

incentivize the use of biofuels — it provided a wholesale level subsidy on biofuels. Without this funding, the biofuel industry, including the biofuel industry in Oregon, is scrambling to maintain stable prices for its products.

Champions of alternative energy have been pushing fuels derived from renewable organic resources as a sustainable substitute for petroleum-based fuel for decades, but it has been difficult for biofuels to become established in the fickle, politically charged fuel market.

According to Ian Hill, the CEO and co-founder of biofuel retail company SeSequential-Pacific that has three stations here in Eugene, “the fluctuating policies and support of biofuels creates a terrible business climate.” Hill points out that more sustainable small-scale producers and distributors of biofuel are unfortunately among the most affected by the policy change.

So far SeSequential has not had to raise the prices of its fuel, but depending on whether the federal government reinstates the subsidy, prices for biofuel may hike as much as a dollar per gallon. “Some legislators say that they want to bring back the FET and some say no, and that makes it really hard,” Hill says.

Companies like SeSequential are working to compete with petroleum-based fuels even without the federal subsidy, but the government also subsidizes the supply of petroleum products, and that subsidy isn’t going away anytime soon, he says. “In an ideal world this would be a level playing field, and the domestically produced, renewable fuel would win out,” Hill says, “for now, however, we are just hoping that we can be given a consistent idea of what our funding will be so that we can create a plan for a sustainable future.”

SeSequential has cards at its Eugene stations asking customers to call on their senators and representatives to vote in favor of SB 1277 the biodiesel tax credit extension bill.

— Caitlin McKimmy

COUNTY COMPENSATION CONFLICT

As Lane County crosses its fingers in hope that Congress will renew federal county funding before massive budget cuts hit county services from the jail to animal control, sparks flew at the Feb. 8 commissioner meeting over proposals to make both real and “symbolic” budget cuts.

A proposal by Commissioner Jay Bozevich was placed on the agenda to cut \$30,000 from the strapped county budget by eliminating the county board’s deferred compensation plan, which costs the county about \$1,500 per commissioner; cutting the commissioners’ office expenses to \$1,000 a quarter; and by a cut in the board’s general expense contingency budget.

Bozevich said in the meeting that his proposal is “not a lot of money but I think it’s a very symbolic gesture.”

Commissioner Rob Handy countered with a proposal of his own that he said would cut up to 15 percent from the highest salaried employees at Lane County and would net more than \$1 million in savings.

Handy said it’s time “to move beyond symbolic approaches to the budget.” He said there are 65 people making more than \$90,000 at Lane County and they “have not shared the pain that the rest of folks at Lane County have.”

The discussion of Handy’s proposal became heated at times.

County Administrator Liane Richardson said the cuts might affect doctors and attorneys and “conversations like this with the people who we can’t replace are going to cause them to go looking elsewhere.”

She said, “You are going to make it even worse for the people who are going to be stuck running this,” and called Handy’s proposal “really bad policy.”

Bozevich said, “You have to be selective in how you run an organization.” And said he had “no interest in directing staff to do that research.”

Other commissioners questioned the legality of Handy’s proposal and whether some of the higher salaried employees were represented by unions and had union contracts. But

Commissioner Pete Sorenson said he saw the value in looking into the proposal for nonunion contract employees, including the commissioners themselves.

Sorenson said “people want more than symbolism. They want a sense that elected leaders are doing things in the public interest, the purpose isn’t simply to put out a press release.”

“As difficult as it is to discuss cutting salaries, including my own salary, I’d like to know what my options are,” Sorenson said.

Handy tried several times to amend Bozevich’s plan in order to direct Richardson to look into his plan. It failed each time with Handy and Sorenson in favor and Bozevich, Sid Leiken and Faye Stewart against, saying the agenda team would take it under consideration due to an earlier “head nod.”

The commissioners voted unanimously to implement Bozevich’s cuts, but not to devote staff time to Handy’s proposal and the possibility of saving the county \$1 million.

“The public doesn’t want symbols,” Handy said. “They want us to make meaningful decisions — and conservatives have signaled that cuts from the highest salaried managers and supervisors are off the table.”

— Camilla Mortensen

VALENTINE’S FORESTLAND RUCKUS

Nothing says love like a good protest. Conveniently enough the most recent State Land Board (SLB) meeting took place on Valentine’s Day and more than 60 protesters showed up in Salem with cards and cakes to let the SLB know that the Cascadia Forest Defenders and other conservationists want state forests to be better managed.

CFD, which says that since polite requests have been ignored it will now encourage “rowdiness” to get its point across, announced its plans for the rally Feb. 3 by dumping a load of dead Christmas trees in the driveway of the governor’s mansion and holding up a banner with a heart on it. The SLB is made up of the governor, secretary of state and state treasurer.

