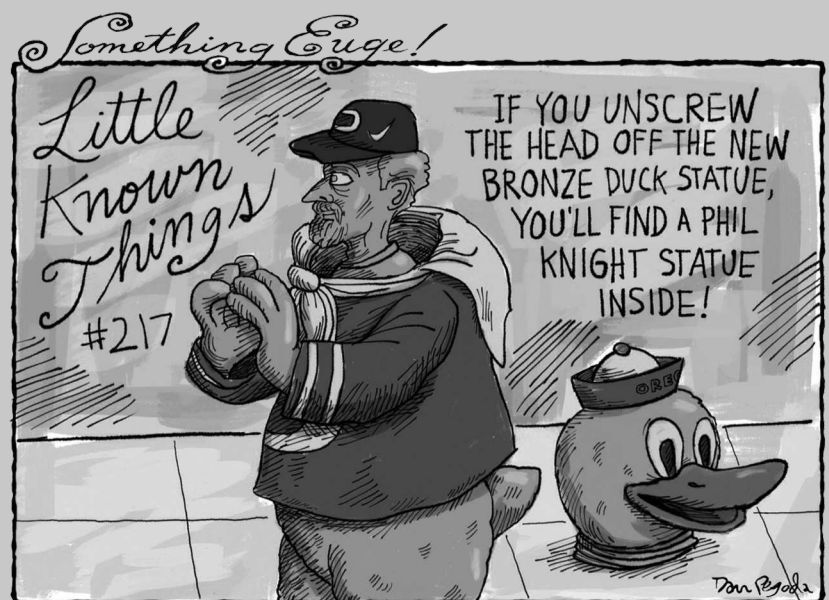


SLANT

• Eugene City Councilor **George Brown** told us earlier this week that he will not be seeking re-election to a third term in the May Primary. It's a decision he's been pondering for a while, and in earlier conversations we tried to talk him out of it. His progressive, thoughtful voice on the council is in the minority and is vitally important to the future livability and prosperity of our community. But he's grown weary. "I feel the need to step away for a while, to recharge, to spend more time with my family and our business, and to see a bit more of the world outside the window," he tells us. Serving on the council is a huge responsibility and Brown, co-owner of The Kiva store downtown, has taken the Ward 1 position seriously, as Bonny Bettman McCornack did before him, advocating for transparency and best practices, paying attention to the details, working to kill the bad ideas that keep popping up, shepherding the good ideas that are always under attack. The filing deadline for this position is March 2, and so far political newcomers Chris Wig, Joshua Skov and Chad Anderson have taken out filing papers. Anybody else out there now that Brown's made his decision? Meanwhile, he tells us, "I plan to continue working hard up to my last day and then some."

• Our city manager and some councilors are looking at continuing the 17-block **Downtown Urban Renewal District** (affectionately known as DTURD) to pay for downtown high-speed internet and rejuvenating the Park Blocks. We are reminded of a Bonny Bettman McCornack column in our paper March 11, 2010, saying, "City Hall is where good ideas go to die and bad ideas are repeatedly resurrected," and "DTURD is a slush fund in search of a justification." Once the money is collected, it can be used for pet projects the manager and council want, and even for administrative salaries. Keeping the decades-old DTURD alive is going to be a hard sell, especially since letting DTURD sunset will free up millions in the fund for schools, local government services and debt reduction. If the council goes ahead with this highly questionable funding scheme, ignoring a 2010 "never again" council pledge, we predict a citizen initiative will circulate to kill the district once and for all.

• The **drama in Harney County** is evolving but still unresolved as we go to press this week. Some occupiers are behind bars, one is dead, others are still barricaded at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. We hope the hold-outs surrender peacefully but we don't expect them to, and refuge buildings and other facilities may be further damaged. How can we help? We hear from the Lane County Audubon Society that donations can be made to the two nonprofits that operate educational, environmental, recreational and cultural programs at the refuge. They are the Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and the Malheur Field Station, which is supported by the Great Basin Society. Both of these worthy groups have websites and Facebook pages and make it easy to become members or donate. It's time to reclaim this protected wildlife sanctuary that belongs to all of us.



