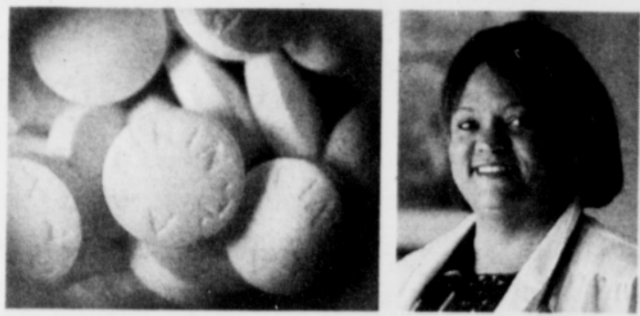


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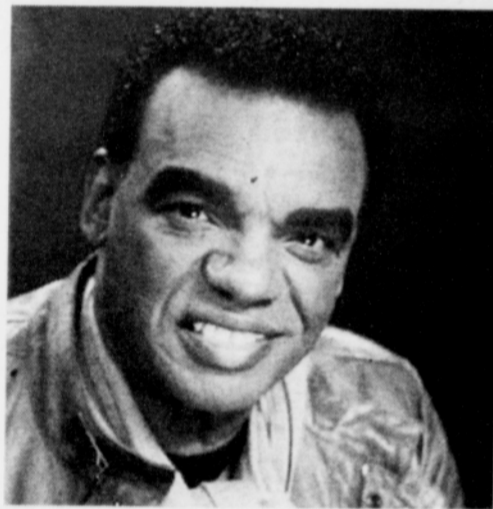
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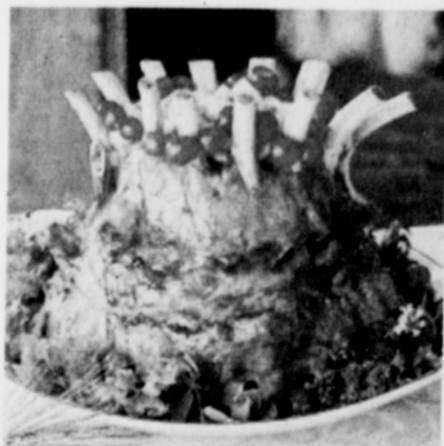


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# Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?

## LOCAL NEWS

### Focus is on Job Creation: Hughes' vision for Metro Council's future

In November, former Hillsboro Mayor Tom Hughes squeaked out about 1,000 votes more than opponent and former 1000 Friends of Oregon Executive Director Bob Stacey, becoming Metro Council president, a job that wields tremendous influence over the tri-county area's growth and economy.

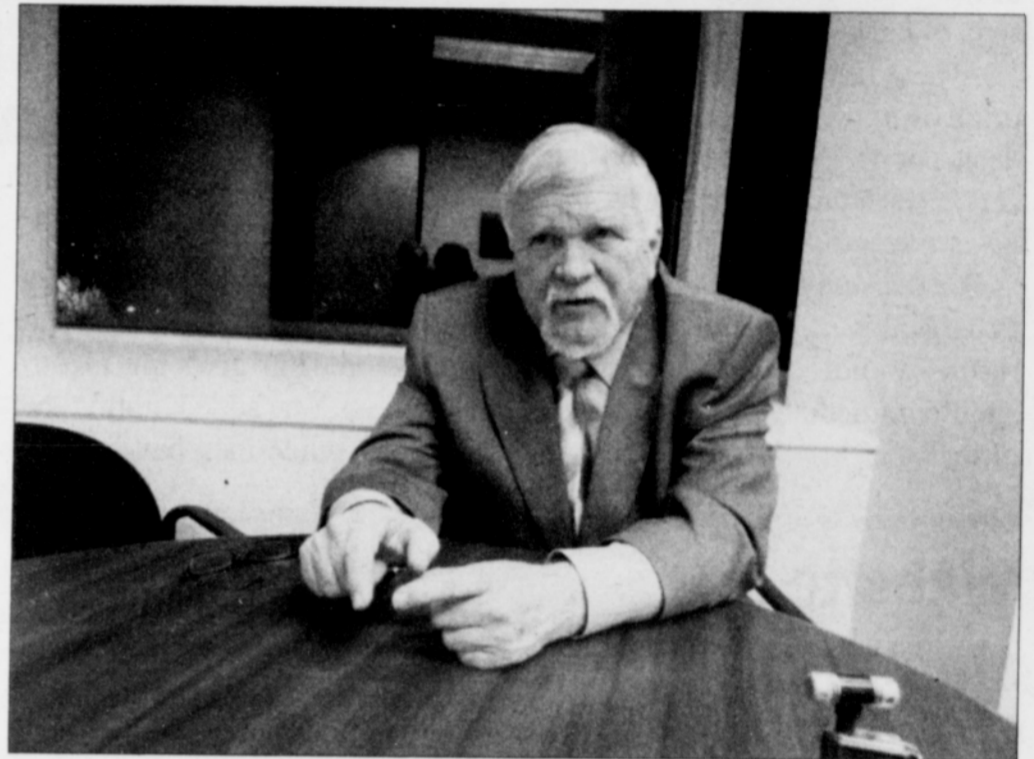
With the region facing a chronically soggy economy, Hughes has put his sights squarely on job creation and reviving the economy. To get a sense of what Hughes wants to do with the position as top elected official for the region, the Portland Observer sat down with him to discuss the challenges of minority populations, the potential impact of the Columbia River Crossing on north and northeast Portland, and other topics. His remarks have been edited for clarity.

