frustrated investigator to resign.

Eugene Police Auditor Dawn Reynolds said the private investigator she hired to investigate a Taser incident at a May 30 protest last year has resigned due to a number of "ethical and practical" concerns. The investigator, Joyce Naffziger, declined comment and referred questions to Reynolds.

A Eugene City Charter amendment passed overwhelmingly by voters requires the city to hire an independent auditor with the power to "participate in investigative interviews" and "contract with persons or entities to perform outside investigations."

'She felt like she was wearing too many hats and had too many restrictions to be independent.'

—Eugene Police Auditor Dawn Reynolds

Reynolds described Naffziger's concerns as including:

- The police union and command staff would not allow her to directly interview officers involved in the incident.
- She could be sued by the police union, and the city wouldn't insure or defend her.
- She could be called to testify in civil lawsuits.
- The City Council majority has

unworkable and unclear restrictions on public records.

- The City Council has unworkable and unclear demands requiring the auditor function to get council approval on all "substantive" decisions.

"She felt like she was wearing too many hats and had too many restrictions to be independent," Reynolds said.

"I feel really crushed," said Day Owen about the investigator's resignation. Owen alleges police assaulted and falsely arrested him at the anti-pesticide protest. "I had hopes for justice."

"I'm not going to attempt to hire another investigator," Reynolds said. She said she will try to do her own investigation by reviewing police documents and a transcript of the recent criminal trial of Taser victim Ian Van Ornum.

Reynolds said the interview issue is the subject of a formal union grievance that has not been resolved by the city. She said the liability issue might later be resolved by hiring a part-time staffer protected from liability like other city employees.

Reynolds said she's trying to talk to the city attorney and city councilors to resolve the practical considerations of the council's restrictions on auditor action, independence and public records. The police Citizens Review Board has written a letter to the Eugene City Council calling the restrictions "unworkable," "obviously illegal" and a "direct rebuke to the will of the overwhelming majority of Eugene voters."

Naffziger did several days' work on the case, but waived her fees, Reynolds said. Reynolds praised her ethics and qualifications. She said Naffziger has decades of experience working for defense attorneys on high-profile investigations for federal and state murder trials. "She said they're easier than this," said Reynolds.

— Alan Pittman

CPA CRITICAL OF COP MOVE

The longtime activist group Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA) has taken a stand on a proposed police facility on Country Club Road, calling for a public hearing before the Eugene City Council. The Steering Committee statement was dated April 21.

On the issue of co-location of city offices, CPA says, "Voters have three times rejected proposals for a police headquarters separate from City Hall; we believe that citizens do not want the inefficiencies associated with dispersing key administrative offices throughout the city."

Regarding the earthquake and "protecting essential services" arguments, CPA says, "The city owns many buildings that provide essential fire and police services. The council and the public should have available a complete inventory of such facilities, and the costs involved in upgrading from the 'life safety' to 'continuing service' engineering standards, in order to assess funding priorities."

Regarding the Eugene/Springfield Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan of 2005, CPA says, "It does not appear that the Country Club Road proposal is informed by any such planning activity. It is in a low-lying area that was lightly developed until the completion of federal flood control dams on the Willamette River in the 1960s. The Mitigation Plan identifies those dams as seismically under-engineered and potentially subject to failure or loss of service following an earthquake." Concerning potential flooding and bridge damage, CPA questions locating EPD "across the river from the majority of the population."



news Briefs

PLANT FAIR BENEFITS MASTER GARDENERS

The OSU Extension Service Master Gardener program has been selected to receive a portion of the proceeds from the Oregon Plant Fair this year. The event is sponsored by Avid Gardeners and the Willamette Valley District Garden Clubs, and runs from 8 am to 3 pm Saturday, May 9, at the Alton Baker Park shelters. The event will include art and food vendors, as well as specialty nursery growers from Oregon and Washington.

"For decades, the OSU Master Gardener program and volunteer service in our community have been invaluable — and vital," says Alice Doyle, an Avid Gardeners board member and co-owner of Log House Plants in Cottage Grove. "Funding is uncertain at this point," she says. "With budget cuts, this program is under siege and we all need to rally in support."

Ross Penhallegon, Lane County Extension horticulture agent, says, "We're one of the major sources of gardening information in Lane County." For more than 30 years, the Master Gardener volunteers have served neighborhoods and rural districts with horticultural education.

Master Gardener volunteers will be on hand with a booth at the Plant Fair to answer questions about plant care, particularly vegetable gardening. They will offer information about composting, adaptive gardening, food storage and preservation, sustainable gardening and the GrassRoots Garden.

Mary-Kate Mackey, gardening writer and Avid Gardener board member, says, "With a renewed interest in home vegetable

gardens — the most since WWII — we need Master Gardeners now more than ever." She calls the volunteers "walking gold mines of horticultural know-how. If they don't know an answer, they know where to find it."

Since its inception in 1976, the OSU Master Gardener program has been a leader in sustainable gardening practices. "We have helped people save money, learn how to garden and avoid pesticide problems," says Pat Patterson, who has been involved in the Oregon Master Gardener program from the beginning. "I've seen the Master Gardeners change hundreds of lives for the better. We've had a tremendous impact on the community."

The Master Gardener program trains gardeners across Canada and the U.S. to become horticulture experts. These specialists then relay their knowledge through volunteerism, such as garden lectures, exhibits, school and community gardening and a variety of other activities. "We answer about 12,000 calls a year," Penhallegon says.

For more information email alice@log-houseplants.com or call 682-4243.

— Karlee Patton

STORYCORPS COMES TO DOWNTOWN

Public radio station KLCC is hosting StoryCorps during its three-week stay in Eugene as it tours the U.S. to record stories of everyday Americans. Opening day is May 7.

StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit project in partnership with NPR and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

KLCC will air a selection of the local stories and create special programs around the project. Selected segments may also air nationally on NPR's "Morning Edition."

The StoryCorps MobileBooth is an Airstream trailer outfitted with a recording studio and will be parked at Kesey Plaza, at Broadway and Willamette. The booth will be open from 10 am to 7 pm Monday,

SPRINGENE SCENE

SAMUEL NATHAN KLINE, AGE 3, STOPS TO INSPECT THE "FLOWS TO THE WILLAMETTE RIVER" SIGN ON THE SIDEWALK. SAM, OUT FOR A DAILY STROLL WITH HIS 13-MONTH-OLD BROTHER ZACHARY, COUNTS THE SIGNS AND TALKS ABOUT WHY IT'S IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO NOT PUT WASTE DOWN THE DRAIN. SAM IS THE SON OF ROGER AND DENA KLINE AND THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN BY THE KLINEs ON WEST D STREET IN SPRINGFIELD, ACROSS

