

you think? What does your son or daughter think? What about your grandchildren? Give it some thought. And think about how this affects people. If it feeds just one person's justification for abusing the next little girl or woman, or makes one female think that that is her worth or one male think that that is what women are, what price are we paying for that ad? (The ad depicts a woman's backside, from the waist down, leaning forward, with her hands on either side of her bottom.)

Jean Denis
Eugene

CRIME VS. BABYSITTING

The new social host ordinance that passed last month needs to be amended. The new law is directed toward university students throwing unruly parties in a way to deter underage drinking and protect the safety of the public. The example we were given [Letters, 3/28] of well over 150 students is completely absurd. Intoxicated students pouring into the streets comes with nothing good to follow. Expecting low-income students to pay for police response is not practical. I find citations of up to \$1,000 in the right ballpark, but not when you tack on excessive fees at the

discretion of the police.

Nearly the entire Eugene police force responded to the party on campus last month for concerns of safety, as many students became unruly pushing officers and running from authority in different directions. This, however, needs to be handled on a case-by-case basis. A gathering of five people does not compare to one of hundreds of minors under the influence. These sorts of parties need a more reasonable approach with permits and bouncers checking IDs at the door to keep the police where they need to be — fighting crime, not babysitting.

Keith Armstrong
Springfield

THE TRUE COST

The Lowell School Board will be considering proposals from for-profit private companies contracting out the district's student transportation. Instead of the reliable service provided by the district, our children's transportation may soon be provided by the lowest bidder. The winner would undoubtedly reduce compensation and benefits for the existing drivers and hire less experienced, lower-paid drivers from outside the community. The district

would also sell its bus fleet to the new contractor, effectively locking the district into a permanent commitment.

The district faces difficult budget decisions, but is it really more cost effective to make this drastic and irreversible change? The UO's Labor Education and Research Center has studied other districts that have contracted out and found costs are almost always higher in the long term than they would have been if transportation had stayed in-district. The district's analysis of contracting out does not represent the true cost of handing over control of its bus services.

Besides, the true value of this service cannot be weighed in dollars and cents; it may only be weighed by the confidence Lowell parents have in their drivers. All of the bus drivers — myself included — are highly skilled and trained professionals. The senior bus drivers have a combined record of more than 50 years of faithful service. Lowell parents can have complete confidence in us because we have invested many years in the children and people we serve. This could all go away if a private company takes over.

Jef Jalof
Lowell

A FADING VISION

Thanks to Pete Helzer for the nice photograph that graced *EW*'s front cover April 4 of crew rowing practice on Dexter Lake with Parvin Butte rising in the background. But future participants in the regatta won't enjoy that same view; and already the butte is shorter than when the photo was taken a year ago.

Greg Demers and Melvin and Norman McDougal, dba Lost Creek Rock Products, continue to carve away at Parvin Butte. Their plan remains to remove the entire butte and leave a gravel pit in 20 years. They are still permitted to operate 10 hours per day, six days per week with no limits on noise or dust. The nearby residents in Dexter have not regained their property rights or value, nor their peace of mind.

Please join the communities of Dexter and Lost Valley in efforts to save Parvin Butte. Contact the Dexter-Lost Valley Community Association at saveparvinbutte.org.

Phil Robbins
Dexter

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VIEWPOINT BY CLAIRE SYRETT

Difficult Choices

HOW DO WE FILL A REAL AND IMMEDIATE NEED?

The proposed city fee is the subject of much debate in our community. Many community members remain undecided. Voters deserve some clarity about the proposed fee and a response to the critics who say it is not needed.

The Eugene Cares campaign, comprised of dedicated volunteers, believes this fee proposal is a modest, practical way to address a continuing structural deficit in our city's General Fund (GF). The GF is the way we pay for most basic city services including police, fire, libraries, parks maintenance, recreation programs, neighborhood services and human services. This fund has experienced growing gaps between revenues and expenses over the past four years. Every budget cycle since the recession, the Eugene city manager has warned the council that this gap must be addressed. But in the wake of the recession, rather than asking voters for new revenues, the council found other means to close the gap and continue funding services without impacting residents. These included cutting positions (some were vacant, but others cut after retirements and staff departures), finding efficiencies like combining our fire department with Springfield's, and cutting back on salaries and benefits, including implementing furloughs. Only last year did the city cut any direct services. These strategies are not sustainable. This year we need to make some difficult choices and are asking voters to help make them.

If passed the city service fee will raise \$5.3 million which will be deposited in a separate fund and dedicated to funding police, fire, human services, parks, pools and libraries. A citizen oversight committee will monitor the expenditure of these funds. The fee will be reviewed in five years for elimination or revision. The fee itself will be no more than \$10 a month per residence and \$30 for business and will likely be much less.

Critics of this fee have raised a number of issues, some valid, others red herrings. One real issue is that the fee is a flat fee which hits everyone the same regardless of ability to pay. To mitigate this regressive effect, the council adopted a low-income relief requirement for the fee to help reduce the burden those who most need the vital services this fee is meant to preserve.

Critics go on to assert that the money raised will not be used to fund the services listed beyond Fiscal Year 2014. This has no basis in fact. It is simply an attempt to undermine voter confidence in the fee. The citizen oversight committee will ensure accountability for how the money is used just as the city has done with the road bond.

Critics maintain that there are other ways to close the gap, including using reserves, ending the Riverfront Urban Renewal District and selling city parks to housing developers. While some of these strategies might fill the gap in the short term they would undermine the city's financial stability and do nothing to address the continuing structural deficit in our GF. We would use up our savings in a couple of years, still have the budget gap and place our city's financial standing in jeopardy. Other cities that have used similar stop-gap measures are now facing bankruptcy.

Lastly, and perhaps most cynically, the critics claim that if the fee fails the council will still find ways to fund the services listed in the ordinance. This too is pure speculation. It is not clear that the council will find consensus on how to fill the gap this year or in subsequent years should voters reject the fee. Three councilors, including myself, have stated we would cut

programs rather than continue to use one-time money for on-going services. Others say they will propose the strategies already mentioned here. But those strategies do not have majority support on the council so there is no reason to believe they will be successful.

While the council is not united in supporting the fee, a strong majority wanted to let voters decide, so on May 21 you will have your say. Voters may find it challenging to wade through the arguments of the fee critics but voters also understand the value of keeping our vital city services. The fee seeks to fill a real and immediate need while providing stability for our city's future. Eugene Cares is asking voters to pass the fee so we can keep our city vibrant and our most vulnerable cared for. We recognize the challenge before us, but we also understand the impact of losing our valued services. We know Eugene cares and will step up to meet this challenge by voting "yes" on the city service fee. ■

Claire Syrett is a Eugene city councilor representing Ward 7. This commentary is submitted on behalf of the Eugene Cares for Neighbors and Community campaign.

