

Fifty Shades of Betty

CITY COUNCIL RACE PITS TAYLOR AGAINST VALLE

by Shannon Finnell

When southeast Eugene voters mark their ballots in this election, they will make a familiar choice: four-term City Councilor Betty Taylor or an opponent? Taylor, a veteran progressive, is seeking her fifth term on the council, while Social Security Administration counselor Juan Carlos Valle is running in his first public election.

Taylor's supporters, such as Mayor Kitty Piercy, cite her devotion to Ward 2 and progressive causes as reasons to keep her on the council, and they point to the development interests donating record contributions to Valle's campaign as a sign of how much pro-sprawl, anti-conservation forces detest Taylor.

Valle's camp says that he's also progressive and would have a similar voting record to Taylor, and he's running because a "fresh approach" is needed on the council. They say Taylor doesn't compromise; Taylor says she doesn't compromise the values she was elected to represent.

Taylor's hair might be gray, but as her fellow Betty, Betty White, has shown, older age doesn't need to slow you down. (Betty White is three years older than Taylor.) Taylor's smart, sassy and votes for the kind of progressive values her south Eugene ward holds dear. Valle says it's all about compromise and collaboration. But when money coming into this campaign comes from conservatives, developers and timber interests, what do compromise and collaboration mean?



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Funding from the Dark Side

Ward 2 is having a rare November election because of a three-way split. Taylor got the most votes, but not more than 50 percent in the May primary between Taylor, Valle and Jim Ray. Council positions are nonpartisan and the top two from a May primary face off in November.

Lane County voters who followed the May primary County Board of Commissioners race might think this November race sounds familiar: A long-serving progressive facing a self-proclaimed progressive challenger who describes himself as more collaborative is exactly what happened when Commissioner Pete Sorenson fended off Andy Stahl.

No, Sorenson says — there's a big difference in the funding. "Betty's opponent has gotten a substantial amount of money from what I would call the dark side," he says, invoking *Star Wars*. "We're talking major Repub-

lican money." He says his May opponent was mostly funded by two donors, one of them Stahl's father.

Valle's campaign manager is former progressive councilor David Kelly, and his largest contributor (\$4,238) is Kelly's wife, Jane Kelly, but other donors contributing to his campaign are far less progressive.

Development and real estate-related interests that have donated to Valle include the Eugene Association of Realtors, developer Dan Neal, Anslow & DeGeneault, Inc., Bennett Management Company (commercial and large-scale apartment management), Jean Tate of Windermere Real Estate and real estate consultant Hubert J. Prichard.

Timber executives Dan Giustina and Joe Gonyea III also contributed to Valle's campaign, as did the Community Action Network (CAN), a political action committee that supports conservative groups. CAN's funding sources include a long list of timber interests

like the Giustinas, Delta Sand and Gravel, Seneca Jones, Oregon Family Farm Association PAC and Healthy Communities Initiative (which donated \$22,643 to help defeat 2010's proposed local tax for Eugene 4J schools). The Oregon Family Farm Association PAC, in turn, has received \$107,500 from conservative mega-donor Loren Parks in 2012 alone.

At press time, Valle's campaign had broken Eugene's record for campaign spending in a City Council race by spending \$27,940.23.

"These are people substantially outside of Ward 2 who are trying to influence the election in Ward 2," Sorenson says.

Sorenson says it's not hard to see why conservatives and timber and development interests are donating to Valle. "They're upset with Betty Taylor for her advocacy for the environment, for her advocacy for the Amazon headwaters, for her advocacy for the