

GET YOUR ORDINANCE IN ORDER

Is Eugene doing enough on climate change?

In July of 2014, Eugene became the first city in the country to require carbon neutrality, fossil fuel-use reductions and the development of a carbon budget based on the best available science when it passed a Climate Recovery Ordinance pushed for by the nonprofit Our Children's Trust and many of Eugene's youth.

More than a year later, some Eugeneans are starting to wonder if this landmark city law is getting implemented the way it should by city staff, and if it's moving at the right speed. Matt McRae, a climate and energy analyst with the city of Eugene, says the city is on track to meet its targets.

The ordinance legally commits the city of Eugene to its pre-existing climate goals of carbon neutral internal operations by 2020 and reduction of citywide fossil fuel use by 50 percent by 2030. The ordinance also directs staff to develop a citywide, science-based target and carbon budget for emission reductions consistent with achieving 350 ppm of CO₂ in the atmosphere by 2100.

Finally, the ordinance requires regular reports on Eugene's progress toward meeting its climate obligations, and it creates a mechanism for getting back on track if the city is not meeting those obligations.

At a Dec. 14 Eugene City Council meeting, several citizens as well as youth members of South Eugene High School's Earth Guardians 350 gave public comment urging the city to enforce the ordinance. "What good is a law without enforcement?" Cameron Fox of SEHS asked.

Julia Olson of Our Children's Trust says the ordinance is not just a goal or an aspiration, it "is law, and it's mandatory and binding," and she says there is some confusion within the city about that. During her own comments at the City Council meeting, Olson specifically addressed City Manager Jon Ruiz as she pushed for implementation, saying, "we fought hard as a community for it, and we cannot let our children down."

Olson tells *EW*, "Every department within the city and every department head needs to be doing their part in planning comprehensive standards for internal emissions reductions and community-wide reductions." And specifically, she says, the city needs to decrease its use of fossil fuels.

"The city manager at the top is responsible for making sure this is implemented," she says. Ruiz was supportive of the ordinance, she adds, and she is confident he will "step up."

Shawn Boles, a member of Eugene's Sustainability Commission and former city councilor, questions whether city staff understands the seriousness of the problem. The City Council has been proactive, he says, in passing the ordinance, and "senior management and the city manager need to get on board."

City Manager Ruiz was out of town for holiday vacation and unavailable for comment.

Olson points to transportation planning as one place the city needs to start implementing the climate recovery ordinance. She says the city's new transportation plan, based on what she's seen in presentations before the sustainability commission, is not incorporating the ordinance.

Olson says the city should focus on more public transit, alternative means of transportation, enhancing walkability, bikeability and ways for getting around that don't involve

having one person per car. "Transportation planning is one of the biggest ways the city can impact emissions," she says. And focusing on widening roads like Beltline, adding stoplights and roads and increasing flow for single-occupancy cars is not a good way to decrease emissions. The goal is decreasing emissions while still keeping people's commute times low, she says.

Land-use planning is another key area, Olson says, with a goal of using zoning and creating city centers where people can walk or bike to shop or get a cup of coffee, "more like the European model."

Joshua Skov, who was a chair of the Sustainability Commission and is a candidate for George Brown's Ward 1 City Council seat, agrees with Olson about the need to focus on land use and transportation in implementing the Climate Recovery Ordinance. "We should not have any conversations about transportation without climate change on the table," he says.

When it comes to city planning and communities, he says it's hard because "there are scenarios involving some change in the way we experience our city. There are some scenarios for change that leave a whole lot of us a lot better off. But they involve change."

Skov says at the city level, it's been a struggle at times to even include the ordinance in the planning conversation, pointing to the need to include it as a filter for decision-making in looking at the EMX bus rapid transit and Envision Eugene. He says the ordinance is an opportunity for the City Council and executive staff to take the lead by raising this priority in their day-to-day work.

Matt McRae is one of the people at the city for whom climate change is a job priority. He says the city is in line to provide every requirement called for by the ordinance, and if it gets off track "we do analysis and come back to council with a list of options to get back on track."

