

RED INK LEGACY

During a *work session*, the Eugene City Council — with strong support from Mayor Kitty Piercy — voted 6-2 to demolish City Hall and to construct a new one. In making this truly momentous decision, councilors studied a cost approximation prepared from “conceptual” data provided by the city’s hired architectural firm. How long did the council deliberate over these numbers? Months? Weeks? No. Mere minutes. Would a private citizen so conduct his affairs?

The council’s decision spends tens of millions of taxpayer dollars and condemns the city, perhaps permanently, to be a renter. Currently, Eugene spends \$1.2 million per year in rent that we didn’t when City Hall was functional. Obviously, Piercy and six councilors are unperturbed by the thought of burning \$24 million over 20 years — and having nothing but rental receipts to show for it.

Demolishing City Hall razes the likelihood of escaping tenant-hood: great news for the city’s landlords — but not for citizens. So who do the mayor and six councilors really represent?

The Hyundai/Hynix debacle should have been a lesson. Not so, apparently, for Mayor Piercy and “yes” voting Councilors George Poling, Alan Zelenka, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Claire Syrett and Chris Pryor.

If ever citizens have had an issue upon which to base their votes, this is it.

I salute opposing Councilors George Brown and Betty Taylor who asked for non-biased information — and time to study it.

Yes, the mayor will get a plaque in the new City Hall. But her legacy won’t be etched there — it will be swirling through our streets within a river of red ink.

Jayme Vasconcellos
Eugene

PAY-STUB QUANDARY

Too many people are homeless because they don’t make three times the rent. Actually they do but can’t prove it because some of their income is in cash and the nosy landlord/rental agency wants to see a bank transcript. Many legitimate professionals may not even have a bank account — waiters, hairdressers, musicians, babysitters, flea-market sellers, plasma donors — all get paid in cash, no pay-stub anywhere. Many shrewd city dwellers can live efficiently enough so as to make this nasty three-times-the-rent consumerist formula an inappropriate form of discrimination.

We need an arrogant-landlord override law: If you can show five-plus years of responsible tenancy, no evictions, crime, etc., they can not deny you shelter.

In the meantime, everyone reading this: Tell off your stupid landlord. At cocktail parties, at the market, around town when you see him or her, say “Hey, make it easier for decent people to get shelter, you ruthless tyrant!”

Too many are homeless here for no good reason!

Kelly Blair
Eugene

UO PARANOIA

A time honored tradition at the UO of Saturday figure drawing is about to be terminated due to issues by the UO concerning liability. The three-hour figure drawing sessions have been available to the public and students alike for at least 42 years, perhaps longer.

The issues raised concern a possible model “who might be an exhibitionist” or an artist “who might have wrong thoughts” and that there is not a university representative there to monitor the sessions.

I have to wonder if this is not an overreaction on the part of the UO to the recent rape scandal. With even President Obama commenting on campus rape issues, perhaps a witch hunt fervor is taking place that is targeting anything that could be perceived as adding to “rape culture.”

While the issue of campus rape is

deadly serious and a problem, I think the UO would be better off educating incoming freshman men and women about the issue and ending the preferential treatment of student athletes, where the athletes may perceive themselves entitled and act accordingly.

In my five years of attending the sessions, I have never seen a case where either an artist or a model have acted inappropriately. We even have artists that are also models, so I’m sure that they wouldn’t model if they felt threatened. Models depend on the extra income and one has gone on to model as a full-time profession. The UO figure sessions have had models of all shapes and sizes, both male and female, ranging in age from 20s to 60s. The artists themselves are multigenerational, enjoy sharing techniques and the general camaraderie of artists.

Perhaps the UO would consider a liability waiver signed by both artists and models? Let’s not end what has been a tradition of artists for centuries with an overzealous and misguided reaction.

Scott Fife, artist
Eugene

BURDEN OF PROOF

EW had an article Sept. 25 explaining how Measure 88 would allow Oregon to issue four-year driver’s licenses to those who cannot prove they are in the country legally.

VIEWPOINT BY STEFAN OSTRACH

Our Rigged Elections

‘TOP TWO’ OPEN PRIMARY WOULD BE MORE DEMOCRATIC

Why should I have to pay taxes for primary elections when I can’t vote in them? I’m registered with a minor party — not the Democrats nor the Republicans. Members of the Working Families Party, like me, and members of the Pacific Green Party, the Libertarian and others have to pay the bill for the two major parties’ closed primaries. So do independent voters not registered with any party.

Thirty percent of all voters and almost half of young voters are not registered with the Ds or the Rs. More than 650,000 of us are shut out of the partisan primaries, where lots of elections are decided. Many of this year’s races for the Oregon Legislature are already over. According to the Secretary of State’s website, only one major candidate will be on the ballot in five of the 16 Senate districts up for election. The same is true in 20 of the 60 House districts. Nearly one-third of the Legislature has been chosen before any independent or minor party voter has had a chance to participate.

Even worse, the Ds and Rs have used the legislative redistricting process over the years to create a state full of “safe districts” where the winner of the major party primary is virtually guaranteed victory in the general election. In the last election, by the time the general election came around, most all attention (and money) was focused on just five “swing districts.” If Oregon were a separate nation that let so few voters choose its leaders, we’d consider it undemocratic.

This November we will have a chance to vote on Measure 90, which would put in place a “top two” open primary system. If Yes on 90 wins, the Ds and Rs will no longer dominate the primaries. All candidates from all

parties will appear on one primary ballot. All registered voters will get a ballot, and the two candidates getting the most votes will face off in the general election. Voters in every district will have a choice. The election process will be much more democratic (small d).

While The Working Families Party of Oregon supports Measure 90, other political parties are lining up in opposition. Democratic and Republican party insiders don’t want to give up their monopoly control of the primaries. Minor parties like the Pacific Greens oppose Initiative 55 because they will no longer be able to nominate third candidates for the general election. Unlike these splinter or spoiler parties that want to maintain ideological purity and never have a chance of winning, the Working Families Party is realistic and pragmatic. We are willing to give up the ability to nominate a general election candidate on our own for the opportunity to endorse candidates in both primary and the general elections who share our values.

The top two open primary proposed for Oregon is significantly different from the systems in place in California and Washington. If Measure 90 is adopted here, political parties will still have an important role. The ballot will show the party, if any, in which the candidate is registered, and it will also show which parties have endorsed which candidates. To choose which candidates to endorse, the Republicans and the Democrats and other parties can still organize (and pay for) their own primary elections. They just won’t be able to keep making me and other minor party members and independents pay for their internal party business through our taxes.



The Oregon Working Families Party is an independent, grassroots political party focused on bread-and-butter economic issues that matter to working people. For too long, we believe, the political system has been rigged against working people. We see adoption of the Oregon top two open primary proposal, which preserves a strong role for political parties, as a step toward empowering more voters and enabling a diverse set of voices to set the agenda for governing our state.

Stefan Ostrach, a retired union representative, serves on the State Committee of the Oregon Working Families Party.