

COUNTY ADMIN ALTERS PLAZA RULES

Government agencies like to release bad news on Fridays and sneak bad rules in over the Christmas holidays, the wisdom goes, because there's less of a chance that anyone will notice on the weekend or on a week off. County Administrator Liane Richardson appears to have made significant changes about access to the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza in Lane County's Administrative Procedures Manual (APM) at the beginning of the Christmas holidays.

Activist Alley Valkyrie was arrested on Thursday, Dec. 13, for allegedly violating the closure of the Free Speech Plaza. By Dec. 17 the access rules had been tightened in the manual.

Dec. 17 was actually a Monday before Christmas, but it would have been hard for the public to know about the changes to the manual because it isn't available online. Commissioner Pete Sorenson says the Lane County Board of Commissioners has discussed putting the manual online Jan. 15, and referred it to the Policies and Procedures Committee.

In what appears to be the first revision since 2006 of the portion of the APM dealing with public use of county facilities, dated and signed by Richardson on Dec. 17, rather than saying "any such speech activity should generally occur" between 6 am and 11 pm in the Free Speech Plaza, the word "generally" was removed and changed to "permitted only." Also added was "unless otherwise authorized by the county administrator in writing" and that unauthorized use would be charged as trespass under Lane Code 6.025.

Valkyrie and other protesters, who were arrested later, were actually charged under Eugene's municipal code.

Eighteen of the 21 people arrested for asserting their free speech rights in the plaza on Jan. 7 (after the APM changes were made) were arraigned on Jan. 28 and asked for individual trials.

Among the myriad changes were also statements that rather than being charged for clean-up if litter was left behind, those accused of littering after a protest may also be charged with a crime. Richardson also added an amendment that states, in part, "the county administrator may amend this procedure at any time as required, either temporarily or permanently."

The Free Speech Plaza is, as Civil Liberties Defense Center attorney Lauren Regan has asserted, "a traditional public forum," which she says makes it harder for the government



to limit protest activities there. Regan has challenged free speech limits in the federal plaza and plans to challenge the county's limits are said to be in the works.

County attorney Stephen Dingle has informed Valkyrie that she cannot enter county buildings without written permission due to her trespass charge in the plaza. She has been told she needs an escort, but also that the county does not have the funds for an escort. In an email to Dingle, she questioned how the county had the funds to consider giving Dingle a "huge raise" but not the resources for an escort.

Valkyrie says, "Four days after my arrest, the county administrator rewrote the APM, granting herself the power to temporarily amend the administrative rules at any time without having to follow the amendment procedures." She adds that when the county administrator was faced with having to deal with a protest group she didn't like, "not only did she violate their constitutional rights by closing the plaza and enforcing a curfew, she further responded by granting herself the power to curtail anyone's constitutional rights on the plaza without any oversight whatsoever. If that's not a blatant abuse of power and authority, I don't know what is."

Liane Richardson and a county spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment before press time. — Camilla Mortensen

'If that's not a blatant abuse of power and authority, I don't know what is.'

— ALLEY VALKYRIE

NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS EXONERATED

Neighborhood associations: not full of criminals. That was the finding of a city of Eugene investigation into whether three neighborhood associations tried to extort money from a local developer.

On April 11, 2012, City Councilor Chris Pryor initiated an investigation (voted for by the Eugene City Council) of three neighborhood associations based on a March 28 R-G story called "One Man's 'Extortion' is Others' 'Tradeoff,'" in which a developer characterized settlement talks between four individuals involved in Jefferson Westside Neighbors, South University Neighborhood Association and West University Neighbors and the attorney of a developer as extortion.

According to the minutes, Pryor said that he'd received many constituent contacts regarding the story, and because the investigation would likely take more than two hours of staff time, he wanted the council's endorsement. In a June 25 response to a records request, Pryor wrote that he received no emails, letters or phone calls about the matter prior to the April 11 meeting, but he had a couple of conversations with his wife and individuals not involved in the development industry.

The report finds that no neighborhood associations were

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ACTIVIST ALERT

- A meeting with the **LaurelRidge PUD** planning consultant is planned for 6 pm Thursday, Jan. 31, at the Comfort Suites Hotel at the I-5 Glenwood interchange. This meeting is to view the current development plans for the 126 acres southwest of Laurel Hill Valley adjacent to 30th Avenue near Spring Boulevard.

- The Oregon State Aviation Board will be holding a public hearing regarding **Waldo Lake and seaplanes** from 6 to 8 pm Thursday, Jan. 31, in the Ken Long Room at the Willamalane Center, 250 S. 32nd St., Springfield. Board members' contact information can be found at <http://wkly.ws/1f4>

- **BLM workshops** on current Resource Management Planning are being held around the state and the Lane County meeting will be from 4:30 to 8:30 pm Thursday, Jan. 31, at the Springfield Public Library, 225 N. 5th St. Surveys can also be found online at <http://wkly.ws/1f2>

- The third annual **Black History Month Banquet** will be from 7 pm to 8:30 pm Friday, Feb. 1, at the Valley River Inn with a social hour beginning at 5:30 pm. Rudy Crew, Oregon's chief education officer, will speak on "Why Inclusion Matters in Education." The other keynote speaker will be Nate Miles, vice president for strategic initiatives at Eli Lilly and Company. Tickets are \$75. For reservations, call 852-9782.

- A neighborhood open house on **Willamette Street options** has been scheduled for 7 pm Tuesday, Feb. 5, at Washington Park Cottage, 2025 Washington St. The meeting will include a formal presentation followed by a discussion of design options which may include removing on-street parking, adding bike lanes, and making other changes to improve transportation on this section. Email reed.c.dunbar@ci.eugene.or.us for more information.

- **Friends of Trees** is organizing tree planting around the valley this winter. The next planting dates are Feb. 9 and March 2. See friendsoftrees.org for details or to donate.

- A gathering led by community organizer Chrissy Peirsol will look at **ideas for Creative Maladjustment Week** coming up in July. The free forum will be from 5:30 to 7 pm Wednesday, Feb. 6, at Growers Market, 454 Willamette. Sponsored by MindFreedom International. Call 345-9106.

- The Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) is now accepting nominations for its first-ever **Community Hero Award**, launched on Jan. 10. The award aims to honor individuals across the Northwest who are leading innovative efforts to reduce pesticide use in their communities. Deadline for nominations is March 1. See pedsticide.org or email kkis@pesticide.org