

vides says the team expects to raise another \$10 million through parking fees, advertising and naming rights and sponsorships. But right now, Benavides says, “It’s hard to sell naming rights to a stadium that doesn’t exist.”

The Ems’ only direct investment: \$10 million in prepaid rent for a 20-year lease.

In 2022, Lane County increased its transient lodging tax (TLT) and car rental taxes from 9.5 percent to 11.5 percent. (The rates are 12 percent in unincorporated parts of the county.) The proposed amount of \$35 million will have to be paid back into the fund by taking 1.5 percent of all TLT annually for 20 years.

The Lane County Board of Commissioners has yet to allocate any funds from the increase. Lane County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky plans to have a final

operational agreement ready to be presented to the Board of Commissioners before the May ballot. Only then will it be decided if the commissioners keep the Lane Events Center location and TLT funding on the table.

The Eugene City Council has approved a measure that will authorize a \$15 million general obligation bond to help pay for the stadium. Property taxpayers in the city — and not revenue from the stadium — will cover the debt.

The measure would authorize an additional 0.08 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For a home valued at \$300,000, that’s an additional \$24 a year.

Emblazoned in his Ems gear, Eugene City Councilor Matt Keating is confident that putting forth the bond measure vote to his constituents was the right decision. He says this will give Eugene voters a choice to say, “Yes,

we believe in a project that benefits this community.”

Eugene City Councilor Jennifer Yeh was the lone vote in opposition to the plan in February. She says that it is the city’s responsibility to send bond measures to the voters only when a project, like the construction of a minor-league baseball stadium, is fully planned out with all other funding determined.

“Voters should be able to rely on their city council to, at a minimum, determine if a project or plan is viable before they send a bond measure for consideration,” Yeh writes in an email to *Eugene Weekly*. “We can’t tell voters how this project will be paid for, how it will be maintained or if it will even happen, yet we are asking for their money.”

*For more information from opponents to the stadium, check out 100MillionDollarStadium.com. The Ems are pitching the stadium at SaveOurEms.com.*

## slant

• **What we’re reading:** Kwame Alexander’s *This Is the Honey: An anthology of contemporary Black poets*. It’s a read that takes you to another world, as all good poetry will do.

• **This week is our annual gardening issue** — and we noticed that downtown grocery Kiva says Double Up Food Bucks can be used to purchase produce starts! Any other places making it easier for folks to grow healthy food? Let us know at [Editor@EugeneWeekly.com](mailto:Editor@EugeneWeekly.com).

• **Just when we were pondering if it was time to do a dog story,** *The New*

*York Times*, Sunday March 17, beat us to it with “How exactly did dogs take over the world?” We have two big office dogs at the *Weekly*. Go to the beauty shop and a little dog greets you. Go to the barber shop and a little dog greets you. It would be better to have dogs running the world than some candidates we can think of. With the May primary election on the horizon, it’s time for us to start interviewing candidates for endorsements. We will see what the dogs think.

• **After many weeks of hoping that the Duck men basketballers would be invited to the NCAA tournament,** the Ducks did not wait for an invitation. They knocked down the front door by winning the Pac-12 tournament. They had to come from behind

three nights in a row in the most impressive and entertaining stretch of Duck basketball in years. As the No. 11 seed in the South Region, Oregon’s first tournament game is March 21 against No. 6 seed South Carolina, and from here on out it is win or go home.

• **News we are following:** *Anonymous Student News* and the *Daily Emerald* recently covered the protest over the University of Oregon student government’s decision to schedule its spring concert on the same day as the Native American Student Union’s annual Mother’s Day Powwow for the second year in a row. ASUO said on its Instagram it is working to cancel the concert. The UO’s annual powwow is May 10 and 11, and Lane Community College’s is April 6.

• **The largest pickleball facility in the Pacific Northwest is aiming to break ground** in May 2025 and finish construction by that fall. This future location is at Lane Community College. Seems like the biggest complaint we hear about the sport is the sound of the balls and the loss of tennis courts — is the new facility the solution?

