



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WOW HALL PROBLEMS

Eugene has a rich and lively arts community. Theaters, galleries, clubs, venues and artists of all stripes, and all of them contribute to our colorful environment. Part of this scene is the Community Center for the Performing Arts in the historic WOW Hall. The CCPA is a tax-exempt nonprofit run by a volunteer board of directors elected by WOW Hall members and the building is long since paid off. It belongs to you! It has a secure base and lots of potential.

There are problems, however. The CCPA represents itself as an equal opportunity

employer, but it's not. Folks who work there just hire their friends, partners and relatives. They write each others' performance reviews. There is no oversight of CCPA policy because there is no general manager. (The last one was harassed out and not replaced.) No one ever gets written up or asked to improve. There is no capital improvements plan, no diversity plan, no overall staffing plan, no movement to improve. It's questionable whether the CCPA could survive a routine IRS audit of 501(c)3 compliance.

What keeps the board from taking responsibility for fixing it is that the board

is elected at the annual general meeting, an event largely controlled by the staff who nominate their friends and relatives and former employees (some of whom were dismissed from their jobs for behavior issues or violation of CCPA policies). If anyone who supports change slips past the goalie, it can get very unpleasant. My year as a board member was not a happy one. Intimidation, yelling, insults, going behind others' backs may not be the characteristics of successful collective enterprises, but they are notoriously present here.

The current board has seen several resignations. There is currently no treasurer. Most are inexperienced in serving on boards of nonprofits, or in community-owned organizations or in arts administration. They give the staff what it asks for (hours, raises, new hires, etc.) because they are in the staff's pocket. There are people of good will involved, but the board as a whole is a rubber stamp for the staff.

What can be done? The next general meeting is 6:30 pm May 15. If the election is decided by 40 or 50 people, as it has been in the past, we'll get more of the same. If the community has an interest and shows up in numbers great enough to manifest some diversity, things could improve.

Membership is \$15 a year or you can work it off by volunteering. You can become a member at any time before the meeting. Anyone interested in running for the board must be a member for 30 days before the meeting (by April 15).

Chico Schwall
Eugene

INVIGORATE DOWNTOWN

If Capstone wants to spend its money to build these student apartments downtown, let them. With all the services and infrastructure falling apart in this town, it is *not* in Eugene's best interest to give them a \$16 million tax break over 10 years.

Many on City Council seem to be all for it, mainly because it would increase population density downtown, a long-held community goal, and invigorate the area. That plan will work if you only want young people, fast food joints and more bars. Seems to me that we'd like to get everybody downtown, yes?

The way to re-invigorate downtown might be to have something going on down there all the time. Plant some trees on the streets and in Kesey Square, install lots of benches under those trees, allow musicians, small street businesses and food carts to open in wider sidewalk areas or empty lots. Change the restrictive law(s) against people sitting on, or even touching walls and planters. Make it clear to all where the clean public restrooms are located.

Hire some of the street people to help keep downtown clean and earn a living. Give them a good reason to be there, too! Then, just maybe, it might be more fun to come downtown and spend some time checking out what's happening. And hey, it's OK if someone wants to take a nap on one of those benches on a nice day!

Robin Bloomgarden
Eugene

WALDO AS MICROCOSM

This issue surrounding Waldo Lake (cover story, 4/29) is much more than a small debate around motorboats, but it's rather a