



• After eight years at its spot on Willamette Street downtown, **secondhand shop and costume mecca Kitsch-22** will close in November. The Kitsch-22 team tells *EW* that the space it has leased at 1022 Willamette is too small for the way the business has expanded, while it would “cost too much money to move somewhere else.” So owner Norman Lent has decided to close up shop and retire. They aren’t the only ones leaving the block: Harlequin Beads & Jewelry, across the street from Kitsch-22, is moving to a South Eugene location, the *R-G* reported Oct. 21, making way for a dispensary. The Kitsch-22 team says post-Halloween, sales will begin, starting with 25 percent off and eventually increasing to 50 percent off. See more on our blog at eugeneweekly.com.

• **The Business Plan You’ll Really Use** Small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs can come hear Palo Alto Software’s Peter Thorsson on the crucial topic of business planning at 6 pm on Thursday, Nov. 3, at the Downtown Eugene Public Library, 10th & Olive. The library says, “He will deliver nuts-and-bolts explanations and steps to follow, from strategies to schedules to sales projections.” Free. More info at 541-682-5450 or eugene-or.gov/library.

• **Gem Faire**, “West Coast’s Premier Jewelry & Bead Show,” returns to Eugene Nov. 4-6, at the Lane County Events Center, 796 W. 13th Avenue. Organizers say, “Jewelry and gem dealers from all over the world will be on site with the largest selection of fine jewelry, gems, beads, minerals, crystals, pearls and much more.” Hours are Fri. noon-6 pm, Sat. 10 am-6 pm, and Sun. 10 am-5 pm. The \$7 admission is valid for the entire weekend. For more information, visit gemfaire.com, call 503-252-8300 or email info@gemfaire.com.

• **Eugene Downtown Cohousing**, which is attempting to create a senior cohousing community, is hosting a meeting for people wishing to learn more about their project at 2 pm Saturday, Nov. 12, at 990 Lincoln Street. More info at eugenecohousingdowntown@gmail.com or 541-344-5751.

• DriveOregon, “a trade association dedicated to electrifying transportation,” is putting on an “**EVs for Businesses**” workshop, 7:30-9 am Thursday, Nov. 10, at the North Building adjacent EWEB Headquarters downtown. Topics include: Costs/benefits and paybacks for EVs for businesses, technology trends and vehicle selection, workplace charging and incentives and rebates for EVs and charging infrastructure. Go to goo.gl/dOKIYM to register or contact EWEB at ev@eweb.org with questions.

• In month of October, all **272 Dutch Bros locations** partnered with their communities to raise \$220,451 to support the advancement of breast cancer research and patient support at both the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute and Albie Aware, a California-based breast cancer awareness foundation. All Dutch Bros locations donated \$5 from every specialty “Be Aware” travel mug sold in October. Dutch Bros says, “The sales of the mugs was in conjunction with Breast Cancer Awareness month, so every mug purchase presented the opportunity to further raise awareness of this disease that affects so many lives.”

NEWS

BY CLAIRE RISCHIOTTO

A PARK DISTRICT PLAN FOR EUGENE?

Eugene has two park systems with looming funding issues — first, Eugene Parks and Open Space, which has a \$2 million budget gap for maintenance plus a backlog of \$30 million in deferred maintenance. Then there’s the River Road Park and Recreation District, an unincorporated district with a shrinking tax base.

Dale Weigandt, superintendent for the River Road Park and Recreation District, says he has an idea that could help alleviate both problems, and he will hold a public forum Nov. 10 to discuss the possibility of merging Eugene’s park systems, essentially creating a new metropolitan park district similar to Springfield’s Willamalane Park and Recreation District.

For several decades now, the River Road Park and Recreation District, an unincorporated district within Eugene, has seen a shrinking tax base of River Road residents as they annex into the city of Eugene. The Metro Plan, adopted in 1982, moved River Road and Santa Clara into Eugene’s Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), according to the River Road/Santa Clara Transition Project.

Now, when property owners in these areas want to undertake certain kinds of development or change their zoning, they must annex their property to the city of Eugene — this is done so that the city of Eugene can service properties within the UGB; however, it also means that every year, fewer property owners pay for River Road’s recreation district.

Space come from the city’s general fund. He says the creation of a new district will allow money to be dedicated specifically for parks and recreation services — which is how districts like River Road and Willamalane operate.

After the public forum, various park entities in Eugene could conduct a feasibility study, Weigandt says. This could cost \$100,000 or less, according to Weast.

The feasibility study would answer questions that Weigandt and his colleagues cannot — for instance, how much it would cost to have a new park district, what it would cost the taxpayer and logistically how two separate entities would meld into one.

Weigandt says it will take the county, the city of Eugene and River Road to work together to pursue the discussion of a new park district. For the past few years, Weigandt says, he’s been working to do just that, speaking with Eugene city councilors, Lane County commissioners and Mayor Kitty Piercy.

Weigandt points to other successful Oregon park districts like Willamalane, which recently placed as a finalist in the 2016 National Gold Medal Awards for park and recreation excellence.

In this case, combining two separate entities means carrying over Parks and Open Space’s \$2 million operational budget gap as well as the approximately \$30 million capital backlog. The process would also include figuring out if Eugene Recre-

A new park district would mean that Parks and Open Space, a division of Eugene Public Works, would combine with River Road Park and Recreation District to form an entirely new park district.

According to Weigandt, out of the 4,735 taxable lots that currently exist within River Road’s boundary, 1,394 have been annexed. “As long as we can pass our five-year serial levies we will stay intact, but if enough properties are annexed, it will create a problem,” Weigandt says.

Burton Weast, a former legislative director for the Special Districts Association of Oregon, initially suggested creating a new park district that would provide park and recreation services to River Road and Eugene, Weigandt says.

A new district would mean that Parks and Open Space, a division of Eugene Public Works, would combine with River Road Park and Recreation District to form an entirely new park district. Property taxes would fund the district, and it would have elected board members, the way Willamalane does.

Weigandt says a new park district is just an idea, and he stresses that he is not criticizing the city of Eugene or its parks department. “I just want to have something that works,” Weigandt says.

For Weigandt, one of the most compelling benefits for a new park district is that it will allow transparency for how funds are spent. Currently, funds for Eugene Parks and Open

ation employees, who are in a separate department from Parks and Open Space, would join the new district.

Weigandt says the new park district would not be a “magic pill” solving Parks and Open Space’s current funding gaps, but having dedicated funds specifically for parks and recreation services over time could help resolve budget gaps.

Eugene City Councilor Chris Pryor, who is a former Willamalane employee, says he supports the conversation about how to best provide park and recreation services to the River Road and Santa Clara residents. However, he shares that there may be cost-efficiency issues with Weigandt’s idea, from a potential tax increase to create a new park district to the repercussions of moving Parks and Open Space out of Public Works and into a new district.

Ultimately, if Weigandt’s idea were to come to fruition, Weast says it would require River Road, Eugene and other unincorporated area residents to vote for a new park and recreation district.

To learn more about Weigandt’s idea, attend the public forum 7 pm Thursday, Nov. 10, in the main room at River Road Park and Recreation District, 1400 Lake Drive. ■

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