

LARRY WILLIAMS
AND LISA POQUETTE

PHOTO: KELLY KENOYER

CAMPAIGNING IN CRESWELL

Race on pot ballot measure is heating up

More than 80 people stood at the intersection of Oregon Avenue and the I-5 exit in Creswell on Monday, Oct. 2, calling on drivers to “Say no to One Gro.” The protesters were referencing an upcoming ballot initiative in the small town — one that has “the friendly city” divided about its future.

If passed, Ballot Initiative 20-280 would allow recreational marijuana dispensaries into Creswell, but those on both sides make arguments unrelated to pot when they argue for or against the measure.

The town banned marijuana-related businesses within city limits in November, but One Gro, a new weed start-up headed by Eugene attorney Mike Arnold, is pushing for that ban to be lifted.

“We wrote the bill with the city, like their city attorney and us wrote the bill,” One Gro CEO Dan Isaacson says.

Isaacson says the bill is designed to allow a maximum of three or four dispensaries within city limits. One Gro already owns a coffee shop, NakD Bean, in one of those zones.

Opponents such as Creswellian Lisa Poquette say that One Gro has already staked out the only commercially viable plot in those limited zones, so it would have a de facto monopoly in the town.

One Gro has offered to donate \$105,000 to the city to help pay for 24-hour policing, though estimates for the cost of 24-hour policing differ. “This is a way you can address

those problems without cutting services or raising taxes,” Isaacson says.

At previous meetings, Isaacson and Arnold have said they want Creswell to become One Gro’s Cupertino, referencing the town that houses Apple. One Gro, they say, will be a cannabis empire.

Opponents of the measure say One Gro is trying to change the nature of the town, and that the company can’t keep its promises. The business already boasts a pot farm of its own, and Isaacson says they plan to use vertical integration to become that empire.

“He’s promised that we’re going to have more police coverage with them coming in, but in fact it would take a minimum of \$160,000 a year to bring in one more deputy into our county,” Poquette says. “There’s not going to be police on the streets 24/7 until there are three or four more deputies.”

Mike Weber of Lane County Mugshots Uncensored, who handles publicity for the opposition campaign, Keep it Creswell, says that “the people of Creswell are basically able to vote in or vote out a business.”

“Does Creswell want Mike Arnold and One Gro in their town?” Weber asks. “The people of Creswell feel like they’re being bought out.”

Another Creswellian who opposes the measure and stood on Oregon Avenue to protest it is Larry Williams. “They’ve

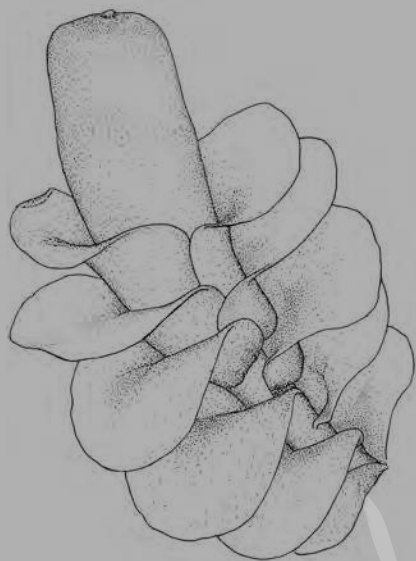
come in and said they want this to be a weed empire,” Williams says. “That would change who we are as a culture as ‘the friendly city,’” he says, referencing the town’s posted slogan.

During the protest, Isaacson came out of NakD Bean and walked up and down each side of Oregon Avenue, offering water bottles to the protesters holding “Say no to One Gro” signs. One protestor jokingly asked if there was THC in the water, and Isaacson replied, “Yes! Just kidding!”

Williams points out screen shots of previous editions of the One Gro website that claim “One Gro is a Creswell based cannabis business, founded by Creswellians.” He says they’re not actually from Creswell, although founder Mike Arnold owns a farm just outside the city. “There’s only one person I know of that’s a Creswellian” on their board, he says.

Williams says he feels that the leadership of One Gro has disrespected the town and its leadership. Isaacson, on the other hand, suggested in an interview with *EW* that the leadership of the town is ineffective, and he suggested that he and Creswell city mayor Dave Strahm could get into dunk tanks and that “everyone that didn’t like one of us could dunk us and the money would go to charity,” Isaacson said.

Williams says, “Mayor Strahm was just voted the small town mayor of Oregon. We’re learning of problems we didn’t even know we had with them coming in.” ■

JUNERMANNIA LEIANTHA;
LONG-LEAVED FLAPWORT

IT'S ABOUT TIME

BY DAVID WAGNER

Two years ago I wrote that it was the worst fire season ever. Each succeeding year has been worse, with the current fire season simply devastating. Although a few rainy days ended the horribly smoky air in the southern Willamette Valley, the fires in the mountains will likely smolder through this month. I fear that our usual reliance on September being a good month for hiking the high country will fade into the past. More years like this one may keep the Three Sisters Wilderness closed to back country users through September.

The fires are being enhanced by the effect of years of extended drought. Even on Spencer Butte, Eugene’s prime city park day hike, one can see dead trees just below the summit. Only the weakest trees in the forest are succumbing but, once dry, these are conduits for a surface fire spreading rapidly to

the canopy. The outlook is grim.

The bright side is actually a result of not much sun. We are ready for the rainy season to set in. Gardens will keep producing until the first frost, slowly to be sure but steadily. One of the reasons I plant zinnias is that they keep getting stronger and brighter right up to that first hard freeze. The nasturtiums are doing well, perhaps because dry conditions deter aphid decimation.

On the forest floor logs are swelling with moisture. The mosses and liverworts that rely on moist conditions love those big, rotting logs. They will be happy all winter.

David Wagner is a botanist who works in Eugene. He teaches moss classes, leads nature walks and makes nature calendars. He can be contacted through his web site: www.fernzenmosses.com.