

- **What about that flat fee** measure that is expected to be on Eugene's May ballot, competing with other money measures? We're trying to keep an open mind, waiting to hear all the arguments. But as a very practical matter, maybe the city should take another look at the measure considering that the fee is opposed by both Mike Clark, the most conservative member of the City Council, and Betty Taylor, the most liberal member of the council. If elements of both the left and right rally to oppose this measure (and we hear the left is already organizing) that's not a good sign for passage. A more progressive version of this measure might have a better chance of voter approval.

- **Bonny Bettman McCornack's** column Feb. 7 generated some good letters about city taxes and fees. Keep them coming. When McCornack was on the City Council she pushed for numerous reforms to improve city finances, such as bringing city legal services in-house. She called for more transparency and an independent performance auditor. She insisted tax breaks for developers were bad economic policy, and a recent nationwide analysis of tax incentives by *The New York Times* validated her concerns (see Slant, 12/6/12). McCornack tells us she appreciates feedback. Email her at bonbet@comcast.net

- Our Feb. 14 "**Gay Friendly?**" article about the difficulty of Eugene's gay male dating scene certainly struck a nerve. Responses ranged from, "It's what's driving me towards graduation. I need to get out into a city with queer spaces," to "Who cares, move to Portland, Seattle or San Francisco if the climate here isn't hospitable enough," to "I really don't want to hear or read about homosexual activity of any kind." Several readers point out the financial aspect: "There would be more gay bars or gay places if patrons supported them."

A letter to the editor this week states that *EW* missed that "There is a movie group, a men's potluck group, a sports group and every Wednesday at Cowfish a regular meet-up." However, several sources under 30 in the gay community say they don't feel comfortable going to these groups that cater to older men. Lesbians have also expressed frustration; one woman explains, "It does not feel safe being leered at and mocked by drunks," at a monthly lesbian bar dance.

So, what's going on Eugene? Two things are certain: Eugene still has far to go to make minority groups feel safe, and *EW* will not stop writing about any group of people, even if it makes some readers uncomfortable.

- **Steve Wright**, recently retired CEO of Bonneville Power Administration, spoke to City Club of Eugene Feb. 15 and invited young people "to come into this industry." BPA, with 3,100 employees, has "huge turnover" and they need engineers, economists, biologists, environmental specialists and more. Wright said internships are available through a process similar to federal programs. His advice: Go to the website. Remember, too, the challenge ahead to "merge economic success and ecological health" for the public utility that provides 40 percent of the energy used in Oregon.

- Will our local legislators step up with a bill to **protect Waldo Lake from floatplanes**? We asked that question in Slant two weeks and we heard this week from Sen. Floyd Prozanski who tells us, "Yes. Sen. Lee Beyer, Rep. Paul Holvey and I are co-chief sponsors of SB 602 that will outright prohibit motor-propelled craft on Waldo Lake." An amendment is being considered that would allow electric motors. Prozanski notes that 21 other lakes in Oregon have this protection. "We started working on the bill in January and it is worth noting that 16 other senators and 18 representatives have signed on as co-sponsors." he says. Good to hear.

- It's great to see the long-awaited **Nobel Peace Park** taking shape in Alton Baker Park on the north side of the DeFazio Bicycle Bridge. We hear the individual Nobel laureate plaques will be installed soon. One Oregonian, Linus Pauling, will be among the Americans honored. See a photo in Slant on our website.

- We heard about a **funny glitch** at a February dance at a Eugene middle school. The DJ plugged his iPhone into the sound system for the jumpin' sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. But every time he got a text message, the music stopped. How did the kids react? They yelled, of course. "Airplane mode" appears to be the solution of choice, allowing use a smart phone for music or games without being connected to web or phone service. You can also disable alerts. Rock on without interruption.

SLANT INCLUDES SHORT OPINION PIECES, OBSERVATIONS AND RUMOR-CHASING NOTES
 COMPILED BY THE EW STAFF. HEARD ANY GOOD RUMORS LATELY?
 CONTACT TED TAYLOR AT 484-0519, EDITOR@EUGENEWEEKLY.COM

lighten up

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

According to the new city ordinance governing student parties, a lot of law-breaking can go on at these events: "Some of the typical offenses include obstruction of public streets, assault, menacing, harassment, disorderly conduct and criminal mischief." And those are just the offenses committed by the police.

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and Recreation Department must be notified of activities proposed within a quarter mile of the bank such as cutting trees, mining and constructing roads, railroads, utilities, buildings or other structures.

