

Eugene Weekly : Coverstory : 7.26.07

ARTICLE | FEBRUARY 24, 2012 - 1:16AM

Operation Find a Better Boss

Anatomy of the next city manager

COMPILED BY THE EW STAFF

With the July 26 resignation of Eugene City Manager Dennis Taylor, Eugene is looking for a new boss.

Selecting that boss is one of the most important decisions local elected officials make. Eugene's system of government gives the manager king-like powers. The manager hires and fires a staff of 1,500 and controls a half-billion-dollar budget. He or she is supposed to follow council policy direction, but a string of past managers has been criticized for ignoring or subverting that direction, controlling all city information and setting rather than following city policy.

The City Council needs to act soon to find a replacement. Last time the council delayed a city manager search, critics say the unsupervised police department ran wild, resulting in officers Roger Magaña and Juan Lara out sexually abusing and/or raping women. The selection operation should also be public so the voters can hold councilors accountable for any malpractice.

Winning the city manager selection game will be a tricky operation. To aid the effort, *EW* dissected the city manager position for a subjective, head-to-toe exposé of what kind of a manager the city should be looking for.



Mike Gleason

Recent Manager History

Mike Gleason. 1981-1996, 15 years. Resigned after widespread criticism that he was ignoring council direction, providing biased or inadequate information and pursuing his own pro-development agenda, especially in giving huge tax breaks to Hynix.

Linda Norris. 1996, less than a year. The interim manager left for a management job at Hynix.

Warren Wong. 1996-1997, one year. The interim manager also went on to a manager stint at Hynix. He now manages the Lane County Fairgrounds.

Vicki Elmer. 1997-1998, one year. Elmer was fired after she angered the police union, city executives and developer interests by cutting budgets and trying to reform city management, the police, outside attorney and environmental practices.



Vicki Elmer

Jim Johnson. 1998-2002, four years. Councilors said they wanted someone the



bureaucracy liked after the tumultuous tenure of Vicki Elmer. But under Johnson, two Eugene police officers spent years sexually abusing more than a dozen women without the city putting a stop to it.

Jim Carlson. 2002, less than a year. Interim manager Carlson was criticized for giving more tax breaks to Hynix and failing to stop officer sex abuse.

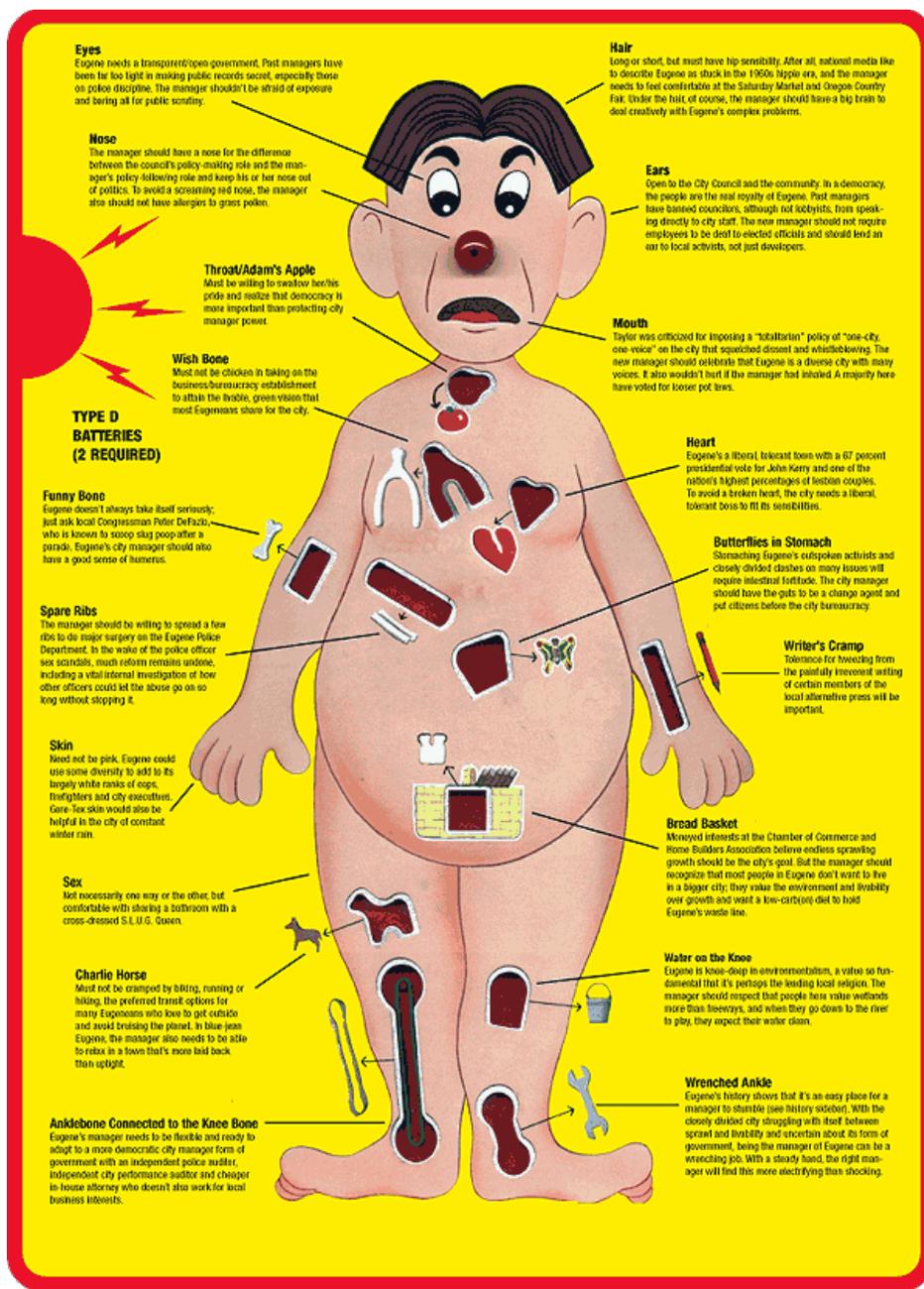
Dennis Taylor. 2003-2007, four years. Resigned amid mixed council reviews including friction with elected officials over his control of information, making policy rather than following council direction, opposition to an independent police auditor and failure to investigate police failings in the officer sex abuse scandal.



Dennis Taylor

Angel Jones. 2007-? Appointed interim city manager by mayor Kitty Piercy, Jones, a former Army captain, once headed the city's Library, Recreation and Culture department and served as assistant manager.

Cavity Sam/antha. 2008-? New city manager with operation game nickname reforms Eugene into new era of enlightenment based on slanted *EW* cover story.



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Funny Bone

Eugene doesn't always take itself seriously; just ask local Congressman Peter DeFazio, who is known to scoop slug poop after a parade. Eugene's city manager should also have a good sense of humor.

Spare Ribs

The manager should be willing to spread a few ribs to do major surgery on the Eugene Police Department. In the wake of the police officer sex scandals, much reform remains undone, including a vital internal investigation of how other officers could let the abuse go on so long without stopping it.

Skin

Need not be pink. Eugene could use some diversity to add to its largely white ranks of cops, firefighters and city executives. Gore-Tex skin

would also be helpful in the city of constant winter rain.

Anklebone Connected to the Knee Bone

Eugene's manager needs to be flexible and ready to adapt to a more democratic city manager form of government with an independent police auditor, independent city performance auditor and cheaper in-house attorney who doesn't also work for local business interests.

Sex

Not necessarily one way or the other, but comfortable with sharing a bathroom with a cross-dressed S.L.U.G. Queen.

Eyes

Eugene needs a transparent/open government. Past managers have been far too tight in making public records secret, especially those on police discipline. The manager shouldn't be afraid of exposure and baring all for public scrutiny.

Charlie Horse

Must not be cramped by biking, running or hiking, the preferred transit options for many Eugeneans who love to get outside and avoid bruising the planet. In blue-jean Eugene, the manager also needs to be able to relax in a town that's more laid back than uptight.

Nose

The manager should have a nose for the difference between the council's policy-making role and the manager's policy-following role and keep his or her nose out of politics. To avoid a screaming red nose, the manager also should not have allergies to grass pollen.

Wish Bone

Must not be chicken in taking on the business/bureaucracy establishment to attain the livable, green vision that most Eugeneans share for the city.

Throat/Adam's Apple

Must be willing to swallow her/his pride and realize that democracy is more important than protecting city manager power.

Hair

Long or short, but must have hip sensibility. After all, national media like to describe Eugene as stuck in the 1960s hippie era, and the manager needs to feel comfortable at the Saturday Market and Oregon Country Fair. Under the hair, of course, the manager should have a big brain to deal creatively with Eugene's complex problems.

Mouth

Taylor was criticized for imposing a "totalitarian" policy of "one-city, one-voice" on the city that squelched dissent and whistleblowing. The new manager should celebrate that Eugene is a diverse city with many voices. It also wouldn't hurt if the manager had inhaled. A majority here have voted for looser pot laws.

Ears

Open to the City Council and the community. In a democracy, the people are the real royalty of Eugene. Past managers have banned councilors, although not lobbyists, from speaking directly to city staff. The new manager should not require employees to be deaf to elected officials and should lend an ear to local activists, not just developers.

Bread Basket

Moneyed interests at the Chamber of Commerce and Home Builders Association believe endless sprawling growth should be the city's goal. But the manager should recognize that most people in Eugene don't want to live in a bigger city; they value the environment and livability over growth and want a low-carb(on) diet to hold Eugene's waste line.

Water on the Knee

Eugene is knee-deep in environmentalism, a value so fundamental that it's perhaps the leading local religion. The manager should respect that people here value wetlands more than freeways, and when they go down to the river to play, they expect their water clean.

Heart

Eugene's a liberal, tolerant town with a 67 percent presidential vote for John Kerry and one of the nation's highest percentages of lesbian couples. To avoid a broken heart, the city needs a liberal, tolerant boss to fit its sensibilities.

Wrenched Ankle

Eugene's history shows that it's an easy place for a manager to stumble (see history sidebar). With the closely divided city struggling with itself between sprawl and livability and uncertain about its form of government, being the manager of Eugene can be a wrenching job. With a steady hand, the right manager will find this more electrifying than shocking.

Butterflies in Stomach

Stomaching Eugene's outspoken activists and closely divided clashes on many issues will require intestinal fortitude. The city manager should have the guts to be a change agent and put citizens before the city bureaucracy.

Writer's Cramp

Tolerance for tweezing from the painfully irreverent writing of certain members of the local alternative press will be important.

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