

# CAPSTONE RUNS INTO SNAGS

Like sands through the hourglass, so are the ongoing controversies related to the proposed 1,200-student Capstone housing project. Since the Eugene City Council approved a 10-year property tax break in May, the project has been slapped with three appeals, continued pressure regarding construction standards from nearby residents and now the lack of a sale or ownership of the property on which half the project would be built.

On hearing that Capstone was unable to reach a deal with local developer Steve Master for the site west of Olive Street, which Master has the option to purchase from PeaceHealth until May 2013, Councilor George Brown emailed the mayor, City Council and John Vawter of Capstone. "In the many statements made by Capstone representatives, I'm not aware that your representatives ever informed anyone that Capstone actually did not have purchase or development rights to what constitutes almost half of the proposed development," Brown wrote.

Brown also wrote that complete knowledge of

ownership and purchase agreements might have led the City Council to change the way they applied the Multiple-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTe) to the project, and he requested copies of all agreements regarding purchase, lease and development rights Capstone and its agents have had since the original MUPTe application, which lists Capstone as owner of the entire site.

Paul Conte, a neighborhood advocate who filed the three appeals, says the non-ownership of the west side of the proposed development, where the second phase of the project would be built, might be a ruse to try to defeat his appeal based on a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) that didn't address both phases of the project. City code requires assessments before, between and after each phase of phased projects; Capstone's TIA does not. City staff approved Capstone's TIA over Conte's objections because "these discrepancies produce more conservative results," the city's TIA approval states.

"If Capstone doesn't have some option or agreement to purchase or to be able to develop the part of the site that's on the west side of Olive Street, then they can claim that this project that their doing the TIA for really only involves the so-called phase one on the east side of Olive Street, and they could use that then, to not have to produce the

analysis of the entire project," Conte says.

Residents of Olive Plaza and other local businesses say they are concerned about Capstone's refusal to release documents relating to lead, asbestos and other potential health hazards during demolition. A bake sale at Olive Plaza raised \$200 toward the purchase of HEPA air purifiers for residents with compromised respiratory systems.

"Olive Plaza is 75 feet from the clinic site," Olive Plaza resident Barbara Goldberg says. "We all know that the site holds some toxic materials. Many of us have serious health conditions, and we see that the demolition is placing us at risk. All we are asking is that we are fully informed regarding the potentially hazardous materials on the site, that the air quality be monitored before and during the demolition that takes place by an independent, qualified company and that these materials be removed in a way that prevents risk to our health, the health of the people in our neighborhood and the rest of Eugene."

Residents of Olive Plaza and nearby businesses have formed Safe Demolition Eugene, a public interest group that is focusing on preventing airborne toxic and nontoxic dust from leaving the demolition site and contributing to health problems. See safedemo.org for info. — Shannon Finnell

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