

news Briefs

COPS WANT GUNS, NOT DRUG, MENTAL TESTING

At the urging of the Eugene Police Department, the city is lobbying against drug and mental health testing for officers, but for an expensive, armed UO police force.

The city of Eugene has given its top priority to lobbying against a bill that would require steroid and drug testing for police officers involved in shootings, require mental health evaluations for police officers and require that the incidents be investigated independently by the Oregon Department of Justice.

A report to the City Council from EPD police Captain Chuck Tilby said the city will give its top priority to opposing Senate Bill 895, which seeks to increase the safety and accountability of police officers heavily armed and authorized to use deadly force.

The bill requires that an officer involved in an incident in which the use of deadly force caused serious physical injury be tested for illegal drugs, including steroids.

In response to pressure from elected city commissioners, Portland recently renegotiated its police contract and plans random tests for illegal drug and steroid use for about two-thirds of its officers per year beginning in July, according to *Willamette Week*. The random tests, costing about \$170

each, aren't only required in officer involved shootings. Steroids drew particular concern because of their potential to cause dangerous aggression in users.

Tilby wrote the council that Eugene police don't do random drug testing or require testing after shootings. "This is an option that is offered to employees, but lacking reasonable ground to believe an officer is taking such substances, the city cannot mandate the test. Expect a large negative reaction to this paragraph from unions." Tilby wrote, "mandating the tests is not advisable and increases the city's costs for paying for such tests."

Tilby also argued against a provision requiring periodic psychological evaluations to retain police certifications from the state. "Psychological testing is not an exact science," Tilby wrote. "Mandating tests would be costly and fraught with legal problems." Tilby also opposed a provision requiring six mental health sessions for officers involved in shootings. "Doesn't serve officers well, but serves mental health professionals quite well," he wrote.

Tilby called independent investigations by the Department of Justice a "major problem with this bill." Right now the EPD investigates itself with some help from the district attorney and state police. Tilby argued the bill "removes local control" and the DOJ "will significantly reduce the quality and timeliness of these critical investigations."

The police safety reform bill is sponsored by the Senate Committee on General Government, chaired by Rep. Chip Shields, D-Portland. The bill was introduced in February and moved on to other committees last month.

The city and police are also lobbying against Senate Bill 405 that would allow the UO to replace expensive EPD officers with a cheaper, unarmed, university police force. In the past the UO has paid EPD about \$500,000 a year for policing.

Tilby argued that the university police should get union benefits, PERS and other

benefits given to police officers. Not giving the benefits is "good for universities, not good for professional standards maintenance, recruiting, retention," he wrote.

Tilby argued that not requiring university police to carry guns would be a "nightmare," because it would require other jurisdictions to provide armed officers when needed. The bill would be "absolving the university system of the ultimate responsibility of having employees exert deadly force," he wrote. The city supported another bill that would require armed and expensive police officers on campuses. — *Alan Pittman*

WILD HORSES KILLED IN HIGH DESERT

Wild horses roam Oregon's eastside high desert as well as, more unusually, some of its forests. In March someone shot and killed six of those horses in an area about 20 miles outside Prineville. Three were discovered last month: two stallions and a pregnant mare whose yearling foal was found nuzzling her, according to the Humane Society of the United States, which has offered a \$2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the shooters.

On April 8 three more horses that had been dead for some time were found, bringing the total to six.

The horses were part of a small herd of about 55 to 65 animals that roam in the Big Summit Herd Management Area in the Ochoco Mountains. A nonprofit group, the Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition, which assists the BLM and the Forest Service in conducting a yearly census of the herd as well as with adoption events and gentling clinics after the horses have been gathered, has also offered a reward of \$1,000 for information on the shootings.

Pleasant Hill resident Gayle Hunt says she formed the group, which has about 80 volunteers, to do things such as "building networks of help for adopters and promotional strategies that lift the wild horses' image from varmint to valued resource." The horses that were shot "were well known to us," Hunt says.

The Crook County Sheriff's Office, which found the animals while on patrol, says the shooter could be charged with aggravated animal abuse.

Wild horses in Oregon are found on BLM, Forest Service and, in one case, Fish and Wildlife managed lands. Forest Service land horses like the Ochoco herd are managed in cooperation with the BLM.

