

## COMMISH HANDY SUES OPPONENT PAT FARR

North Eugene Commissioner Rob Handy is suing opponent Pat Farr. He alleges Farr is sending out false statements to voters and using false statements in his polls through the Lindholm Company.

A colorful mailer that recently landed in voters' mailboxes courtesy of a PAC supporting Farr's bid for the seat on the Lane County Board of Commissioners accuses Handy of everything from being "named in a sexual discrimination lawsuit that cost taxpayers \$244,000 dollars" to costing the county \$1 million.

According to court documents, what actually happened was that a woman named Linda Wagner sued the county and the entire board of commissioners — which is the case when someone sues the county — and the county settled with her. The case alleged discrimination based on sexual orientation, not "sexual discrimination," as is written on the mailer.

Another of the misleading accusations is that "Lane County government has paid out \$1 million in settlements in the past two years including Rob Handy's costly ethics violations." The \$1 million refers to all the lawsuits settled by Lane County, regardless of whether Handy was involved. The rest of the mailer's allegations are in a similar vein.

Kate Kelly, a spokesperson from the Handy campaign, says that Farr "has gone too far by making statements verbally, as part of pseudo polls, and in writing to voters that are not distortions but complete untruths. There has to be a line — and he has crossed it."

She adds, "This is why we are filing this suit — as a community we have to have some standards about what we will accept as part of campaign rhetoric and out-and-out lies will never be acceptable."

— Camilla Mortensen

## COUNTY CUTS AFFECT HORSES?

About six horses with chunks of their coats missing and protruding ribs were surrendered by their Springfield owner to neighbors after repeated complaints were filed against her to Lane County Animal Services (LCAS). LCAS and the Lane County Sheriff's Office are facing county budget cuts, and local equines might be falling through the cracks.

The complaints of alleged neglect by Rose Buckholtz have been an ongoing ordeal, according to LCAS Supervisor Rick Hammel.

The neighbors who filed the complaints have been taking care of the animals ever since Buckholtz gave them up, according to Darla Clark, who runs the horse rescue organization Strawberry Mountain Mustangs and has been in contact with the group of neighbors. According to Clark, some of the horses were near death and a colt was too weak to stand and had to be carried away.

Two horses currently remain with Buckholtz, says Hammel, and she has agreed to not have anymore than the two indefinitely. "To this point she's been cooperative," he says. "We'll see how she can do with these two horses."

But according to Clark, LCAS is not being aggressive enough in taking legal action.

"LCAS is not documenting these cases, and they're slipping through the cracks and they're becoming bigger and bigger problems as time moves on," she says. "It's just never resolved."

"We don't do any criminal investigations," Hammel says of LCAS.

But horse abuse and neglect is pursued and has resulted in convictions in nearby Oregon counties. Last October a woman was put in jail for six months for horse neglect in Douglas County, says Clark, and in Marion County she has worked with the sheriff, who recently had a case where the defendant received two years for neglect.

"[In areas] all around Lane County this is being taken really seriously," she says.

Hammel points to budget issues and says the Lane County Sheriff's office has been aware of the problems of neglect pertaining to this event. The problem is under investigation, according to Hammel, but he doubts legal action will be taken because of a lack of county resources. "I don't think the sheriff has detectives he can spare for a horse abuse case," he says.

— Ted Shorack

## NORTH EUGENE COMMISH RACE GONE WILD

The race for the North Eugene seat on the Lane County Board of Commissioners has become a brawl, with revelations of drunk driving and allegations of wrongdoing flying right and left.

An "emergency meeting" last week, attended only by the commission's conservative majority and County Administrator Liane Richardson, resulted in a swift vote to release to the media information related to allegations against incumbent Commissioner Rob Handy. Handy calls the allegations a "smear tactic."

The allegations that Handy illegally requested money to help pay off a debt incurred by a timber-funded open meetings lawsuit were presented in a letter from attorney Alan Thayer representing Eugene businessman and EWEB Commissioner John Brown. According to the *R-G*, Thayer and Handy's opponent in the North Eugene race, Pat Farr,

are good friends.

Handy said he checked with the county's finance department before asking supporters to assist with the debt.

Under Oregon law, emergency meetings may be held without the required 24-hour advance notice. The statute says, "In case of an actual emergency, a meeting may be held upon such notice as is appropriate to the circumstances, but the minutes for such a meeting shall describe the emergency justifying less than 24 hours' notice."

Handy's attorney, Marianne Dugan, has initiated a public records request in regard to the county's communications about the emergency meeting, drafts of Thayer's letter and communications between Thayer, Brown and Farr, and county employees.

The email received by the press giving notice of the emergency meeting was time-stamped 7:42 am May 3. The meeting was held at 9 am that day. An email was sent out to county employees notifying them of the issue by 9:45 am.

Senior Assistant County Counsel Stephen Dingle said in an email, "Oregon Public Meeting law recognizes the need for emergency meetings. ORS 192.640(3). Given the type of notice provided and that the subject matter of the meeting was confined to the topic that caused the emergency, I don't see a violation of the letter or spirit of the law."

The meeting's agenda listed "public records request" as the meeting's topic. Lane County has not yet responded to *EW*'s request to explain what made the meeting an "emergency," and the emergency designation does not appear to be explained in the video of the meeting available on the Lane County webpage. The minutes have not been released as of press time, though minutes of the board meeting the day before are available on the web.

Handy said at a Thursday press conference that the allegations were timed to hurt him in the May 15 election, for which voting is already under way. He said that the timing "was coldly and cynically planned to make sure that when the truth comes out, the election will be over." He added, "If he was truly concerned about my behavior

## Happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEL

### BRANDI FERGUSON

A Springfield native and a grad of Thurston schools, Brandi Ferguson is the granddaughter of Jack Crawford, who arrived from Tennessee after WW II and founded Crawford Logging Co. "My dad is 62 now and still logging," she says. "Two months ago, he had a double-triple bypass. Two days ago was his first day back in the woods." For 10 years, Ferguson worked at the Eugene Airport, at first for American Airlines, then for an airline consulting firm. She married, had two kids, then divorced, and still has two kids, except for every other weekend. "I started volunteering with the Eugene Stream Team," she says. "I learned about native plants and trees." Three years ago, she adopted Awbrey Park, near her home in north Eugene, and organized work parties on the first Saturday of each month, October through May, to remove invasive plants. Around the same time, she applied for a job opening at the McKenzie River Trust. "I had references from the city," says Ferguson, who landed the job, worked one year in operations, organizing events, then became development director, in charge of fundraising. "I feel very fortunate to work with amazing, generous people." Two weeks ago, Ferguson was honored with the Wegene Award by Eugene's neighborhood associations for her efforts at Awbrey Park.