• **A panel of the three Eugene mayoral candidates spoke at the City Club of Eugene** meeting March 15: Kaarin Knudson, Shanaé Joyce Stringer and perennial candidate Stefan Strek. We were impressed by Knudson’s report that she has knocked on 500 doors as of last Thursday. City Club will meet at noon on Friday in the Maple Room at Inn at the Fifth to discuss STAR Voting, which will also appear on the May ballot.

## It Must Be the Climate

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On Monday, March 11, the University of Oregon again failed to live up to our community values and the values they publicly espouse by delaying a critical decision to reduce their climate pollution. **Instead, the Board of Trustees punted a crucial vote about the future of UO’s polluting gas boilers indefinitely, despite years of sustained community pressure.**

The University of Oregon has long advertised itself as an environmental leader, attracting students and faculty from around the world with its socially conscious branding. Yet UO fails to include in its glossy advertisements the huge impact that the school continues to have on our environment and climate. **The University is the single largest source of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions in our community, according to Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) data<sup>1</sup>.** These emissions drive the climate crisis and are at odds with the climate commitments made by the University and the City of Eugene.

Student groups at the UO have worked for nearly a decade to pressure the school to address its emissions by electrifying the school’s boiler system which generates about 20,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually and makes up over 80% of the University’s total emissions. Since 2016, students have been writing letters, providing testimony, and organizing protests to push the Board of Trustees to uphold the values touted by the institution and address the significant emissions associated with these outdated gas boilers.

Two years ago, it seemed that pressure was working. The University formed a “Thermal Task Force” to study alternatives to the boiler system and provide a recommendation to the Board of Trustees in light of the University’s climate commitments. The Task Force, made up of students, faculty, and administrators, laid out four options (outlined in a previous column titled “UO Reliance on Methane Reaches a Boiling Point”).

## UO Trustees “DUCK” DECISION to CLEAN UP Polluting GAS BOILERS

Throughout this process, the university failed to communicate opportunities for involvement or describe the importance of reductions to students or community members. **The Thermal Task Force provided only abbreviated summaries of outdated information. This left the community uncertain about how the options were picked, why other options were not considered, if the funding numbers are accurate, or if the CO reductions will play out as promised.** Despite this, the Task Force and university leadership received strong engagement from students, community members, and elected officials urging them to recommend the option with the greatest emissions reductions and highest efficiency.

**Specifically, the community coalesced in support of Option 4, which would transition the boilers to high efficiency heat pump technology, reducing emissions by close to 80%, while dramatically increasing energy efficiency and creating good union jobs.** Option 4 was also supported by a UO student government (ASUO) resolution, a Memo<sup>2</sup> from the City of Eugene Sustainability Commission and a Letter<sup>3</sup> signed by over thirty organizations, unions, and local elected leaders including Senator James Manning and Mayor Lucy Vinis.

The Task Force, pressured by administrators to pick the lowest cost option, created a fifth alternative, Option 2B, which would transition only about half of the University’s gas use to electric, and reduce emissions by a little over 40%, which they then recommended earlier this year. While this option was far less ambitious than what students were hoping for, there was still broad support for the recommendation as a first step in the longer-term decarbonization of the University.

The University continued to duck responsibility and refused to consider a vote on the Task Force’s recommendation, further delaying the climate action our community has been demanding. To add insult to injury, the Board cited “budget uncertainty” as its reason for not moving forward with the \$15 million project, despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars on capital projects in the past few years.

The Board’s refusal to make a decision further muddies an already obscure and inaccessible public process around the Thermal Task Force, and has made it clear that the institution will prioritize its unsustainable growth over its moral obligations to the community.

With the University’s continued failure to act, it is becoming clear that **State of Oregon officials must follow the example set forth by the State of Washington and pass legislation to regulate the institution and require action to address these emissions.** It is untenable for a publicly funded University to continue to ignore popular sentiment and maintain the status quo, polluting our air, impacting our communities, and threatening our climate.

1. <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/ghgp/pages/ghg-inventory.aspx>  
2. <https://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/72604/Letter-to-inform-Council-about-UOs-pending-decision-for-transitioning-its-heating-system>  
3. <https://fossilfreeeugene.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/University-of-Oregon-Thermal-Task-Force-Letter.pdf>

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