The scenic waterways system was created by a citizens' initiative in 1970 and was last updated in 1988.

Both public and private lands fall into the area proposed for protection that ends just above Finn Rock, and Armendariz explains, "This isn't a land grab; this is an opportunity to form a collaboration between folks that are good stewards of the land already; it protects waterways adjacent to their property. Landowners have control."

Armendariz says the bill will protect rivers that are "national treasures," and adds, "I see it as a win-win all the way around." — *Camilla Mortensen*

TEACHERS CONCERNED OVER 3X5 SCHEDULE

A majority of South Eugene High School teachers sent a letter to the 4J School Board Feb. 19 asking the board to reconsider implementing the 3x5 schedule at all high schools next year. Several teachers were expected to raise these concerns at the Feb. 20 board meeting.

At least one teacher from International High School (IHS) also planned to speak at the meeting after a dozen IHS teachers signed a letter to the board outlining concerns about the schedule.

In their letter, the South teachers expressed concern that switching to a 3x5 schedule (three trimesters of five classes daily) from the current 2x7 schedule (two semesters of seven classes daily) will result in educational deficiencies, according to teacher Barbara Hascall. Under the 3x5 schedule, most students would get a year of coursework over two trimesters, resulting, the teachers say, in two weeks less instructional time, fewer opportunities for teachers to develop relationships with students, and less choice.

The new schedule, they say, will also complicate lesson planning, create gaps in instruction and make it harder to keep students focused (classes will go from the current 50 minutes to 70 minutes).

North Eugene High School teachers sent a similar letter to the board last month.

South's teachers delayed voicing their concerns to the board while waiting to see if the Eugene Education Association (EEA) would oppose the change on contractual grounds; last month, EEA decided against doing so.

Superintendent Sheldon Berman has touted a common high school schedule for several reasons, chief among them giving teachers more opportunities to collaborate, reducing class size, and saving money as 4J anticipates \$12 million to \$21 million in additional budget cuts in 2013-14. Teachers counter that the new schedule would provide less collaboration time and purported savings won't happen because the budget shortfall may erase significant class size reductions.

South's teachers' concerns arose, in part,

after discussions with teachers at Churchill, which implemented the 3x5 schedule this year.

"The board must always give serious consideration to teachers' opinions when policy changes impact the classroom," Board Chair Jennifer Geller said, responding to the letter. "We also have a responsibility to consider a range of other factors, including ensuring that students have equitable educational opportunities and looking for ways to provide excellent education in extraordinarily challenging financial times." She added, "No schedule is perfect, but some schedules are less costly and allow for smaller classes without adding staff." — *Anne Bridgman*

OREGON RIPE FOR AGGIE BONDS?

It's no big secret that Oregon's farmer population is aging. On the other hand, increasing demand for locally produced food provides opportunities for a new generation of sustainably minded growers to develop successful farms — if they can get financing, that is.

A group of farmers and agriculture experts recently testified before the state Legislature on the difficulties small farmers, especially those new to the profession, face getting the credit necessary to purchase farmland or farm equipment. Though some Oregon farmers may qualify for the federal Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Loans program, the state does not have its own credit program to assist inexperienced farmers break into the business.

On Feb. 12, the Oregon House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources held a hearing on HB 2700, which would create a Beginning and Expanding Farmer Loan Program to help farmers with less than 10 years experience buy land, equipment, livestock and seed. The program would utilize private bonds exempt from federal taxes, known as "aggie bonds," which can be bundled with existing FSA lending programs and can lower loan interest rates by as much as 25 percent. Sixteen states already offer aggie bonds.

"The economic downturn and the credit crisis have erected new barriers for those seeking to purchase or refinance farmland," wrote Michael Selvaggio, policy director for the Oregon State Treasury in testimony supporting the measure. "House Bill 2700 would take direct aim at these barriers, helping to provide low-cost farm loans to credit-worthy borrowers who may not otherwise be able to get them."

"I'm cautiously optimistic we're going to get this done this year," says Ivan Maluski, policy director for the Molalla-based Friends of Family Farmers, which is lobbying for the bill. "We had a good hearing on Tuesday. It was the first bill that had a hearing in the agriculture and natural resources committee. It has good bi-partisan support."

Maluski describes the program as a "no brainer" that should pay for itself in loan fees after it is up and running. Representatives from the FSA, Oregon Farmers' Markets Association, OSU's Small Farms Program and Oregon Rural Action all provided testimony in support of the bill. — *Ephraim Payne*