

# SLANT

- A campaign already is coming together to take on County Commissioner Faye Stewart in the May 2018 election. James Barber, who lives in Walterville, handed out cards at the Feb. 17 City Club of Eugene meeting that say he's a candidate for the East Lane county commission position with the slogan "Voice for the People." Lots of energy there. Stewart is long entrenched in the conservative-leaning Lane County Commission, so this should be interesting.

- **President Trump's attacks on the media continue.** He seeks to undermine reader confidence in the news and have his supporters take his word as gospel. That's hard for us to swallow when he informs the public the "leaks are real" but "the news is fake" and tweets that legitimate news sources are "the enemy of the American People [sic]!" A hashtag has surfaced among journalists #NottheEnemy, but we heed the argument of Berkeley prof George Lakoff who says don't repeat the framing of journalists as the "enemy." Instead #ProtecttheTruth.

- Why do we continue to focus on the homeless "crisis" as if it were only in downtown Eugene? Homeless people are sleeping on porches nearly every night at 14th and Pearl and beyond. EW's wooden bench is a bed some nights at 13th and Lincoln, and low-hanging branches are the roof for sleepers all over town. The "crisis" is so much broader than the doorways of the businesses in downtown Eugene, and the solution is not just to throw the unhoused out of downtown.

- Prof. Geoffrey Stone's Feb. 17 talk on the University of Oregon campus was quite a bookend to the recent stories about Milo Yiannopoulos, the former Breitbart news editor disinvented to the University of California campus, who just lost a book deal and his job to his comments on pedophilia. Stone, who has been both the dean of the University of Chicago law school and provost of that university, talked about free speech on campus. Our takeaway was that neither academic freedom nor freedom of speech should be taken for granted. They are fragile freedoms in the current political climate. Yiannopoulos spoke at the UO campus in May 2016 via Young Americans for Liberty, and rumors have circulated on social media that he would be invited back again.



- Frank Lawson has been hit with major challenges, like the December ice storm, since the Eugene native became general manager of Eugene Water and Electric Board in May 2016. Speaking to the City Club of Eugene on Feb. 17, Lawson said Eugene is the largest city in the Northwest with a single source of water, the McKenzie River. His solution is a small modern plant on the upper Willamette River, the sooner the better (see EW's Nov. 24 cover story "Water for Life"). He also said he doesn't know of a great city without a great riverfront, and this is part of his thinking behind wanting to sell the EWEB building on the river to the city of Eugene. As to the Seneca biomass plant, Lawson said if that contract were on the table today, he would say no. But it's a done deal and the "no" option is no longer on the table.

## CITY IN NO RUSH TO IMPOSE BUFFER RULE ON DISPENSARIES

Local marijuana retailers have been waiting close to a year for the city of Eugene to adopt an ordinance requiring a 1,000-foot buffer between dispensaries.

Eugene remains the only major municipality in the state that has yet to adopt a buffer, and while City Council is deliberating the issue, corporate-owned dispensaries with out-of-state money are flooding into the market, and local businesses say they are being displaced.

The total number of active marijuana retail licenses currently approved in Eugene is 32. Five more have posted signs on storefronts announcing they are opening soon, including two neighboring the High Street McMenemy's on both sides.

Although it is designed for recreational dispensaries, the city's draft ordinance would apply to all dispensaries, including medical. Additionally there is already a 1,000-foot rule for existing medical dispensaries that was passed before recreational started.

At the Feb. 13 City Council meeting, Councilor George Poling urged the city manager and mayor to put the work session on the agenda as soon as possible. But as of the latest tentative working agenda, the weed buffer discussion has yet to be scheduled.

"I don't know where we are on it or how long it's going to take to get to our plates," Poling tells EW, adding that he "doubts very seriously" the council will get to it before its March break.

Municipalities like Portland, Bend and Albany adopted a 1,000-foot buffer ordinance to combat the absence of residency requirements in Oregon and to ensure dispensaries don't open on every street corner. But Eugene has yet to adopt a buffer ordinance, and dispensaries are proliferating, particularly downtown.

Morgan Glenn, a 26-year Eugene resident and owner of the Flowr of Lyfe dispensary downtown, has been pushing to pass the ordinance since last summer. Since the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) began licensing recreational dispensaries in October 2016, two new dispensaries with out-of-state ownership have opened within 1,000 feet of his shop.

Glenn says he fears the influx of new dispensaries will drive marijuana prices down and eventually run local shops like his out of business.

"People with deep pockets come in from out of state," Glenn says. "They could lose money for two years, have everybody else get flushed out, and then the last one standing is the one that has corporate money backing them — out-of-state money."

Heidi Fikstad, co-owner of locally owned dispensary Moss Crossing, isn't sure why Eugene has "lagged" so much on passing the ordinance. She says she began getting worried when the city hadn't passed it toward the end of last summer and has advocated for the buffer at council meetings since.

City Council had a preliminary discussion about the issue late last year, but Poling says the majority of councilors did not yet want to move forward because they were "dealing with some other issues." Several were wary about regulating where businesses can and cannot be placed, although liquor stores are already subject to buffer restrictions. Councilor Emily Semple says Councilor Claire Syrett, who was a driving force behind the buffer ordinance, fell ill, and the ordinance fell off other councilors' plates.

Poling says the 1,000-foot buffer ordinance is worth prioritizing on the agenda, though not above other important issues such as homelessness, miscreant behavior downtown, the Envision Eugene project and the urban growth boundary question. Semple says the issue is small enough that it won't take a lot of City Council's time to pass: "We just have to get it on the agenda," she says.

Glenn says although the 1,000-foot buffer isn't the most important issue to everybody, it has been on the City Council's table for a long time. The rapid influx of corporate-owned dispensaries is leading to the loss of local jobs, he says, and dispensaries on every corner are bad for community relations.

He says it is not too late for a buffer — with new businesses flooding in, it could get "a lot worse than it is right now." ■

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