

TAX BREAK MAY HELP HABITAT'S HOUSES

There's no shortage of demand for good homes in Eugene these days, especially for those with low or little income. Now the local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International has its fingers crossed that the nonprofit will be able to put up a few more houses every year if the Oregon Legislature passes House Bill 2690-1 this summer.

The bill grants tax exemptions for land held by nonprofits, if that land is intended for low-income housing. The primary benefactors are organizations like Habitat for Humanity, building in Eugene and Springfield since 1990, which has strongly supported the bill.

"In Lane County, we are only exempt from property taxes from the time of building a new house," says Don Griffin, executive director for the Eugene and Springfield Habitat for Humanity. "But with this we could be exempt for seven years or more."

In contrast, Eugene's Multiple-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTE) granted the Capstone student housing project a 10-year property tax break.

Usually Griffin's organization buys a tract of land for later development and the process can take at least three years before building begins. During that time, in Lane County, the property taxes add up.

"We need the exemption," Griffin says. "The estimates are that this will save Habitat affiliates [in Oregon]

\$200,000 a year in property taxes." The Eugene and Springfield Habitat for Humanity affiliate will save at least \$5,000 a year.

Right now Griffin's affiliate has one house under way in the Eugene-Springfield area, a groundbreaking due on June 13 and a third project under way later this year. For its construction projects, Habitat for Humanity relies on donated materials and thousands of volunteer hours. The nonprofit also takes on eight to 10 repair projects a year, painting older houses and building accessibility ramps.

Griffin says property tax exemptions vary by county, and the new act would "clarify" matters.

"We're trying to get some consistency around the state," Griffin says.

In the long run, more homes mean more taxes for the state and counties. "Once we sell it to the home owners, it goes on the tax rolls as a regular house, at many times the tax than when it's bare ground," Griffin says.

Though the bill will help all low-income housing developers in the state, House Rep. Phil Barnhart, chair of the House Committee on Revenue, says it's primarily targeted at Habitat for Humanity.

"With this they can build a few more houses a year for low-income families," Barnhart tells *EW*. "I'm hopeful the bill will pass."

HB 2690-1 has already passed the House 57-1 and is now in the Oregon Senate. — *Dash Paulson*



OAKLEIGH COHOUSING SENT BACK FOR PUBLIC INPUT

The controversial Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing (OMC) planned unit development off River Road next to the Willamette River will go back for additional public comment following a decision May 15 by the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA).

Petitioner Simon Trautman, who was injured in a vehicle collision at the corner of Oakleigh and River Road, was originally denied his motion to intervene in the project when it was being appealed before the Eugene Planning Commission. Trautman claimed he was not given adequate notice, even though he was living in Idaho at the time and reportedly had not provided the city with a correct address for notices of the appeal hearing.

Trautman, his wife and his mother-in-law were on record as opposing the application and were therefore legally required to be notified by the city, according to LUBA.

Paul Conte, a local neighborhood advocate, joined Trautman in the appeal and said in a prepared

statement: "This was a long overdue repudiation of the biased and unfair handling of land use applications by the Eugene city attorney and Planning Division staff. The Court of Appeals and LUBA have now served notice on Eugene that attempts to subvert Oregon's Statewide Planning Goal One — citizen participation — will not be tolerated."

But local project architect Will Dixon says, "This is the decision that we wanted, given the circumstances." Dixon says the development will continue along the "scenic route."

"This is another in a long string of items that has caused us significant delay and cost, but we're not going anywhere," Dixon tells *EW*. "As a group, OMC is now up to 24 full-member households (out of 28) and we're feeling more committed and dedicated to our development than ever before."

Neighbors have fought the development and the increased traffic it will bring, with some posting signs saying, "Just because it's legal doesn't make it right," and "Cohousing OK, 28 units not. Think of others."

The full LUBA order can be read at wkly.ws/20t and detailed information about OMC can be found at oakleighmeadow.org. — *Ted Taylor*

ACTIVIST ALERT

- Environmental advocate **Paul Scott**, co-founder of Plug In America, will speak on "Autonomous Vehicles and the Future of Sustainable Transportation" at 6 pm Thursday, May 28, at the EWEB North Building, 500 E. 4th Ave. Free. Scott is a former BRING Recycling worker who has gone on to gain national attention in the field of electric vehicles. He was featured in the documentary *Who Killed the Electric Car?*

- **Oregonians for Industrial Hemp** will meet from 5:30 to 7:30 pm Thursday, May 28, at Growers Market, 454 Willamette St. Find the group on Facebook.

- A panel discussion on "**The State of Black Oregon Report**" will be from 6:30 to 8 pm Thursday, May 28, at the Knight Library Browsing Room on the UO campus. Sponsored by the Urban League of Portland and others.

- Eugene **Mayor Kitty Piercy** and Ward 2 City Councilor Betty Taylor will be at the Mayor's One-on-One community outreach meeting from 5 to 6 pm Thursday, May 28, at Haggen at 30th and Hilyard Street.

- The **4J School Board** is seeking community members interested in serving on the district's Equity Committee. Applications are due at 5 pm Thursday, May 28. See wkly.ws/20u.

- **Food Not Bombs** is planning a "Psychedelic Indie" fundraising event from 9 pm to midnight Friday, May 29, at The Lorax, 1648 Alder St. Money raised will go towards a People's Garden.

- The **Lane Regional Air Protection Agency** Board has an opening for a Springfield position and the deadline to apply is May 29. Applications are available at Springfield City Hall or online at wkly.ws/20r.

- The annual **Festival Latino Block Party** will be from noon to midnight Saturday, May 30, at Sprout! Food Hub, 418 A St. in Springfield. Drinks and dancing begin at 6 pm. Suggested donation is \$5 to \$10 and proceeds will go to Huerto de la Familia.

- The fourth annual **Solidarity Fair: A Social Justice Gathering** will be from noon to 4:30 pm Saturday, May 30, in Central Park in downtown Corvallis. The event "celebrates a diverse and active labor movement in the Willamette Valley, honors the generations of struggle for economic, social and environmental justice, and promotes public awareness about labor and its intersections with other social movements," say organizers. A contingency from Lane County usually attends. Sponsored by the Solidarity Action Network, a coalition of unions, student groups and social justice organizations.

- A free stage reading of **SEEDS**, a Canadian documentary theater performance that is part courtroom drama, part social satire will be at 7 pm Sunday, May 31, at Oregon Contemporary Theatre (OCT), 194 W. Broadway. The play examines the 2004 Canadian Supreme Court case **Monsanto vs. Percy Schmeiser** for patent infringement of Monsanto GMO canola seeds. The characters are all real people, the dialogue is all verbatim. Actors are from the UO Theatre Department. Call 870-4849 for more information.

LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY SCHEDULE

- ODOT is currently **spraying roadsides**. Call Tony Kilmer at ODOT District 5 at 744-8080 or call (888) 996-8080 for herbicide application information. Highways 1-5, 101, 126 from 7 miles west of Walton to Florence. ODOT may spray Highway 36 soon.

- Giustina and related companies, 345-2301, plans to hire A&H Forestry, (360) 467-1255, to spray their roadsides in the larger **Camas Swale area** south of Fox Hollow Road in Lane County with 2,4-D, glyphosate, triclopyr, sulfometuron methyl, metsulfuron methyl, clopyralid and/or Dyne-Amic. See ODF notification 2015-781-08065, call Brian Peterson at 935-2283 with questions.

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