

LANE COUNTY BUDGET CUTS TO HIT HARD

Lane County's budget misery has only just begun. The county's budget committee approved the proposed budget in May, and the cuts kick in at the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1, with cuts already taking place.

Though much of the media furor has been over issues such as cuts to the jail and the sheriff's office, the cuts are hitting the public services designed to keep people out of jail and healthy just as hard. And local AFSCME union representative Jim Steiner says some of the cuts may cost more money than they save.

The Oregon secretary of state's office has chosen Lane as one of eight Oregon counties it will monitor "based upon 10 financial, economic and demographic indicators." A report released on May 31 says that on the positive side, Lane County has a low debt burden and it "also has good liquidity and the fifth largest fund balance in Oregon." On the other hand, in 2011 Lane "ranked next to last in per capita local revenues," and the county's permanent tax rate is the seventh lowest rate in Oregon. Lane is also in the bottom third of Oregon counties on public safety spending.

The Lane County jail has been issuing reports of "capacity based releases," or as the county likes to call them, CBRs, of inmates from the jail due to reduced jail beds. Who to release is decided in part by a score in a program called the "risk assessment tool" or for short, the RAT. The "score takes a plethora of data into account including the defendant/offender's current charges, past convictions and rate of failure to appear in court," according to a news release by Sgt. Carrie Carver.

Steiner, who represents the county's AFSCME union, says the recent decision by the conservative majority on the County Commission to contract out jail health care services to a health care company called Corizon instead of using union nurses could actually cost money in the long run. Steiner says the union had requested a line-by-line explanation of how contracting out to Corizon would save money despite not reducing the number of staff, but says the county "said they couldn't do that."

A health care expert's report on Corizon's work at the

Idaho State Correctional Institution says nursing mistakes or failures were likely to have resulted in some inmate deaths and one inmate wasn't told for seven months that he probably had cancer. Terminal and long-term care inmates sometimes went unfed and were left in soiled linens, the report said. If inmates were to file lawsuits over poor care, this could cost the county money, Steiner says.

He also questions the county's \$191 million in investments while spending \$5 million to \$6 million each year to pay down more than \$102 million in debt. "Why not look at liquidating some of those investments to pay off the debt?" Steiner asks. He says this question was not adequately addressed at the budget committee meeting.

County Administrator Liane Richardson did not respond to a request for comment on this before press time.

The county has more than \$3 million invested with the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA is probably best known among conservationists for building dams that threatened to wipe out the endangered snail darter. These days the TVA has solar projects, a number of coal-fired plants and several nuclear power plants as well.

— Camilla Mortensen

CIRCUS OF SOLIDARITY FOR ECOPRISONERS

The International Day of Solidarity with Eco-Prisoners is June 11, and in Eugene the event will be marked with a circus of sorts at the Wayne Morse U.S. Courthouse. Last year the day was celebrated in 30 cities around the world, according to Eugene's Civil Liberties Defense Center. Organizers say there will be jugglers, fire-breathers, stilts, music, clowns and other performers.

June 11 started as the international day of solidarity with Jeff "Free" Luers and all eco-prisoners, Luers himself says. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison for burning three SUVs at a Eugene car dealership in 2000. No one was injured in the fire. The sentence was much harsher than those imposed on other arsonists whose crimes were not politically or ecologically motivated.

Luers and the CLDC fought for, and won, a reduction in his sentence. He was released from prison in December 2009.

Luers says, "Sadly, I was not among the last to go to prison for such radical actions. June 11 is now about Marie Mason and my friend Eric McDavid." He says McDavid is serving 19 years in prison as a convicted domestic terrorist "for something that never happened, in which the jury

themselves said they didn't want to convict but felt that the judge had given them no choice."

Mason was sentenced to 22 years for her involvement in the burning of an office connected to genetically modified organism research and the destruction of a piece of logging equipment.

The event will be a circus "because the idea of justice in this country is a joke. Look at the recent Occupy uprising, people feel that injustice and inequality viscerally," Luers says. He adds the event "is a mockery of a court that dare dignifies itself with the word 'justice' when so much of what has come from it has been injustice."

Luers says events such as these do have an impact on prisoners, "And it had an impact on the people holding me too. Both positive and negative. I had guards that came in and tell me they saw my case and the protests on the news. They told me they thought I got a raw deal."

