

Reconcilable Differences

Two tricky cases with hopeful outcomes



In this column, published in the Dec. 12, 2007 issue of *Eugene Weekly* under the title "Irreconcilable Differences?" I wrote the following:

I promise to report back a year from now. I'm participating in two collaborative efforts wherein people who have disagreed for a long time have agreed to try to agree. By next December, when I'll report again, each collaboration will be succeeding, middling or failing.

Well, it's five months later than my promised December report-back, but by March 2009, both collaborations had succeeded. The West Eugene Collaboration generated recommendations to enhance transportation, commerce and the environment in west Eugene. The Tushar Allotments Collaboration agreed on grazing management and monitoring changes on two over-used cattle allotments on the Fishlake National Forest in south-central Utah.

Both collaborations had boring, awful, inspired and key moments. Both reached consensus about solutions. Both provided recommendations in a public report that felt like a well-deserved endpoint to the participants. Whew!

But of course recommendations don't change anything. Bummer! Only implementation of recommendations can result in better conditions in west Eugene or on a broken stream in southern Utah. And this will be an interesting challenge because the implementation will require government agencies to work in a less compartmentalized manner than usual and in a more collaborative way with their communities.

Collaborations aren't compartmentalized; their recommendations aren't compartmentalized; and implementation of the recommendations can't be compartmentalized.

We locked horns in west Eugene because Eugene, Lane County and Oregon transportation and highway departments were running down their transportation track at the same time Eugene, BLM and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers environmental departments were slogging through their wetlands restoration track. The proposal to build a highway through recovering wetlands was a train wreck.

We locked horns in southern Utah because the Forest Service and livestock permittees were turning out the same number of cows to trample the same streams and eat the same small aspen sprouts the elk were eating and graze the same grass to nubbins every year while environmentalists were photographing the results.

The west Eugene recommendations call for simultaneously accommodating vehicle, mass transit, bicycle, pedestrian and fish travel. The southern Utah recommendations call for simultaneously accommodating cattle, fish, aspen and (novel thought in the grazing world) flowers and pollinators.

The challenge to governmental agencies, elected officials, non-governmental organizations and citizens is to consider what both reports say about existing conditions and desired conditions and how we might get from existing to desired conditions. At critical moments during each of the two collaborations, certain people rose above their particular perspectives to propose or accept novel approaches or to drop favored positions that weren't gaining traction.

And that's what it will take to test and implement the recommendations: At critical moments, certain people will need to rise above their particular perspectives to propose or accept novel approaches or to drop favored positions that aren't gaining traction. Whether governmental or non-governmental, we'll all have to keep telling ourselves, "I will not do business as usual. I will not do business as usual."

Do social conflicts ever get solved any other way?

Mary O'Brien of Eugene has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She can be reached at maryobrien10@gmail.com. The West Eugene Collaboration report is posted at www.odrc.state.or.us/documents/WEC_Report_Final_3_18_09.pdf and the Tushar Allotments Collaboration report is posted at <http://tushar.ecr.gov/pdf/FINALREPORT050209.pdf>

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EPD COWARDS

Congratulations to the EPD for torturing another youth! It must make you all quite proud to be protecting the people of Eugene from such dangerous criminals. Reading how the officer feared being attacked by the scrawny boy who was half cuffed reminded me what a bunch of cowards Eugene police officers are. Cowards!

I would love the opportunity to box any of you in a ring with no weapons so I can show you how a real man handles himself — a concept lost on anyone on your poor excuse for a police force. Or better yet, how about you clowns come to the Bay Area and try your hand at real policing? I triple-dare any of you to attempt your brand of brutality and intimidation on this populace. You wouldn't last a day here.

Similarly, if we sent our officers to Eugene, they probably would never want to return to the Bay Area, because Eugene is about the easiest place in the world to be a cop. How many homicides were there in Eugene last year? I'm sure we had more here last week.

In my limited interactions with Bay Area cops, I have found them to be respectful and confident, while cops in Eugene are rude and scared. What are you people so afraid of? Hippies and activists are not dangerous people.

Taunting the liberal majority of taxpayers in Eugene by placing incendiary ads (4/30 *EW*, p. 5) is about the stupidest thing I've ever seen a union do. Do you really think you can taunt the very people who pay your salaries and get away with it? These people will be far better off without you as you are the most dangerous criminal element in the community.

You may contact me to arrange a boxing match, but be forewarned, I weigh a full 150 lbs., so you'll want to send your toughest officer.

Kursten Hogard
San Francisco

MORE PATHS

A problem with cycling in the Eugene/Springfield area is that so many of the people who plan cycling routes do not ride bicycles

and therefore do not understand the needs of commuting cyclists. The axiom here should be that we want commuting bicycles and pedestrians on paths and back streets. Let auto traffic have the main thoroughfares.

As for this proposed bike bridge over the Delta Highway, I am not against bicycle bridges over freeways in general. Big bicycle bridges are expensive because they have to be able to support the weight of access vehicles. Also, these types of bridges take years to complete. In the meantime, there are more projects that need to be done.

Before plans are finalized to spend more than a million on a bicycle project, planners need to consult the cycling community as to the needs of cycling and walking. After this, planners need to ask if the project is needed or if more value for the money could be obtained with other cycling projects that would cost far less and would be of as much or if not more benefit to the community.

The unincorporated areas of west Eugene still need a bike path in front of the Delta Sand & Gravel pit on Industrial Way. This can be an inexpensive asphalt path. Some housing development and new streets have been put in place off of Tiato Street that would connect the entire west region of the area with the river paths. This small path would make it practical to cycle on back residential streets and paths all the way from the farthest point on the west side of Eugene to the east side of Springfield avoiding heavy traffic.

Cyclists could avoid the deadly under-Beltline gauntlet on River Road, one of the most dangerous cycling areas in town.

Another cycling project is to connect the Fern Ridge bike path with the Beltline bike path. This project has been on the back burner for many years.

Lee Norris
Cheshire

WE NEED SALLY

I've worked with Sally Sheklow for more than 10 years. I consider her a good friend. I count myself among the men she doesn't hate.

She's a long-time champion of social justice. But there are still men (and women)

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