The SLB governs about 1.6 million acres of state land and resource assets, including agricultural, rangeland and forestland, including the Clatsop, Tillamook and Elliott state forests. Income from these lands goes to the Common School Fund.

The protest, as well as public comments, centered on the SLB’s recent decision to dramatically increase clearcutting on unlogged coastal rainforests and to sell portions of public land into private ownership. According to CFD member Grace Warner, Gov. Kitzhaber responded to the concerns over the sale of the public lands by saying the lands lacked conservation value.

The protest, which took place both outside the meeting and inside during the public comments, included singing about breaking up with the governor to the tune of “Killing Me Softly,” the singing of “Happy Birthday” to Oregon and the presentation of a cake, and at least two protesters stripping for the governor. Warner says security stepped in between the disrobers and the politicians, preventing the SLB from getting much of a view.

Warner “mic checked” the governor during her public comment slot, saying “there are no schools on a dead planet.”

— Camilla Mortensen

LIGHTEN UP

Without motor boats, Waldo Lake is serene. With motor boats, it is Fern Ridge Reservoir, but without the convenience of the Shell station and the Dixie Cafe.

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

- We’re sad to hear of the passing of **Svitlana Kravchenko**, the much-lauded director of the UO’s masters program in environmental and natural resources law. She died Feb. 10 in Eugene at the too-young age of 62. She was known worldwide for her strong advocacy for reforming public policy on environmental matters. She traveled and lectured in dozens of countries and authored 12 books and hundreds of academic articles. Despite the overwhelming challenges to the environment, she once said, “We face a world that contains great beauty and is populated by humans capable of great acts of generosity.” Our condolences go out to her family, friends and colleagues.

- Should Eugene taxpayers **subsidize private developers**? We’ve been doing it for a long time and while the cost to taxpayers runs into millions of dollars each year, the benefits to our city are dubious. The latest proposal, using the city’s Multiple Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPT) for a higher-end student housing complex at the site of the old Eugene Clinic, would give downtown one more welcome boost. But MUPT was not needed for other successful private student housing projects in Eugene, and this project will end up competing for renters with hundreds of other private landlords who do not have the economic advantage of 10 years of zero property taxes. It’s time to level the playing field and repeal MUPT in Eugene ordinances.

- **Our public records request** regarding the total cost of fighting the excessive-force and right-to-videotape case that ecosystem advocate Josh Schlossberg won against the city has been delayed until “litigation is completely over,” the city tells us. ORS 192.501(1) states that “Litigation has not been concluded until there is a final judgment and all appeal rights have been exhausted.” We hope that this is only related to the ongoing negotiation of attorneys’ fees, and not a sign that the city plans to spend even more taxpayer money appealing an open-and-shut excessive force case. We’ll be curious to see if the total cost reflects the hundreds of hours that city staffers spent holding meetings about the case and observing the proceedings.

- Makes us proud that our **Congressman Peter DeFazio** voted against the Federal Aviation Administration bill with its anti-union provision and other serious problems. Makes us wonder why Sen. Ron Wyden voted for it, while Sen. Jeff Merkley and the rest of the Oregon Democratic delegation voted against it. The loyalty oath provision alone should have brought out a loud “Nay”: “It is the patriotic duty of the people of the United States to support the members of the Armed Forces who are defending the Nation’s interests around the world at great personal sacrifice.” This irrelevant language serves no purpose other than cynically identifying opponents of the bill as not supporting our men and women in uniform.

- **Eugene** was jumping last weekend with an infusion of folks from all over Lane County, flashing signs that the recession continues to recede. Country music sold out Matt Court Friday night, at the same time that Cozmic Pizza packed in an SRO crowd to hear outrageously bad date tales, some told by two EW story-tellers, Camilla Mortensen and Dante Zufiga-West, to benefit Planned Parenthood. Marché restaurant served one of its biggest all-time crowds Saturday night, brought out by the new Inn at the Fifth and the splendid show at the Hult Center by the Eugene Ballet Company. KLCC’s Microbrew Fest is always a big draw at the Fairgrounds, as is the Eugene Record Convention at the Hilton. We’ve probably missed some other recession-busters drawing big crowds lately. Let us know.

- On Valentine’s Day Lane County Hearings Official Gary Darnielle ruled that Greg Demers and the McDougal Bros.’ Lost Creek Rock Products can go ahead and **mine Parvin Butte**. This means that unless the developers have a heart and leave the butte alone, the mine with all its dust, noise and environmental devastation can operate in the middle of a community, with no input from the neighbors, and tear up the earth near a salmon stream. Even the hearings official didn’t sound thrilled about his own ruling and was critical of the flawed code and would like to see it rewritten. We hope Lane County appeals this controversial decision and also changes its code so communities can protect themselves and the environment from devastating and unnecessary destruction.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately?