

COMMISSION CONTENDERS PULL OUT

The two Lane County commissioner races heading for the May primary have narrowed their fields. Conservative City Councilor Mike Clark dropped out of the North Eugene race against current Commissioner Rob Handy Feb. 28, and on March 1 political newcomer Kieran Walsh gave way in the contest for the South Eugene seat held by Pete Sorenson.

If a commissioner candidate gets more than 50 percent of the votes in the May 12 primary then that candidate goes on the November ballot unopposed. In some cases candidates will pull out of a race in hopes of helping another candidate win that majority. Walsh said at a press conference last week that he pulled out to offer a “united front” against Sorenson. He went on to endorse Andy Stahl.

Sorenson, a popular longtime commissioner, faces Stahl, executive director of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, in the race for South Eugene. Stahl has been lining up political endorsements from Oregon’s Legislature, including state Sen. Floyd Prozanski and state Rep. Val Hoyle.

Sorenson’s endorsements reflect his long history of pro-environment and pro-union votes. He has been endorsed by the local Sierra Club chapter, the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV) and Oregon Wild Conservation Leaders Fund PAC. On the union side, Sorenson has gotten the nod from the Eugene firefighters union, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 and the Lane County employee union — AFSCME Local 2831. City Councilors Betty Taylor, Alan Zelenka and George Brown have all endorsed Sorenson, as has Mayor Kitty Piercy.

In the North Eugene race, Clark’s withdrawal leaves interpreter/translator and frequent political candidate Nadia Sindi and City Councilor Pat Farr to take on Handy. After pulling out, Clark threw his endorsement to Farr, who also lists conservative former mayor Jim Torrey and former county commissioner Bobby Green as endorsers in the nonpartisan race. Handy beat Green for the north Eugene seat in 2008. Handy, who like Sorenson has a history of green and pro-worker votes, has not yet begun to list endorsements on his campaign website.

At the city level, Mayor Piercy has two challengers,

Kevin Prociw and John Walrod. Councilor Betty Taylor is facing Jim Ray and Juan Carlos Valle. And the open seat for EWEB Wards 1 & 8 has two candidates, Will Shaver and Steve Mital.

— Camilla Mortensen

PUBLIC INPUT ON LOSS OF LCAS

Despite the concerns of local animal advocates, Eugene and Lane County continue to work to transition to a “new model” for animal services. There are two upcoming “community input sessions” the public can attend to voice worries over the impending demise of Lane County Animal Services (LCAS).

The county says budget shortfalls at the county and city have spurred the current attempt to change animal services. Sondra Arrache of Save the Pets and the No Kill Community Coalition (NKCC) says animal advocates are concerned that the “transition team” doesn’t include members of the LCAS advisory board and other knowledgeable animal advocates. Current LCAS manager Rick Hammel has only one year of animal welfare experience.

Lane County’s vocal animal advocacy community formed the NKCC, which in the past five years helped dramatically improve adoption rates and reduce euthanasia at LCAS.

Among the NKCC’s concerns are the how, with no concrete plan, money is actually going to be saved. The group says the right now the city and county are looking at models from locations that have a lower quality of animal care and higher euthanasia rates, instead of places with a higher quality of care and lower euthanasia rates.

The animal advocates also say that one of the options that has been discussed — shifting animal control shifted to the police could lead to people who are more afraid to call officers for animal issues. Animal officers connected to a shelter are more apt to provide “providing counseling and resources to help people be better pet parents.”

The first session will focus on sheltering and adoption services. It will be at 7 pm Thursday, March 15, in the Bascom-Tykeson Room of the Eugene Public Library. There will be representatives from Lane County, Eugene and Springfield.

The second session at 7 pm, Thursday, April 5, is also at the library and will feature representatives of Eugene and Lane County discussing enforcement and licensing services.

The NKCC says it wants to see this process slowed down and would also like to see the city and county use the animal expertise and resources animal advocates are offering for free.

The group says it wants to see “LCAS stay funded in its present form, until we can come up with a model that can succeed.”

For more information on the NKCC go to its Facebook page at <http://wkly.ws/17w>

— Camilla Mortensen

DECISION MAKERS

Moving more than a thousand students to the intersection of three Eugene neighborhoods creates a lot of stakeholders. That’s why different organizations have joined together to form the Eugene Community Advisory Team (Eugene CAT) to examine the proposed Capstone project, which would bring 1,200 students into a downtown complex at 13th and Olive by fall 2014.

Even with the many stakeholders involved in Eugene CAT, the group isn’t looking to go all Buffy the Vampire Slayer on the project if (or when) it runs into controversies. “Our primary interest isn’t in making a recommendation,” CAT Steering Committee member Paul Conte told a public question-and-answer town hall on March 13.

Instead, the committee is working with the involved neighborhood associations, developers and city staff to ensure that information is available and accessible to the public — and City Council, too.

The March 13 meeting, attended by Capstone representatives as well as EPD and LTD representatives, a city of Eugene community development manager and parking and transportation representatives, among others, covered the basic outline of the project, the guidelines for City Council’s decision on the proposed \$16 million Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPT) and questions and concerns submitted in writing in advance and by attendees.

Among the questions addressed by the panel were concerns about enforcement of noise alcohol and drug violations, traffic on West 12th Avenue (a popular bike corridor), the extra sensitivity to construction dust and noise of some elderly and disabled Olive Plaza residents, the adequacy of the eight-story parking garage and developers’ desire to have a decision by the end of April.

Among the questions that city staff and Capstone couldn’t answer (both entities said they needed to consult a lawyer for legal details) was what provisions — such as permanent on-site building managers or conduct code guarantees — City Council might be able to insert into the MUPT.

To meet its goal of keeping information accessible to the public, Eugene CAT has a website that includes a calendar of future events and an archive. Audio from the March 13

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