

of the opulent against the majority.”

On the good side of local news, the Rights of Local Community Self-Government Charter Amendment has finally been cleared by Lane County’s Circuit Court out from under corporate-funded opposition for the gathering of signatures. Community Rights Lane County is now looking for volunteers to move the Charter Amendment toward the ballot.

No one will ever come knocking on your door to give you your rights. Like the suffragists, the abolitionists and civil rights fighters of generations, it will take work and unity. Join us at communityrightslanecounty.org.

Eron King
Triangle Lake

KIDS PAY

Well, another school and testing year is over. This year, Oregon started giving standardized tests to kindergarten kids. Apparently, you’re never too young for data collection. And while California just joined 29 other states in no longer giving invalid, unfair high school exit exams, Oregon still insists on them. More data.

Beyond the federal and state over-testing, Eugene School District 4J administered 72 additional reading and math standardized tests from kindergarten through fifth grade.

Wait, there’s more. Kids at three local low-

income middle schools may wind up taking up to 36 more reading and math standardized tests. Wow, up to 108 tests worth of data!

Confused about the use of Smarter Balanced test scores, which come out after students have left for summer? That’s because they are really designed to score teachers and schools — even though the American Statistical Association says they are worthless at doing that.

And weren’t the Common Core curriculum and accompanying tests invented to have a common comparison between states? Guess what? Only 42 states now adopt Common Core, with many more having second thoughts, and only 30 states now use the Common Core-related tests.

Aren’t the Common Core and Smarter Balanced tests necessary to fix education? Guess what? Recently, more than 100 educational researchers in California found no improvement in educational quality or achievement gap with Common Core and found the tests lacking “validity, reliability and fairness.”

Meanwhile, corporations make bundles, politicians and school boards pretend they are doing something worthwhile and educational testocrats get high-paying jobs. Kids pay the price.

Roscoe Caron
Eugene

GREAT SCANDAL

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has called the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) a “cesspool of corruption” and a “snakepit of Big Pharma lies.” Strong words for the agency tasked with protecting the public health, don’t you think?

Vaxxed: From Cover-up to Catastrophe explores one particularly heinous cover-up, which came to light when Dr. William Thompson, a lead research scientist in the CDC vaccine division, divulged key details to researcher Dr. Brian Hooker in a series of recorded phone calls. Approximately 10,000 documents were thrown into a trashbin that showed a clear link between the time of administration of the MMR vaccine and an increase in the rate of autism, particularly in African-American males.

There is a reason why Robert De Niro went on the *Today* show and called this film “a must-see.” When government agencies commit fraud, the American taxpaying public deserves to know about it, especially when it concerns the collective health of our nation’s children.

I urge you to see this film while it is in Eugene, and bring your friends and family. This just could be one of the greatest scandals of our time.

Jennifer Grafada
Eugene

PREVENTABLE DEATHS

Suicide is one of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States, and it’s preventable. Nine out of 10 people who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental health condition, like depression, at the time of their death. Together, we can help people who struggle to seek help, improve the quality of their lives and stop this tragic loss of life.

My family has had to grieve the losses of three men who lost their fight with suicidal ideation. I personally live with bipolar disorder and have spent my adult life trying to advocate for myself and others who are trying to find happiness living with mental illness. I volunteer with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to raise awareness and teach our communities ways all of us can help to prevent suicide.

I will be traveling to Washington, D.C., next month to tell my members of Congress how important this issue is to me. It is important to me because it affected me and my family directly.

Please take five minutes right now to call your U.S. representative and senators at 202-224-3121 and tell them to make mental health a national priority by funding suicide prevention research today.

Join me in this fight to #stopsuicide. Together we can make a difference.

Sara K. Scofield
Eugene

DESIGN MATTERS

BY JERRY DIETHELM

Moving the Pieces of the Puzzle

A BETTER PLAN FOR THE COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND CITY HALL

You know those puzzles where you push one piece out of the way in order to place another?

It all started out by pushing the old block-sized Eugene City Hall out of the way to make way for the new. Putting a new four-story, 30,000 square foot City Hall on the southwest corner quarter of that old block left behind three quarters of a blank block to fill. The plan was to reserve the northwest quarter behind the proposed new City Hall for a future Phase II, 60,000 square foot City Office building so that the city would eventually occupy the whole western half of the block, leaving the eastern half open for another use.

So what might one do with that other open half a block of land downtown?

Enter the “switch.” Lane County could have the eastern half of the old City Hall block for a new Lane County Courthouse. In trade, the city would receive the lost North Park Block and the half block of land along 7th Avenue buried for the past 50 years under the “butterfly” parking lot. That in turn would make possible a restored North Park Block and expanded site for the Saturday and Farmers Markets, including the possibility of an indoor market building. So what was not to like?

From the county point of view, it made much better sense to build the new County Courthouse on the western side of the now open block so it could better continue to connect to its Public Services Building. But that would move the proposed new City Hall building further down 8th Avenue to the corner of 8th and High. The Phase II City Office Building meant to consolidate city services would then end up behind it on the corner of 7th and High Street — no one’s first choice location for downtown central city services.

And how far out was the County Courthouse project — five years? And what were the realistic prospects that the city would ever build its Phase II office building behind the new City Hall anyway? The cost of the 30,000 square foot Phase I building has already climbed from \$15 million to a controversial \$25 million. A Phase II 60,000 square foot office building could be expected to cost at least twice that much or more by the time it got built.

Enter a different switch?

New planning has shown that a new consolidated County Courthouse will need to be 250,000 square feet and that a best configuration and fit would require the entire vacated City Hall block. But where, then, would the new City Hall building go? Building the large new County Courthouse on the butterfly site would be a possibility, but that would foreclose forever any North Park Block or Farmers Market aspirations. And it would leave the new City Hall building sitting lonely on its 8th Avenue corner wistfully awaiting a Phase II and some other compatible use that might never come.

The answer to the puzzle:

The county gets the whole block of the old City Hall site. The city moves its four-story, 30,000 square foot City Hall to the one-half block site at north end of the butterfly parking lot along 7th Avenue. The old 60,000 square foot (four floors of 15,000 square feet) County Courthouse is in time remodeled (and its steel frame upgraded to present-day seismic requirements) for one-quarter of the cost of a new Phase II City office building. And, if desired, the two city buildings could be connected by a skyway over Oak Street.

The North Park Block is restored and becomes the home of a long-awaited improved market environment. For the next several years, the county plants solar-collecting trees and parks on its warehoused block, and with the best of good fortune has a brand new building in place when the world comes to visit in 2021.

Because it no longer needs to be courthouse secure, the whole Oak Street side of the Public Services Building is opened up to the Park Blocks, igniting the process of turning the Park Blocks’ buildings’ backsides into front sides all around.

The new City Hall sits poised above its restored Park Block and Market civic center.

And we all lived happily ever after.

Jerry Diethelm is a Eugene architect, landscape architect and planning and urban design consultant.