

\$282 I owe into life-affirming programs here in Oregon. I will be giving money to Habitat for Humanity, Beyond Toxics, Planned Parenthood, Nature Conservancy, FOOD for Lane County and the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Council.

I believe if everyone who was against war would stop paying for it by resisting some of their tax dollars it would send a strong statement to the president and our government. Please consider joining me.

*Susan P. Barnhart
Eugene*

DO THE RIGHT THING

We as a community need to vote yes on the proposed city fee, Measure 20-211. This will at least maintain our current level of services for our residents. We are a caring city and I have been proud to see our city through the years do the right thing. We need to pass this measure to continue our support of our library, fire fighters, pools, parks and help for the homeless.

This measure is a way to cover the city's budget shortfall caused by lesser revenues from property taxes due to the economy. Opponents have objected to it being a flat tax without mentioning that the council is committed to providing relief to our low-income families by waiving the fee and/or reducing the fee. It should be clear also that the council is not expecting to need the full \$10 a month fee for the first year. The whole purpose is to allow for some stable funding for our future and to increase up to the \$10 fee limit when needed.

We should approve this measure now. It was very disappointing to read the opponent's misleading comments and throwing suspicion on our council members as to their motives. The council has come up with a good solution to avoid hardship and deserves our support.

*Ruth Miller
Eugene*

PAIN PILL PROBLEM

In response to your cover story March 28 on opiate abuse in the Northwest: The writer failed to mention an even bigger problem that individuals like myself have had to face — what addicts have done to the medical system in Lane County.

I am all for helping people with their addictions; but because of all these opiate addicts, people like myself who have real chronic pain issues have to deal with pain and suffering on a daily basis. Local doctors are so paranoid of losing their licenses to practice that they profile and judge everyone who requests help with pain. Innocent people like myself are now being treated like addicts. I have had chronic pain problems for over three years and I have been thrown into the pile of abusers and treated like an addict. I have been told that I am addicted to opiates and that I am an IV drug user and worse.

Our hospitals are flooded with people screaming and yelling about how they need opiates for whatever they have made up that day to try to get their fix. So people like myself suffer neglect. Sacred Heart's ER even posts signs in the lobby saying they will only treat acute pain, not chronic pain. We are treated like crap and there's nothing we can do to defend our real pain problems. So even though I would like to help these addicts I wish they would stop acting out almost anything to try and fool doctors into believing they have some type of pain problem.

So I say get over your addiction however you can and get a life because you are screwing up many other people's lives with your sad excuse of addiction.

*William Jones
Eugene*

IN DEFENSE OF HANDY

The R-G editors would be well advised to take their own advice and try to see things from another person's point of view. In my conversations with Rob Handy, who was my North Eugene commissioner and for whom I voted, I never detected the arrogant pride the editors imply. He listened while projecting interest, humility and strength of character. The editors see some sort of hubris-fueled tilting at windmills, while I see a man standing on principle.

Make no mistake, the original lawsuit brought by a former commissioner and a timber company was, from this voter's point of view, an attempt to put the progressive commissioners in their place and by extension to remind those who voted for Rob Handy that their votes didn't amount to a hill of beans when compared to the political power of a timber company.

Why didn't the former commissioner offer her experience and wisdom over coffee to the newest sitting commissioner? She could have explained what she thought was wrong. Why go immediately to the hugely costly option of a lawsuit? How many of us have started a new job, no matter how skilled or talented we might be, who could not benefit from the advice of someone who previously held the job? And then to be sued instead — how does this lead to anything good?

When Handy was apportioned \$20,000 of the legal fees, it seemed to me that everyone who had voted for Rob was being fined. The former commissioner had the deep pockets of a timber company to keep her skin out of the game. It seems only reasonable that the North Eugene constituents who voted for Handy, while none may have deep pockets, could at least combine their many pockets to stand up for the commissioner we elected. But then I suppose we as a nation have decided that corporations are exalted people and when a corporation chooses to put mere

voters in their place it is the duty of the press to "see things" from the corporation's point of view.