• Maybe the most discouraging words from **Congressman Peter DeFazio** at the City Club of Eugene on Jan. 21 told us something we already knew. When asked if climate change figured at all into transportation legislation, the ranking minority member of the House Transportation Committee reminded us sadly that "the majority of the U.S. House of Representatives doesn't believe in climate change." How can our elected representatives be that far behind the rest of the world?

• The investiture of **Lynn R. Nakamoto** as an associate justice of the Oregon Supreme Court in Salem Jan. 25 was a day of high praise for the first Asian-Pacific American on this state's highest court. One of seven justices, she will face election this year. Moving up from the Court of Appeals, she was appointed by Gov. Kate Brown. She started practicing law in Oregon 30 years ago. One of her former Portland law partners said, "Probably the most extraordinary thing about her is that she doesn't think she is extraordinary." One other woman, Justice Martha Walters from Eugene, serves on the court.

• New and more restrictive rules for **medical marijuana** are being hashed out (see Biz Beat) and lots of problems are still unresolved on recreational pot. It will be interesting to see if the black market for cannabis products will actually diminish. Word on the street is that some puffers are put off by the high prices of legal boo. In the end, the market will be driven by supply and demand and if taxes, fees and rules are too onerous, the street market will continue.



PHOTO: AMY SCHNEIDER

BEYOND TOXICS CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF ENVIRO ACTIVISM

On the corner of Lawrence Street sits a tiny white building that houses feisty non-profit Beyond Toxics, which has advocated for environmental and social justice reforms in the state of Oregon since 2001 — you might remember it as Oregon Toxics Alliance.

On Feb. 5, Beyond Toxics will celebrate its 15th anniversary at Capitello Wine Bar in downtown Eugene, as well as introduce a state ballot petition banning aerial chemical sprays.

"We have become the go-to venue for people because often times traditional venues are not responsive," says Joel Iboa, environmental justice and community outreach manager for Beyond Toxics.

Lisa Arkin, executive director of Beyond Toxics, says she receives constant messages from community members from all over Oregon asking for the nonprofit's assistance and advice.

"We get calls from moms; we get calls from agencies; we just seem to be at the nexus of where government and communities try to find solutions," Arkin says.

Beyond Toxics has successfully worked with allies to protect Oregonians from chemicals and pollution, from passing SB 637 in 2009, which called for protecting children from pesticides on Oregon school properties, to collaborating with Western Environmental Law Center to pass SB 528, a ban on field burning in the Willamette Valley, also in 2009.

Most recently, Arkin says, Beyond Toxics has partnered with nonprofit Oregon Wild and other conservation groups to push for a handful of ballot measures banning aerial pesticide sprays on private industrial and state forests that provide drinking water for Oregon communities or salmon habitat.

Arkin explains that according to Oregon community complaints and state findings, "These chemicals are drifting far away from where they were sprayed and harming people, killing pets, blinding livestock and getting into water systems."

Arkin and Iboa say that Beyond Toxics has relied on its tenacity to advocate for reforms where money and politics intertwine.

"Legislature has kind of been reluctant to take any action because a lot of legislators receive donations from timber companies and chemical companies, and their lobbyists are really powerful and very effective," Arkin says. "We want to ban aerial spray because we know it's unnecessary for a healthy timber economy."

Guests will have the opportunity to sign the aerial spray ballot petition at Beyond Toxics' anniversary party, where Arkin hopes to collect 1,000 signatures. Former *EW* columnist and longtime environmental activist Mary O'Brien, now living in Utah, is expected to attend.

The Beyond Toxics 15th anniversary celebration starts at 5:30 pm Friday, Feb. 5, at Capitello Wine Bar, 540 Charnelton Street in downtown Eugene. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 at the door. Tickets can be purchased at beyondtoxics.org.

— Claire Rischiotto

'We just seem to be at the nexus of where government and communities try to find solutions.'

— LISA ARKIN, BEYOND TOXICS