The BLM has announced a May 4 meeting at the Burns District Office to discuss the use of helicopters in rounding up Oregon's herds. The BLM says it gathers an average of 500 to 700 horses a year from Oregon's public lands. The BLM has also announced an effort to establish "eco-sanctuaries" in the West on private and public-private lands for horses removed from public rangelands where cattle are often grazed. The sanctuaries would be potentially be used to promote ecotourism, the BLM says.

The Crook County Sheriff's Office is investigating the Ochoco horse killings. Anyone with information about the case is asked to call the sheriff's office at (541) 447-6398 or go to www.cowildhorse.org for more info. — *Camilla Mortensen*

TAX DAY ACTIVISM

Would you rather pay taxes for peace or war? Local activists have organized a parade and rally on April 16, the Saturday before this year's tax deadline of April 18. Fashion Resistance to Militarism will be modeling their outfits. Speakers will include Jim Schmidt of Veterans for Peace outlining the costs of war and two Spencer Butte students speaking about climate as a security issue.

The event runs from 11 am to 12:30 pm Saturday at the Free Speech Plaza at 8th and Oak. Sponsors are WAND, Community Alliance of Lane County (CALC), Veterans for Peace and Taxes for Peace Not War. For more information contact Michael Carrigan of CALC at 485-1755 or email calcpeace@efn.org or oregonwand@oregonwand.org

Another tax day action is a "Taxes for Peace Not War" rally at noon Monday, April 18, at the Eugene downtown post office. The day's message is, "instead of paying for endless war and cutting taxes for the rich, Congress should fund education, job creation, universal health care, and other vital services," according to organizers. Sponsors include CALC, Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network (ESSN), WAND, Veterans for Peace, and Taxes for Peace Not War. Music will be provided by labor singer Mark Ross.

A traditional "penny poll" will be held in front of the post office. Passersby will be offered 10 pennies that they can put in jars labeled with different government funding choices. Last year Eugene penny poll participants chose to give human resources 45 percent compared to 2 percent for the military, and 1.5 percent for the Iraq/Afghanistan wars. This is in sharp contrast to the decision by the U.S. Congress last year to give more than half our discretionary tax dollars to the military.

Also Monday at the downtown post office, US Uncut Eugene will host a rally and march against corporate tax-dodgers and unnecessary public service cuts at 3 pm. The rally is part of a nationwide action in solidarity with hard-working, tax-paying families. The rally will be followed by a march to Bank of America on 11th Avenue and back to the post office. For more information, email uncuteugene@gmail.com or look for "Eugene Uncut" on Facebook.

The local Tea Party's 912 Lane Group is also planning a "Tax Day Rally to Promote Patriotism, Fiscal Responsibility, Limited Government, and Freedom!" from 5 to 7 pm Friday, April 15, at the old federal building at 7th and Pearl. Art Robinson, who is expected to run again against Congressman Pete DeFazio in 2012, will be among the featured speakers. Boy Scouts will sell hot dogs. Tea Partiers will sell Tea shirts. Email teapartyeugene@gmail.com for more information.

Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL



DOUG BALES

"It's humbling to be part of a community where there's so much generosity," says Doug Bales, volunteer coordinator for the Egan Warming Center. Named for retired Major Tom Egan, a local homeless man who died outdoors on a freezing night in 2008, the center provided 4,500 warm beds and 9,000 meals at six locations to an average of 250 guests on 21 cold nights from November through March this past winter. Bales grew up on a farm in New Mexico, followed his two older brothers into the Army, achieved the rank of lieutenant and served for seven years. He graduated from NM State, got a job as a stockbroker, then relocated to Eugene in 1989. In addition to his work as a financial advisor, he has lived in and renovated several historic houses. After working as a kitchen volunteer at the First Christian Church in EWC's first year, Bales was hired by St. Vincent de Paul to coordinate the program. "I had some ideas on organizational development," he says. "I still work in the kitchen. It's a blast. Everyone loves it. We all share that feeling of wanting to contribute." A number of local agencies and businesses, as well as 325 individual volunteers, contributed to the center's second season. Learn more at eganwarmingcenter.com.