

## **Changing Leadership at the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency**

Much of my after-school time in 1960 was spent bagging barkdust in recycled burlap bags previously used for 100-pound sacks of potatoes. At a nickel a bag of shoveled barkdust, it provided a good source of income for a 10-year old boy in east Portland.

Each December, I was the primary flocker of Christmas trees at the same business place, Evergreen Garden Supply, owned by my parents since the mid-1950s. Our family must have been a favorite of the best tree farmer in Oregon, since he supplied us with his prime Noble Fir, Grand Fir, and Douglas Fir trees, even though most of his trees grown in the foothills of Mt. Hood were shipped out of state. Evergreen Garden Supply was the popular location for Portlanders purchasing hundreds of green or flocked trees each year. By the time I graduated from high school, I was probably the most experienced tree flocker in the Portland area.

Because of these early years in the family business, and the blessings of part-time or full-time work ever since, I have enjoyed steady and satisfying work for over 60 years. But that is coming to an end.

I am retiring from my best job of all, Director of the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (or LRAPA), at the end of March 2021. My 16 years at LRAPA with the mission of "Community partners working together to ensure clean air for everyone" have been the most rewarding of my 48-year environmental career. It has been a privilege to work with an excellent staff, local and state elected officials, partner agencies, and a very engaged and supportive public.

I am leaving LRAPA in good hands. The local nine-member LRAPA Board of Directors has been very effective working together with the outstanding LRAPA staff and our state and federal partners. Beginning April 5, 2021, the new LRAPA Director will be Steve Dietrich. Steve's broad environmental experience in Virginia, Wyoming, and Oregon will serve the community well. I expect even better air quality in the years ahead!

--- *Merlyn Hough, (former) Director of the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency*

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

### APRIL 1 – STRIDES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

A panel of three community leaders will discuss the new program announced by Peace Health and Eugene Marathon: Strides for Social Justice—a free, family-friendly app offering self-guided tours highlighting the contributions, achievements and milestones of Eugene's Black residents, as well as some of the injustices they have faced.

### APRIL 8 – NEW SPRINGFIELD COUNCILORS

Damien Pitts and Kori Rodley have recently joined the Springfield City Council. Hear what their plans and goals are.

### APRIL 15 – THE COMING FIRE SEASON

A panel including the Eugene Springfield Fire Chief, the Lane County Public Works director and emergency managers from the local jurisdictions will discuss the risks of the coming fire season.

## PUBLIC CALENDAR

All items are tentative and subject to change. For current information, click on the agency name which will redirect you to the appropriate web site.

[City of Springfield Council](#)  
225 Fifth Street  
Springfield, OR 97477  
(541)726-3700

April 5, 2021  
Work session 6:00 p.m.

Regular Session 7:00 p.m.

April 12  
Work Session 5:30 p.m.

Springfield Economic Development Agency (SEDA) 7:00p.m.  
Glenwood Riverfront Development

April 19  
Work Session 5:30 p.m.  
CDBG Action Plan  
Use of Force Report  
Regular Session 7:00 p.m.

April 26  
Work Session 5:30 p.m.

RECENT MEETINGS

SEDA Executive Session 7:00 p.m.  
SEDA Regular Session 7:30 p.m.  
Glenwood Riverfront Development

Lane County Board of Commissioners

125 Eighth Avenue  
Eugene OR 97401  
(541)682-4203

April 6, 9:00 a.m. Board Meeting  
April 13 – No Meeting  
April 20, 9:00 a.m. Board Meeting  
PH: Old Hazeldell Quarry  
Evening Public Comment  
April 27, 9:00 a.m. Board Meeting

Lane Transit District

3500 E. 17th Avenue  
Eugene, OR 97403  
(541)687-5555

April 7, 5:30 p.m. –Budget Committee Meeting  
April 21, 5:30 p.m. –Board Meeting

School District 19 Board of Directors

640 A Street  
Springfield, OR 97477  
(541) 726-3201

April 12, 7:00 p.m. – Board Meeting  
April 26, 4:00 p.m. –Work session

Springfield Utility Board

250 A Street  
Springfield OR 97477  
(541)746-8451

April 7, 6:00 p.m. – Board Meeting

Willamalane Park and Recreation District

320 S. 32nd Street  
Springfield, OR 97478  
(541)736-4544

April 7, 6:00 p.m. – Board Meeting

Lane Regional Air Protection Authority

1010 Main Street  
Springfield, OR 97477  
(541)735-1056

April 8, 2021, 12:15 p.m. – Board Meeting

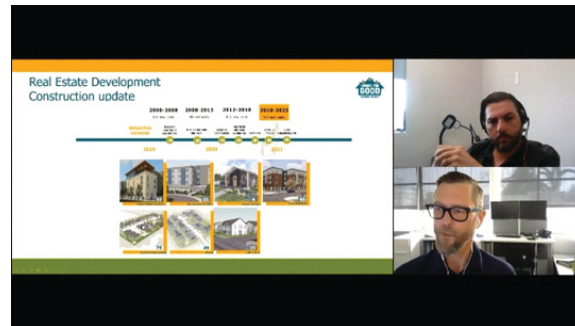
planned for Springfield next to Fred Meyer. In total the agency manages over 650 units in Lane County. In addition, the agency provides rental assistance and supportive services, including weatherization.