*Ramona McCall
Eugene*

KEEP SCHOOL OPTION

I agree that the open enrollment law should be allowed to run for the full five-year term, as outlined in the original law [see Slant 4/4]. While this law was passed in 2011, it didn't take effect until September 2012, so the actual consequences are only being seen now.

Open enrollment has been the single bright spot in the funding of the Pleasant Hill School District since 1992, when Ballot Measure 5 took local control of school funds away from school districts. Our school enrollment went up 8 percent this year (after declining by 50 percent over the past 20 years). Because Measure 5 allocates funds to districts for each student they have, declining enrollment — caused by *closed* enrollment, an aging population, and restrictive land use laws — has devastated our school district. We had to close half the school buildings and crowd into the remaining two school buildings. Our forestry, culinary arts, business and drama programs are gone. Construction technology, music and foreign language programs have been gutted. School days have been cut.

I challenge any adult over the age of 32 to say that today's Oregon public schools are better than they were in 1992. School choice is nice for parents, but the pertinent issue is that local districts have no control over their revenue, and so either Ballot Measure 5 needs to be repealed, or we need to start talking about a statewide sales tax that will be used to stop underfunding education in this state.

*Dana O'Leary-Parrish
Pleasant Hill*

VIEWPOINT BY GEORGE BROWN

Why I Changed My Mind

PASSING THE FEE WOULD DELAY STRUCTURAL CHANGE

In mid-March, forced by a serious bout of pneumonia to spend quiet time at home, I was able to more closely examine budget and other documents and to reassess my advocacy for the proposed city service fee. After much calm reflection, I concluded that I personally, and council majority collectively, had made a mistake in focusing solely on the "revenue-raising" option as the preferred strategy to address the projected

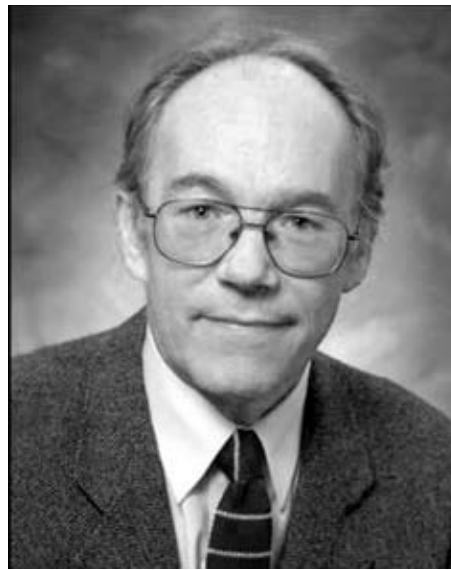
General Fund imbalance.

Council first learned details of the fee proposal at the Dec. 10 work session. Had council been informed of the fee idea in July when the Strategic Research Institute first polled likely voters to test their support of a city service fee, we would have had several months to examine the idea and to explore other remedies to the budget problem.

As I looked at the issue more deeply, I realized that my initial support was based on several false premises:

The idea that the only solution to the budget imbalance is to raise revenue via a city service fee is false. There are other choices, and the full Budget Committee will closely examine them if the ballot measure fails.

The notion that there is simply no money left to fund the "threatened" services is false. A partial list of places to look for re-prioritization of spending would include:



- Recent history of departmental end-of-year fund balances

- The city's share of the Riverfront Urban Renewal District fund balance and ongoing yearly diversion of tax receipts from the General Fund

- Money currently spent on neighborhood and citywide "visioning" and "economic development" projects

- The reserve for revenue shortfall fund balance

If the measure fails, the manager, council and staff will be forced to re-examine how the city prioritizes General Fund spending and to initiate a

fundamental restructuring.

If the measure passes, it will be viewed as a validation of current practices, and the manager, council and staff will see no reason to make a deep structural change. This is why I'm opposing the fee.

George Brown is a Eugene city councilor representing Ward 1.