

# 700 SIGNATURES A WEEK

City auditor petitions hit the streets, public gatherings

Volunteers are “well on our way” to collecting 10,000 signatures to put an Office of Independent City Auditor on the Eugene ballot next May, according to David Monk, one of the chief petitioners along with Bonny McCornack and George Brown.

The organizing group, City Accountability Committee, needs to collect about 700 valid signatures a week before the deadline of Oct. 12.

Rallies and signature-gathering trainings are already happening, and more are planned. A training for a core group was held Oct. 12 at the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees offices downtown. More than a dozen people showed up to learn the rules, get their bright turquoise T-shirts, and gather for a group photo to be posted at cityaccountability.org.

Monk told the group that Eugeneans are responding positively to the petition. Several hundred signatures were collected outside the Oregon Country Fair gates July 5, and petitioners will continue outside Kiva, Sundance, the Eugene Public Library and at public events such as the Whiteaker Block Party.

At the Lane County Fair this week, signature gatherers will work out of the Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network (ESSN) booth. Petitioners will also be going door-to-door.

At a July 10 rally in support of the petition drive, former city councilor Brown said, “Based on my years of experience on the council, this is the best thing we can do to improve, open up and get real accountability in local government.”

Brown said he has long been frustrated with the lack of transparency in city government. Even council members were often in the dark regarding the inner workings of city



SIGNATURE GATHERERS OUTSIDE THE AFSCME OFFICES IN OCTOBER

management. He said an auditor could look closely at programs such as the Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption “to determine whether it is producing the results intended,” or examine Eugene’s old urban renewal districts, or the City Hall contracts and “the fees paid to the architects, which are two-and-a-half times what they should have been.”

An auditor would “have the freedom to audit any city program, any vendor, any budget, any department,” Brown said. “And we don’t have that now.” He also supports the auditor’s hotline on which any citizen, vendor or city em-

ployee can anonymously report fraud, mismanagement or inefficiencies.

Lonnie Douglas, a self-described Republican and conservative and chair of the ESSN Action Mobilization Committee, organized the July 10 rally in Eugene. “The reason ESSN supports an independent and elected city auditor is because it just makes sense,” he said. “It’s all about transparency and it doesn’t matter if you are on the right or on the left. The idea is to have accountability in the hands of the people.” ■

## SLANT

- When even our 10-year-old friend asks what’s going to happen on the **old city hall/new county courthouse lot** in downtown Eugene, it must be time to look for an answer.

Any suggestions? It will be at least three years, probably more, before ground breaks for a courthouse.

Should we have a garden? Or even trees around the edges? Remember those old-fashioned big-top circuses — wouldn’t that be fun? How about a giant art installation?

Of course, some have rightfully urged using the space for a homeless shelter, but the cost of maintenance and management always comes up.

Parking. That’s probably what will fill this precious space.

- We listened to **State Senator Floyd Prozanski**, Democrat from Eugene, **State Representative Cedric Hayden**, Republican from Roseburg, and **Repre-**

**sentative Julie Fahey** from Junction City wrap up the 2017 legislative session to the City Club of Eugene on July 14, and we came to one conclusion.

If Oregon is going to raise more revenue for education, we need to elect more progressive Democrats. There will never be enough “cost containment” to satisfy the Republicans.

- Don’t waste time answering questions to the fake phone pollsters calling themselves “**Informed Electorate.**” They’ve been calling into the Eugene area with questions about how the people can take their government back, saying they are making half a million contacts a month. Of course, it’s expensive to reach that many people, so they need \$20 per contact or even \$15. That’s when we catch the scam and hang up, but the caller was really clever. We wonder how much money they have raked in so far.

- **What we’re reading:** A friend who just finished *Hue 1968: A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam* by Mark Bowden recommends it for readers especially interested in how journalists exposed deception by the American military. Some readers, he warns, may not like the emotional details of the fighting. This new book, recently reviewed on public radio’s *Fresh Air*, reminds us once again of the role of

the free press in exposing lies by the government in a democracy.

- **Long summer nights.** Eugene police were busy last weekend keeping the lid on downtown partying. The cops arrested two different intoxicated drivers going the wrong way on one-way streets, one of whom bashed a few parked cars in the process. They arrested another man who tried to punch a tavern employee and, across town, nabbed a guy who pulled a gun during a bar dispute. All in all, downtown units “had a busy shift with one of most populated party scenes the commander said he had seen in years,” the department said in an email.

Enjoy the good weather but be careful out there!

- **Speaking of enjoying the weather,** women in town are likely to don dresses or shorts when the weather gets hot. This is not an invitation to harass them. Even if you like what you see, please keep it to yourself! What you may think is a compliment can come across as a threat to a young woman walking alone in an unpopulated area. We’re not quite Saudi Arabia — where police this week arrested a “girl in offensive clothing” for wearing a crop top and a short skirt — but that doesn’t mean women here feel safe in their summer garb, or wearing anything else for that matter.