For more on the International Day of Solidarity with Eco-Prisoners go to cldc.org

— Camilla Mortensen

CONSERVATIVES GOT ADVANCE MEETING NOTICE

Is arranging an emergency meeting through serial emails and phone calls a violation of the open meetings law under the ruling by Judge Michael Gillespie? Recently released emails show the Lane County Commission's conservative majority decided to have a meeting to vote on an issue with less than 24 hours' notice. They did not contact progressive Commissioners Pete Sorenson and Rob Handy until less than an hour and half before the 9 am meeting on May 3.

The controversial ruling by Gillespie that has been used to paint Handy and Sorenson in a negative light was never appealed, because the conservative majority voted not to do so. That ruling argued that Handy, Sorenson, Faye Stewart and former commissioner Bill Dwyer used serial emails to form a quorum and deliberate. Since Stewart and Dwyer were not named in the Seneca timber-funded suit, they were not part of the case.

The Oregon Legislative Counsel, the agency that provides legal research for the state Legislature and its members, reviewed Gillespie's ruling and concluded that the judge's reasoning "does not support the conclusion that a public meeting law violation occurred." It's only a violation of the open meetings law if a quorum deliberates together in private. But the Gillespie ruling still stands as far as Lane County goes.

SPORTS

EMFC AZUL STOMPS SPOKANE, 2-0

Rain fell hard on Friday, June 1, as Eugene Metro Azul Women's Fútbol Club (EMFC) took the pitch for their first home game of the season. The stands, home to a 620-person crowd of screaming fans of all ages, became a puddle-ridden waterway only minutes after the starting whistle was blown. But the atmosphere at South Eugene High School was jovial and spirited, with feet stomping against the metal and hordes of fans engaging in chants each time the excitement level on the pitch rose.

Azul's opponents, Spokane Shine, held possession well in the opening 20 minutes, but as the first half went on, EMFC became increasingly comfortable and confident, allowing Tahne Apo to score the first Azul goal not only of the night, but also of the entire season-to-date, in the 37th minute of the first half.

The second half saw the true excitement of soccer brought to spirited fans dressed in blue. For a town that has no prior experience with women's premier soccer, the last 45 minutes of the game were intense. The crowd cheered collectively as a Spokane Shine player was knocked down during a fair but tough challenge on the wing, and several near misses in the late stages of the half had the crowd on its feet, screaming for the ball to hit the back of the net. This request was answered swiftly and smoothly with nine minutes to spare as a goalkeeping error left Spokane's posts unguarded. For Caitlyn Jobanek, the conversion was a tap-in past a lone defender to put Azul up 2-0.

Unexpectedly, Spokane began to bounce back in the closing minutes, and in stoppage time Eugene goalkeeper Lindsay Parlee put in a remarkable effort to keep her clean sheet (shared with Elise Nord) intact, aiding EMFC Azul in achieving their first victory of the season. The next game is at 7 pm Friday, June 15, at South Eugene High School versus the Portland Rain.

— Andy Valentine

ACTIVIST ALERT

- **A free screening** of the independent film, *Bag It!* will be at 3:15 pm Sunday, June 10, at the Eugene Public Library Bascom Tykeson Room. Sponsored by the Lane County Chapter of the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Surfrider Foundation and Environment Oregon. Eugene City Councilor Alan Zelenka will talk about the council discussion regarding banning plastic bags. Space is limited. To RSVP or for more information visit www.olcv.org/events or call Ashley at 968-8269.

- **Guided hikes by Oregon Wild** will include some in Lane County and the nearby Cascades this summer. See www.oregonwild.org for info and reservations and to get on the emailing list.

- Sustainability activist **Jan Spencer** of the River Road neighborhood is planning a speaking tour this June talking about "Creating a Safer, More Secure and Greener Neighborhood." The free talk begins at 7 pm Wednesday, June 13 at the Corvallis Public Library, followed by a talk at 6 pm Thursday, June 21, at the First Methodist Church, 1771 Harvard St. in Roseburg. Next, he will speak at 6 pm Wednesday, June 27, at the Pringle Creek Community, 3911 Village Center Drive SE, in Salem. He says he will be talking about "how neighborhoods, suburbia, human potential, social activation and uplifted values are all elements of creating a safer, more secure and greener neighborhood."