The current focus has been internal, he says, pointing to reducing fossil fuel use by the city's vehicle fleet, such as police cars and fire trucks. The city is also changing the way it builds and repairs roads, he says, using coal fly ash instead of concrete. According to Columbia University's Earth Institute, the cement industry produces 5 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions.

Externally, McRae echoes Olson's call to move away from single-occupancy vehicles. He says the city is working with EWEB on energy retrofits, moving away from heating buildings with natural gas. He calls for supporting businesses that repair, retrofit and recycle instead of encouraging mass consumption.

McRae says the reduction of citywide fossil fuel use by 50 percent by 2030 is an "aggressive target," but says the city is on the path to meeting that goal.

Olson says the youth of Earth Guardians 350 are committed to attending every City Council meeting to ensure the Climate Recovery Ordinance is truly implemented. Eugene's ordinance is the first of its kind, and other cities across the country are looking to it as a model, she says.

"I think there are a lot of people within the city that see there needs to be more done," Olson says. "City staff and department heads should be more empowered and encouraged to do this work, and someone needs to be accountable."

'We fought hard as a community for it, and we cannot let our children down.'

— JULIA OLSON

SLANT

• **It's a dark and dastardly world out there** so we've been cranking up the sunshine with some upbeat content in December. Our third annual "I Dream of Eugene" issue last week appears to be a big hit, and if you missed it due to the holidays, our office has extra copies. It's great to see letters arriving in response to the funny, fanciful and thoughtful dreams we published for the Whiteaker, north Eugene, the city and Glenwood. We like dreams more than New Year's resolutions. Dreams are visionary and visions have power. Those damned resolutions tend to set us up for disappointment and guilt. As Sally Sheklow notes in her "Living Out" column this week, she's changing her bucket list to a fuck-it list. So it's time to lighten up, and keep those fun and creative visions coming. Got dreams for Kesey Square? Send them to editor@eugeneweekly.com. We need 'em. Winter has just begun.

• **Geri Richmond's neighbors** know another side of the famous UO chemistry professor who will receive a National Medal of Science in January from President Obama at the White House. She's one of nine researchers receiving the country's highest science award this year. She also raises chickens and routinely delivers eggs around her neighborhood near the UO. Her garden is amazing. It includes enough persimmon trees to put the gorgeous fruit on every table in east Eugene. When she is in town she walks several miles each way to her UO lab from her home near Hendricks Park, no matter how dark or dank it is. Her mother was a beautician. She must have instilled an iron will into this daughter who fights for great science and advocates for women scientists around the world.

• We read the *R-G's* attention-grabbing "14 homicides a grim milestone for Eugene-Springfield area" story with interest on Dec. 28. What stood out to us was the quote from UO economics professor Benjamin Hansen: "**Higher temperatures seem to increase aggressiveness**, and lower precipitation increases exposure. When it rains, we avoid each other and therefore avoid most crime." Eugene-Springfield had a "run" on homicides during the hot weather, and the daily's number crunching shows that "more than 40 percent of all homicides of the past 44 years have occurred in the 'dry' months of June through September." So what does that mean for us in terms of climate change with our summers getting longer, drier and hotter? Our population has gone up, but despite our murderous record year, homicides have statistically gone down. Will our increasingly hot weather make for more murder streaks? If you didn't have a good reason already to battle global warming, avoiding murder is a good one.

• In welcoming the New Year, we are also welcoming some **new laws in Oregon** that are going into effect. Of note, House Bill 2879 and House Bill 3343 allow pharmacists to prescribe birth control and require insurance companies to cover a full year of birth control. Under SB 454 employers with more than 10 employees must provide up to 40 hours of paid sick leave per year to each worker. Also making things better for workers is the Ban the Box bill. HB 3025 bans employers from inquiring about an applicant's criminal history prior to interviewing them. The Motor Voter Act (HB 2177) gives a boost to democracy because now when people eligible to vote get or renew a driver's license, they will automatically be registered to vote, with the ability to opt out. For more new laws, check out the full press release from the Oregon Democrats: goo.gl/ar0ki0.

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