When asked about the causes of homelessness, Mr. Fox said the biggest driver is a supply side issue. He said that in-migration added about 50 thousand people seeking homes to the county each year, while only 25 thousand units of housing are being built. He pointed to raising construction costs as a major actor in the relatively low rate of construction. He added, however, that most people who become homeless are not those coming in from other states, but rather the vast majority are local residents who experience issues that result in homelessness. He described the inflow of people becoming homeless as “relatively small.”

PROGRAMS CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

MARCH 4 – HOMES FOR GOOD

While the recent opening of the Commons at MLK received much public attention, it is only the most recent of several permanent supported housing projects now or soon to open that are operated by Homes for Good, the Lane County Housing Authority, according to Jacob Fox, the Executive Director of Homes for Good who discussed the many agency efforts at the March 4 City Club program.



The Commons at MLK is different from some of the other projects, in that it offers continuous on-site medical and

mental health support in an expansion of the “housing first” model which has proved effective in reducing homelessness across the nation. The MLK project will support 51 individuals and does not require that they resolve their mental health or substance abuse issues before being eligible for housing. Besides being an important social step in reducing homelessness, Fox said, the project makes good economic sense. While it will cost about \$20 thousand annually per resident to provide support, the effort means almost \$50 thousand a year in annual spending will be avoided by the medical, mental health and criminal justice systems.

Other permanent supported housing projects open or planned for the metropolitan area include a similar project on Charnelton Street, the Market District Commons at 5<sup>th</sup> and Oak, the Soreng facility in west Eugene, a project for homeless families at 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Tyler, a project for homeless veterans in Cottage Grove, and a 70-unit project

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He said the agency maintains 40 different waiting lists for housing or housing assistance. The best way to follow them and get on the waiting list is through the agency website <https://www.homesforgood.org/> or by following the agency on the various social media platforms.

Mr. Fox does not anticipate that the agency will be involved in developing the “missing middle” housing contemplated by the recently approved program under Senate Bill 2001. Homes for Good, he said, finds it more efficient to develop larger scale programs, although he said that developing any housing in any way possible is a step to reducing the under supply of housing.

He was asked to distinguish between workforce housing and affordable housing. He responded that the City of Eugene project at the former downtown LCC Center, which is designed as work force housing, is planned to serve residents earning between 80 and 100 percent of median income, while affordable housing is designed to serve those earning less than 60 percent of median income.

Finally, he called for development of a publicly supported shelter facility, to supplement the facility at the Eugene Mission, although he acknowledged that creating such a facility would probably require the voters to agree to additional taxes to fund a public shelter.

**MARCH 18 – MAYOR SEAN VANGORDON**



Patience and flexibility -- those are the two words best describing the needs of Springfield according to newly appointed Mayor Sean VanGordon. In a wide-ranging conversation with Springfield City Club on March 18, Mayor VanGordon pointed to successes in the recent past, but added that the City has suffered a bad recession in 2020, facing at least a \$1 million budget gap in the coming year. Although he said recently approved federal aid will help, the City still is not sure how much it will get and, beyond that, faces a long term structural gap between revenues and spending.

In the short term, he pointed to the need to support existing businesses as they attempt to recover. He added that even though the city issued more residential building permits in 2020 than in any time while he has been on Council, and will probably exceed that this year, there remains a broad housing gap – simply not enough housing and not at the right price points.

He did have excitement for the recent announcement of proposals to construct sports facilities in the Glenwood Riverfront area. The Council received a briefing on March 15 (see the report [HERE](#)) and the Springfield Economic Development Agency will have an opportunity to review all three proposals at its April 12 meeting. He said it was too early to tell if more than one of the proposals could be combined to produce a multi-purpose facility.

On the soon to be released report on police practices (released after he spoke) the Mayor said he expected to ask a Council subcommittee to form to develop a road map to respond to the conclusions. He noted it would take time to respond to the issues raised. While some things, like giving a person who files a complaint a receipt number so the complaint can be tracked, are simple, most others will take slow steady progress. He asked the community to remain patient as the road map was developed and implemented. He still believes it may be wise to appoint a blue-ribbon committee to study solutions but said needs to be revisited in the fall.

Likewise, he asked for patience as the City continued to develop and implement initiatives to improve diversity, equity and inclusion and help minority populations feel connected. He pointed to the CityLink system

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as one step forward but said there needs to be more work done. Values are easy to have, he said, but we must work on what needs to be done to make people feel they are a part of this community.

In response to a question about how the City finally managed to get a workable project for development of Marcola Meadows, he again pointed to the need for patience and flexibility. The original proposal was developed in an era focused on big bx stores. The development environment has now changed, and it was important for both the Council and City staff to remain flexible and work through issues one by one to create a different approach that now will break ground.

One of the first things he wants to do is take a new look at the City’s goals. He pointed out that now the Council is fully in place for the first time in some time –in fact, he has not yet had in person meetings with the new Councilors.

He did point to one good thing that has come out of the pandemic. Because the City had to move much of its business online, residents have had more opportunities to see how government is working and to comment. He believes that the transparency that was created needs to be maintained in the future so that the public can participate more in governing without having to come to City Hall to attend meetings.

**City Club Board of Directors**

President	Heather Murphy	<a href="mailto:heatherm@casa-lane.org">heatherm@casa-lane.org</a>	
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