

## TERRORIST ACT

Finally a homophobic, religion-based murder of American gay men and women has been labeled “terrorism.” Islam is no worse than Protestant Christianity in this regard.

Tim Hilton  
Springfield

## PREVENT VIOLENCE

My heart is with the victims and survivors of the massacre in Orlando, Florida, an act of terror now being reported as the worst mass shooting in U.S. history.

I stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all those who were killed or injured, and my thanks go to the dedicated first responders who rushed to the scene.

Americans are now coming together to say enough to hate and violence, and to show our support for the people of Orlando and for our LGBT brothers and sisters. As communities across the country celebrate LGBT Pride Month, we are reminded that every life is precious.

The bottom line is that in this country, it is far too easy for those who hate and are intent on doing harm — including radical jihadists — to access guns. We owe it to the people of Orlando — and to all of the 90 Americans killed each day by guns — to do everything in our power to prevent this kind of violence.

Curtis Taylor  
Eugene

## NEEDLESS ACCIDENT

Thank you for the article on “Oil Train Crashes” on page nine of your June 9 issue!

Surely safety precautions should have prevented this accident, and according to *The Register-Guard*, there have been “26 similar railroad derailments in the U.S. and Canada.” This is especially shocking since it occurred in small towns in this modern era!

My two sisters and I witnessed this accident firsthand as we were driving to Washington state and this caused us and many motorists nearly a three-hour delay.

The EPA and other organizations must be properly monitored so a similar needless accident never occurs.

Stace Webb  
Eugene

## POIGNANT FILM

Tonight my family and I went to see the film that Robert De Niro says “everyone should see” — *Vaxxed*, at the David Minor Theater (despite the *Weekly’s* misleading blurb which featured a jumbled and myopic echo of the pharmaceutical establishment via *The Washington Post*).

This is a film about scientific integrity and the way that this integrity is compromised by the pressures of industry, specifically as revealed by Dr. William Thompson, former head scientist at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and coauthor of the study (enshrined as vaccination/autism gospel) used to prove that the MMR doesn’t cause autism.

The film shows plainly how Dr. Thompson comes forward and reveals

that the study’s data was manipulated by the CDC because it showed a correlation between the MMR and autism (they actually threw parts of the study into the trash in a secret meeting and manipulated numbers in their official report).

It was particularly poignant to see pediatricians changed their practice after reviewing the version of the original study (preserved by Dr. Thompson) with the real data un-retracted by the CDC.

It is also a film about how the lives of many children and their families have been tragically changed by the MMR vaccination.

Sabrina Siegel  
Eugene

## CRASS DTURD

I just want to say how disappointing, if not unsurprising, it is to see that the *Weekly* published Janet Bevirt’s crass letter [Letters, June 2] in opposition to the Downtown Urban Renewal District. Using the acronym “DTURD” was not a mistake, not funny and not productive.

## VIEWPOINT BY BONNY BETTMAN MCCORNACK

## Ongoing Boondoggle

A SERIES OF QUESTIONS ABOUT EUGENE URBAN RENEWAL

The Eugene City Council, Lane County Commission, Lane Community College and 4J are all on board with diverting *your* tax dollars to benefit private property and businesses in the Downtown Urban Renewal District (DTURD) — even though you paid those taxes assuming you were funding education, public safety, libraries, parks and other essential services.

On June 13, City Council voted 5-3 to extend the DTURD.

If those elected and appointed officials had the slightest interest in protecting the public’s best interest and exercising their fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the taxpayers, then these are some red flags they could have raised regarding DTURD’s proposals for high-speed fiber, LCC’s old building, Farmers Market and the Park Blocks.

Why should Eugene taxpayers pay for fiber optics downtown when voters granted charter authority in 1998 for EWEB to be the provider of a publicly owned network?

Why should downtown properties exclusively benefit with cheaper high-speed rates because their hook-ups are publicly subsidized, while the rest of the community pays the going rate and the subsidy?

Why aren’t benefiting property owners being required to pay for their own fiber upgrade?

Are any of the properties receiving the publicly funded high-speed fiber located in buildings in which the manager rents city office space? In that case, would taxpayers be paying twice for the service, once to install it to private property and then again for the city to use it?

Why does the revised DTURD plan amendment

promise that none of the skimmed revenue will be used for City Hall or a parking lot on City Hall Block when everyone knows council does not keep promises legislated in the DTURD (like the promise it will terminate this year)?

Why was the public hearing held prematurely on a range of vague and undefined plans and debt, ranging from \$17-\$48 million, instead of defined projects with their concomitant costs?

Why wasn’t the public able to testify regarding significant text edits to the revised plan (available 17 days after the public hearing) and why is the public input on the scope of the projects occurring after council adopts the plan?

Why does the plan anticipate it will only collect 94 percent of property taxes levied in any given year, when the city budget projects 94.5 percent and the actual collection rate ends up being between 97-98 percent? This translates into a lot of extra money for the DTURD over the 11 years of the plan.

The proponents tout the benefits of URD in terms of economic development and increasing the value of land in the district. If DTURD is so beneficial, then why, after 49 years and at least \$100 million, does the city manager claim in the official report that, “The city concludes that the entire plan area is blighted.” Why throw good money after bad? What other ways could the city invest those tax dollars for the benefit of the community, instead of exclusively for downtown property owners and businesses?

Despite the news that the DTURD “debt limit” is \$19.4 million, the actual amount of money committed is more than \$27 million. Wouldn’t it be common sense to fund the projects without Urban Renewal and save all the additional costs of running

the DTURD scheme?

Why should city taxpayers be forced into the middle of LCC’s sale of its old downtown campus when they already paid for LCC’s new campus?

Why doesn’t the city use the revenue from existing taxes, already paid for parks and park maintenance, to upgrade the Park Blocks instead of charging taxpayers twice for that service?

And why does the scope of the Farmers Market project range from simple upgrades to the existing site all the way to the extreme of building a commercial structure on the butterfly lot or elsewhere? What is *the* plan?

The city is exploiting the impact of compression on 4J’s local option levy, claiming that it will result in an additional \$360,000 in 2016 if it adopts DTURD. The city very carefully deleted that same Local Option Levy (LOL) from projected revenue tables for the plan’s 11 years. Is that because compression variables could result in major 4J losses, just like it has in the past, and the LOL expires in 2020 but the DTURD is extended to 2027?

Since DTURD has been over-collecting tax increment revenue since 2011 for the current plan, aren’t there sufficient funds immediately available, including the half million dollars allocated but unspent for the Farmers Market, sufficient to retire the debt, and therefore the district would terminate automatically?

Legally, does the City Council have the authority to adopt an amendment to DTURD if there are sufficient funds right now to pay the debt?

What is the total amount of money diverted into DTURD since its inception in 1968?

In the midst of their back-scratching and back-slapping fest, the only question our public servants are asking is: “How much longer can get we away with this boondoggle?”

*Bonny Bettman McCornack is a retired registered nurse, former Ward 1 city councilor and longtime progressive city and neighborhood activist.*