

downplayed in the *R-G* is that the terms of the settlement stipulated that Handy and Sorenson didn't admit any wrongdoing.

Legal minds argue the ruling was clear as mud anyway. That includes the Oregon Legislative Counsel, the agency that provides legal research for the Legislature and its members. The legislative counsel reviewed Gillespie's ruling and concluded that the judge's reasoning "does not support the conclusion that a public meeting law violation occurred."

The case could have been appealed, but the conservative county commission appeared against it, and a settlement was reached instead.

The suit was criticized as a politically motivated effort to hurt the liberal commissioners, and it worked. Fleenor, who was exonerated, did not run again for the West Lane commission seat, and Libertarian-turned-Republican Jay Bozievich took the spot in the last election.

Stahl says his issue is with "Sorenson's conduct when the 'Book Club' was established to hide the deliberations of budget committee members who met privately to line up votes for commissioners' aides, just as the county was facing budget challenges that have worsened to this day."

However, under Gillespie's ruling, which was based on "serial emails," there was no quorum that met in person and no one was found to have had an illegal "Book Club" or other meetings.

Sorenson says he decided to run again, despite the smears, because not running would "acknowledge that standing up for progressive values would mean you would be attacked, and attacked successfully." He wants to see the liberals in town not fear that running for office means they will be vilified, he says.

The lawsuit was not the only attack, and not the only one that was deemed unfounded. That suit was followed by an "investigation," later called an audit, into the Community and Economic Development Department.

"Having a review of how public funds are being spent is a good thing," Sorenson says. But he says to call it an investigation

in the paper and call out Handy and Sorenson as "commissioners under investigation," when in the end the issue had little or nothing to do with individual commissioners was troubling.

Then County Administrator Liane Richardson initiated an investigation into Handy and Sorenson for "harassment." The investigation, which cost the county thousands of dollars, included allegations that Handy and Sorenson were retaliating against Richardson, calling her a liar and giving questions to an *EW* reporter. The accusations were all found to be without evidence, and voting on issues such as Richardson's appointment as "permanent county administrator" was found to be something they were elected to do.

focusing on the allegations, not on the conclusions. It could be that wrongdoing is sexier in the paper than innocence, or it could be, as the *EW* editorial section has argued, that the daily paper still hasn't gotten over its grudge about the previous, more liberal board voting to make *EW* a newspaper of record and share in the county's advertising dollars. The *R-G* wrote the county and threatened litigation over the issue.

"He hasn't just piled on with what the timber company did, or what the right-wing Republicans did or what the daily newspaper has done," Sorenson says of Stahl, "He's piled on with all of them."

The Supporters

Sorenson's web page proudly lists unions, environmental groups and local politicians including Mayor Kitty Piercy, and City Councilors Betty Taylor, George Brown and Alan Zelenka.

Stahl has mailed out a colorful card full of praise from state legislators Reps. Val Hoyle, Phil Barnhart, Nancy Nathanson and Paul Holvey and state Sen. Floyd Prozanski.

Stahl's campaign money has come from family loans, the legislators who endorse him, the Cato Institute's Randal O'Toole and includes an in-kind contribution from Ed King of \$8,500. King is known not only for his popular King Estate Winery, but also for his business association with the controversial Greg Demers and McDougal brothers, whose companies having been mining Parvin Butte and seeking control over water from the McKenzie River (see News Briefs this issue). Stahl has said he does not supports the water grab.

Sorenson's money has largely come from unions, environmentalists and local supporters of liberal causes, like those fighting big timber, gravel companies and pro-sprawl developers. He has spoken out repeatedly against the water grab as well as on Parvin Butte.

As the Bard wrote, "Nature hath framed strange bedfellows in her time," and the Lane County Board of Commissioners is a strange bed. May the best man lie in it.

Sorenson says the positions he has taken on issues, from logging to sprawl to the Strong Schools initiative over the years have reflected the views of the people in his district but have 'infuriated really powerful interests.'

Finally there was yet another investigation into Sorenson, one he wasn't made aware of as it happened, that yet again looked into the allegations of the Seneca-funded Dumdi case. This investigation by the Washington County District Attorney also ended in dismissed allegations.

That's four unsubstantiated investigations into a liberal commissioner who votes against big money interests and for the environment. "It's ominous to have elected officials be subjected to this kind of harassment," Sorenson says.

All of these attacks were reported by the *R-G* in stories

UO Cultural Forum, Family Housing, Clark Honors College, Multicultural Center, Oregon Humanities Center, School of Journalism and Communication, Women's Center, Black Women of Achievement/BWA, and Black Student Union; plus Eugene Media Action, a Committee of Eugene PeaceWorks; Eugene Weekly; and Progressivevoices.org proudly present

Belva Davis Never in My Wildest Dreams A Black Woman's Life in Journalism

Wednesday, May 9, 2012
7 p.m. • 182 Lillis Hall
free and open to the public
Information: (541) 484-9167



EO/AA/ADA institution committed to cultural diversity



conflict

RE-ELECT

Betty Taylor

INTEGRITY
INDEPENDENCE
EXPERIENCE



ENDORSED BY

AFSCME
Oregon League of Conservation Voters
Many Rivers Group
Democratic Party of Lane County
County Commissioner Pete Sorenson
Eugene City Councilor George Brown
Eugene City Councilor Alan Zelenka