

UNHAPPY NEIGHBORS



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Loveall also attacked PeaceHealth for “bullying their way into the campus-industrial zone unnecessarily,” noting that the hospital giant owns 75 acres of vacant, developable land next to its RiverBend hospital in Springfield. Giustina and Richardson have leveled that same argument.

WELCOME, NEIGHBOR

The planned two-building facility might not be everybody’s notion of an ideal neighbor. The county’s building, a “crisis stabilization center,” would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with 28 beds and 14 recliners. It would draw walk-in patients, drop-offs by police and drop-offs by mobile crisis vans, the county says. Its services would include treatment for addiction and substance abuse.

PeaceHealth’s 96-bed building would be an inpatient psychiatric hospital with strictly controlled access and egress.

The dual facility would be heavily used, serving an estimated 12,500 patients a year, including children and the elderly.

The county vows the center would fit in with its neighbors and be well run. Neighbors include not only the 400-employee Richardson Sports factory, but a FedEx sorting center, and office parks with health insurance companies and other occupants.

Oregon state Sen. Floyd Prozanski, who represents Springfield and part of Eugene, says the super-siting law was needed to avoid objections and delays.

“These types of facilities, there are a lot of people who don’t want it in their backyard,” he tells *Eugene Weekly*.

The facility “needed to be expedited,” he says. Springfield officials last year knew the super-siting law was in the works. “They did not have any objection,” Prozanski says.

The super-siting language “is an example of the county and the state working as partners to achieve an outcome that serves the entire community,” Trieger says.

The super-siting language takes up just three-quarters of a page in a sweeping 68-page health care reform bill that Prozanski helped usher through the Senate. The language of the entire bill, including super-siting, was kept under wraps as it was being worked on up until the closing days of the Legislature in late June. It was then unveiled and rushed through, approved by Democrats in party-line votes. The super-siting section received almost no discussion, recordings of the sessions show.

The bill blindsided and dismayed Giustina and Richardson. Their suit, filed in Lane County Circuit Court, names the county, the city, the state and PeaceHealth. The businessmen allege the super-siting law violates their land-use appeal rights and other rights under other parts of Oregon law. They want a judge to rule that those laws take precedence over the super-siting law. The case is unfolding. The defendants all deny the Giustina/Richardson claims.

Giustina and Richardson declined to speak with *Eugene Weekly*.

With the new law in hand, the county has pressed ahead. Days after the bill was signed into law, the Lane County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1, over Loveall’s heated objections, to buy the site for \$7.8 million from

its longtime farming owners. The county completed its purchase of the old filbert orchard just days after Guistina and Richardson filed suit. The county, earlier this month, notified the city that it will proceed with the project and invoke the super-siting law.

LONG TIME COMING

Lane County has tried for more than a decade to build a center where a wide range of patients — distraught teens, unhoused people who are depressed, adults experiencing a panic attack, people with addictions — could get quick temporary care and counseling, a sort of emergency department for behavioral health. County staff say they evaluated more than 35 local sites for suitability.

The best was county-owned land on Martin Luther King Boulevard in Eugene, across from Autzen Stadium, they said, so they tentatively picked that spot. But game day traffic jams were a negative, they said.

Meanwhile, in 2023, PeaceHealth announced that as part of closing its University District hospital in Eugene, it would build a new 96-bed psychiatric hospital, preferably near its RiverBend hospital, to replace the old 36-bed secure psychiatric unit at University District.

The near-tripling of psychiatric beds would be a godsend for the region, behavioral health advocates said.

PeaceHealth identified the 18-acre filbert site on International Way and approached the county about building a joint facility, records show.

The site was mostly perfect. It was for sale. It was just a couple of miles from the RiverBend emergency depart-

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