**Portland Observer:** *In the past few years, there have been some unsettling reports that have come out on the state of minorities in the area: the State of Black Oregon and the Coalition of the Communities of Color report. As Metro Council president, how do you make sure that everyone can enjoy the region's livability?*

**Tom Hughes:** We need to get jobs in places where they are not as accessible to minority populations. The other thing that's important for us to do as a region is to come to a better appreciation about the status of minority populations. Historically, Portland was the place you were looking for. Communities of color would come to Portland.

Today, because of a lot of the gentrification that's gone on, the communities of color have dispersed around the region, so there's a lot in Gresham; there are a lot of communities of color out in places like Beaverton and Hillsboro. I think that that creates a series of issues. It's hard to target economic recovery to a certain geographic location as a way of improving the economic lot of communities of color because they are dispersed around the region.

So you basically have to do a couple of things. As a region, we need to have a more robust job growth than we do now. We need to identify ways through, on the one



Tom Hughes, Metro Council president-elect.

hand, affirmative action programs for government jobs, and, on the other hand, training grants and other kinds of efforts to make sure the workforce has a substantial element that is part of the minority communities. So we need to do a better job to make sure that there is training available for all segments of the population.

Part of the reality isn't just because it's the right thing to do, but it's also the sensible thing to do because in an economy that's growing rapidly, and unfortunately ours isn't right now, one of the things that you begin to experience are restraints on the workforce; you don't have enough members of the workforce. The reality is we can't really afford to lose any major elements of our population from the workforce. So to the degree that any group of people — minorities, women, people who are not well trained because of their economic status — all those people need to have training available for them so that they are qualified for the jobs of the future, or else we won't have a workforce sufficient to accommodate that growth.

**PO:** *Metro has some contracts set aside for minority business enterprises. I was hoping you could talk a little bit about that.*

**TH:** As a large government entity, with a number of grant programs and other things that are aimed at stimulating economic growth, Metro has the opportunity to work with minority contractors

and small contractors. As Metro funds projects in the area like transportation projects, or transportation-oriented development, and if we scale those right, a lot of minority contractors — which tend to be small business people — can benefit.

One of the difficulties we have is that these big projects tend to be scaled at a level that only big companies can bid on. If you scale the job differently you can attract small businesses and it's easier to put in a requirement, an enforceable requirement, that we give minority contractors an opportunity to do that.

**PO:** *What are the jobs of the future?*

**TH:** I think in this region we're going to have a tremendous opportunity in health care, all the way from biotech development up through, and including, all of the medical delivery professions — from alternatives like nurse practitioners to physician's assistant, all the way up to doctors. We actually had over the last few years in this state a tremendous disinvestment in higher ed. That, I think, has been tragic, and puts us at a disadvantage in terms of lots of opportunities that might be available. But health care is actually one we've seen an increase in programs.

So we really are at the center of where we can train more health care workers. We're chronically short of

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