

LAND SWAP

A meeting of minds on the future of downtown Eugene

A meeting at the *Eugene Weekly* office on July 12 brought together city and county politicians and bureaucrats to discuss the future of downtown Eugene. A land swap approved by both the Lane County Board of Commissioners and Eugene City Council may soon transform the park blocks downtown. Lane County will buy the property of the previous city hall for \$4 million, and Eugene will buy the butterfly lot for \$1.88 million — finally creating a home for a new city hall.

The following conversation has been condensed and lightly edited.

MAYOR LUCY VINIS: We're very excited about this agreement — we're very excited about being able to move forward. I think it's a win-win. The county will get a piece of property where they can build on a scale they need to build and the city, I think, gets to set the reset button on city hall planning.

COMMISSIONER PAT FARR: We now know where it's going to go, and that's really all we know. But what's most significant is that the public square will be a public square for the first time in many years.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR STEVE MOKROHISKY: We are excited to see the vision for the butterfly lot come to fruition, which is a city hall on the north side and a restoration of a full public square and a year-round farmer's market on the south side of that block.

EW: How are you planning to fund this?

MOKROHISKY: If we can get in the '19 or '21 biennium our ask from the state approved, that would put us in the position, if we can pull together a funding package, to really be breaking ground in 2020 or 2021. We're going to identify all federal, state and existing resources for funding before we have to have a conversation with the voters about funding.

CITY MANAGER JON RUIZ: The road we've been on for the last many years has been a phase one city hall in which we don't ask the voters for dollars.

We don't have the actual design yet as far as what it looks like or doesn't look like. The city council acting in their role as the development agency has said 'spend up to four and a half million in support of the farmer's market, you don't have to but you can go up that high. The county for its part in this has agreed to put in some \$800,000.

After the judge signs off, we can get on with creating this sense of place that we've all said we want. That's one of the benefits of this, that it really allows us to create a more holistic sense of place and the pieces are really coming together.

MOKROHISKY: I think the city deserves a lot of credit for taking, at really a critical time in their project, [a moment] to say let's reflect on what's in the best interest for the community as a whole and capture the opportunity to really create that sense of place and destination.

VINIS: The historical picture of those park blocks is they were originally one consolidated square and then it was bifurcated and then the parking lot was built so there were all these different things happening to it. So the core vision is that we're restoring that sense of a town center.

EW: If you're planning to eventually include privately owned properties in the city planning process, is there a set design standard?

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER SARAH MEDARY: There's been no start on the design standards but we've begun thinking about what a great [corridor] Willamette to Willamette would look like.

MOKROHISKY: The city will work with us as they're designing and constructing their city hall. We'll work with them on our courthouse. Whether or not it's feasible for us to have the same architects, I don't know if that's going to work. ■

PAT FARR

STEVE MOKROHISKY

JON RUIZ



LUCY VINIS

SARAH MEDARY

HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

SHAWN DONNILLE

"My parents were apolitical," says Shawn Donnille, who grew up in Orange County, California, a Republican stronghold. "Every summer we spent two weeks in Nevada City, an old mining community, and connected with plants and wildlife." At age 15, Donnille started an environmental club at Villa Park High School. "We planted trees on campus," he notes, "and organized monthly debates." After high school, he moved to Nevada City and took part in Earth First! campaigns to save redwood forests and to ban sport hunting of cougars. In 1991, at age 24, he took a job at Mountain Rose Herbs, a home-based mail-order business in nearby North San Juan. "There were two employees and me," says Donnille, who was asked to run the business while the owner, herbalist Julie Bailey, was navigating a divorce. He moved it towards organic certification and built a website at a time when no one else in the industry was selling online. "It was an enormous success," he says. In 2001, Bailey and Donnille moved the business to a small house in Pleasant Hill, Oregon, to be near farms and recreational opportunities. Today they are domestic partners and co-owners of a company with 200 employees in six separate Eugene facilities, including a newly opened retail store. They set their own wages at not more than 3.5 times those of their lowest-paid employee. An executive team of three now runs the company. "I devote my time to environmental causes and groups," Donnille says. "That's my job these days. I was chief petitioner for a ballot initiative to ban aerial spraying that almost made the ballot. We'll revisit it next year."

