

# NEWS

BY KELLY KENOYER

## CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Critics question effectiveness in preventing police misconduct

**E**ugene Police Department has implemented a mandatory, department-wide \$750,000 body camera program for all on-duty officers, but critics wonder if the new program will prevent police misconduct.

The 162 camera systems, purchased from Axon (formerly TASER), feature front-facing cameras that will be worn throughout each shift. The cameras are to be turned on for the duration of each police interaction with someone suspected to have committed a crime, all stops for violations of Oregon Vehicle Code, and investigative encounters with suspects, witnesses, complainants and victims.

Police officers will also record consensual encounters where the officer “will attempt to develop a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity about the subject encountered,” and when a person is in custody, being detained or transported in a patrol vehicle.

Officers are encouraged to record whenever they believe an event should be audibly or visually documented, and whenever a civilian alleges bias. The officer is required to inform those they interact with that they are being recorded. Officers can turn their own cameras on and off, but are then required to explain why an interaction wasn’t recorded to their supervisor.

Eugene Police Auditor Mark Gissiner says the body worn cameras are a useful tool for his office when investigating allegations of police misconduct. His office has already dismissed several complaints based on the available video. “I have full access to anything I want,” he adds.

Gissiner says the biggest issue with the new policy may

be implementation and training. “It needs to become routine, like tying your shoes in the morning.” Gissiner says the cams will lead to “more transparency, certainly more accountability through my office, more understanding for the public of what the officers deal with.”

He adds that things will likely be “easier on a prosecution standpoint, probably easier on a complaint mitigation standpoint, probably easier on an officer safety standpoint, and honestly a significant training tool for officers.”

Gissiner points to a Rialto, California, police department study that showed a 59 percent drop in use of force and a 87 percent drop in complaints against police when officers wore body cameras.

Attorney Lauren Regan of the Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC) says these body cams might not be such a boon for the rights of civilians. “The officers control the cameras,” Regan says. “They are able to turn them on an off, they are able to control their upload, they are pointing away from the officer and toward others.”

The Lane County chapter of the NAACP supports the police body cameras and signed the application for federal funding of the new policy, which came in the form of a \$249,000 grant matched by the Eugene City Council.

Chapter president Eric Richardson writes in an email: “We are happy to see this roll out. However, we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the program in relationship to giving citizens a sense of transparency and trust.” He adds, “Ultimately the program depends on honest, well-trained officers who understand they will benefit from the increased trust in their ability to perform their duties in a professional and transparent way.”

Gissiner says that officers don’t record at all times because of the “astronomical” cost of storing data. “I suppose you could put a measure on the ballot to see if voters want to pay millions to store all this stuff,” he says.



Regan of the CLDC adds that the body worn cameras “may assist the police in prosecuting others and protecting themselves in police misconduct cases.”

Though the cameras may capture police misconduct, Regan says the police currently record audio anyway. But when she asks for audio evidence when handling police misconduct cases, “There have been a number of instances where digital evidence has been lost, destroyed, rendered inoperable, especially in my experience when we request in car video or video of the jail. Often we are told for one reason or another that the evidence no longer ex-

ists.”

Regan emphasizes the importance of citizens taping police-civilian interactions whenever possible, because non-police video can make for some of the most compelling evidence when prosecuting police officers. “There is a public right to record cops, but you cannot abuse that right by being so in the face of a cop that it interferes with his ability to do his work,” Regan says.

Citizens are legally required to follow lawful orders to step back while an officer is doing their duty.

Regan says police misconduct cases are often an uphill battle. “Especially since a lot of the victims in these cases are people of color, I think a lot of racial bias comes into play in the courtroom,” she says.

In high profile police shooting cases like that of Philando Castile, the aftermath of whose shooting in Minnesota was streamed on Facebook Live, Regan says the fact that there wasn’t a conviction “doesn’t negate in any way the fact that a person of color lost their life to an officer who was sworn to protect and serve.”

Regan adds, “I think we would be ill-served by relying on the state to police itself. That’s never been a good solution to police misconduct.” ■



## HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

### JANET CALVERT

In November of 2016, the League of Women Voters of Lane County named Janet Calvert as recipient of its Annabel Kitzhaber Education and Advocacy Award, honoring her long commitment to the community. A third-generation Oregonian, Calvert grew up in Tigard. “I had a 4H home-ec project,” she says. “I raised five dairy cows in seventh grade.” She majored in home economics at Oregon State, then worked as an OSU Extension agent in Malheur County, where she taught moms to be 4H leaders, and where she met her husband, Leonard Calvert, at the time a reporter for the *Ontario Observer*. They spent a year in Tillamook and four years in Corvallis, then settled in Eugene in 1965 and raised two sons, Timothy and Douglas. Janet Calvert joined the board of the local League of Women voters in 1968. “They needed someone for the tax committee,” she says. “I got involved in state and local tax studies.” Later, she took part in the effort to build a new jail for the city and county, and she subsequently served on the state Jail Standards Committee. She spent ten years on the board of the Lane Transit District and fifteen years working in a food and nutrition program for limited-income families at the local OSU Extension office. An avid gardener at home and a member of St. Thomas Episcopal Church on Coburg Road, she was instrumental in transforming the church’s unused 2.5-acre back lot into the Grassroots Garden in 1990. Leased for a dollar a year to FOOD for Lane County and powered by volunteer labor, the garden currently produces 30 tons of organic produce a year for people in need.

### LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY INFORMATION

Seneca Jones Timber Company, 541-689-1011, plans to spray 93.4 acres about one mile south of Hamm Road and two miles east (corrected from west) of Territorial Highway with a broad range of chemicals. See ODF notification 2017-781-07685, call Brian Peterson at 541-935-2283 with questions.

William Bronson, 541-746-7214, plans to spray 18.1 acres near McBeth Road with triclopyr with amine, 2,4-D with amine and/or imazapyr. See ODF notification 2017-781-07915, call Brian Peterson at 541-935-2283 with questions.

Oregon Department of Forestry, 541-932-2283, plans to hire Nick’s Timber Services, 541-910-1120, to spray a total of 272.6 acres on 7 units near Nelson Mountain Road, Little Beech Creek, Knapp Creek, Badger Mountain and Moke Road with imazapyr. See ODF notification 2017-781-08023, call 541-935-2283 with questions.

Camas Creek Resources, 541-521-5897, plans to hire Nick’s Timber Services, 541-910-1120, to spray 34.5 acres near Fish Creek with clopyralid, glyphosate, hexazinone, imazapyr, sulfometuron methyl, triclopyr with acid and/or MSO Concentrate. See ODF notification 2017-781-07906, call Robin Biesecker at 541-935-2283 with questions.