

West Keizer Neighborhood Association General Meeting Minutes

Oct. 13, 2016

Keizer Civic Center

Submitted by Carolyn Homan, WKNA secretary (as transcribed from a tape recording of the meeting.)

Call to order – President Gary Blake called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. at Keizer Civic Center and welcomed approximately 14 people. Gary asked everyone to sign in and reminded everyone that they can keep up with WKNA activities at westkeizerna.com. He also pointed out that the secretary could not attend and that the meeting would be recorded and the minutes transcribed from the recording. Introductions were made around the room. Mike Reid, retired from Seattle, spoke about the effort to construct a third bridge over the Willamette to West Salem. He is a Keizer resident. Gary invited him to share comments from the recent bridge meeting in the “new business section” of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes for May 12, 2016 – Gary asked for any corrections. Rhonda said the correct date on the holiday tree lighting is Dec. 6, not Nov. 29, and that the minutes would be corrected. It was moved and seconded to approve minutes as amended. Motion carried.

Budget for 2016-17 – There have been no expenditures from WKNA's 2016-17 budget.

Speakers:

Gary introduced Shaney Starr, Executive Director, CASA Marion County (Court Appointed Special Advocates) and Eric Bandonis, Marion County Sheriff Parole and Probation officer, and announced that they will be followed by candidates for Keizer City Council.

Shaney Starr – She explained that CASA is a “community owned, volunteer driven, staff supported” organization with the mission to ensure that all abused and neglected children in foster homes to find safe, permanent homes where they can thrive. “I think everyone can agree that children deserve that,” she said. Oregon revised statutes give CASA legal standing so that every foster child is appointed a CASA. A CASA is a volunteer who goes through a rigorous background check and training program. They are then appointed to a sibling unit (one or more children) and are charged with gathering all information about that child or children, to include medical, mental health and education records and info as well as their Department of Human Services file. Sometimes that will include reports from Liberty House, the local child abuse assessment center. The CASA will meet with the child/children regularly and take all the information gathered and synthesize it and make reports to the judge about what they believe would be in the best interest of the child/children. The CASA also serves as eyes, ears of court outside the courtroom, making sure the child gets access to educational support, mental health help and any other wrap-around services and that DHS is making those contacts for the children.

Shaney has been in her position 5 months. Her charge is to grow the program, both financially and the volunteer base. She said they have 45 active volunteers and are training 33 more. For perspective about that, she said that in fiscal year 2015/16 CASA trained 25 volunteers for the year. They can serve 75 to 100 children but Marion County has about 419 foster children that don't have an advocate. “If we can make a dent in that, it would be a significant accomplishment.”

The organization has a budget of about \$300,000. They are required to meet about 56 pages of standards from the national organization, including staffing ratios. They are required to have one staffer for every 38 volunteers. She said they don't get full funding from the state so they're required to do fundraising.

She said presentations are about awareness and asking for volunteers. She asked attendees to share information with others who might be able and willing to volunteer. She acknowledged that it is a hard job and that the cases can be heartbreaking. “We're here to make sure kids are safe and thriving.”

In the question/answer period, Mayor Cathy Clark asked about other community partners. Shaney cited Liberty House, Family Building Blocks and Catholic Community Services as among the main partners, along with DHS. She also said they do have Jane Downing from the Center for Hope and Safety train on domestic violence issues.

Asked about an “ideal” recruit, she said it's anyone with love for helping children who can pass the initial interview, the comprehensive background check, do the 30 hours of training (15 on line, 15 in person) and “realistically, are they are fit to do the work and can they handle it, because it is tough.” The in-person training is done on two Saturdays 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and one session on a Tuesday. Another requirement is meeting with

DHS case workers, the judge, etc. CASA is doing training about every 2 months. Her goal by end of 2017 is to have enough volunteers to serve all foster children in the county. "We're a voice for the voiceless and faceless." She shared brochures describing the program. The website is casamarionor.org.

Eric Bandonis, Marion County parole/probation officer (housed at Keizer Police Department): He noted that this is his quarterly appearance and the next will be in February. He said his case load, which had been low, has jumped a bit, although it's still below the average general case load. The department has added positions -- two new sex offender parole officers, two new domestic violence parole officers and a special services parole officer and a transition parole officer, so future caseloads will be a lot lower. Right now he's at 48 cases; the average general case load is 56. The sex offender case load is 60 and the domestic violence case load is at 67, which he said is challenging because that clientele is harder to control and they have greater needs. The new positions will really help. Special services will work with dangerous offenders, gang members, clientele that have a lot of needs. The parole/probation department also is at full staff so can provide better services.

The case numbers have been dropping because of evidence-based practices used by the department and parole/probation's use of teaching tools to drop recidivism. Case numbers are down 4.2% from last year, a good trend.

He said Lt. Copeland, from Keizer Police Department, could not attend but wanted him to mention a couple of items. At Wallace House Park, KPD got together with code enforcement and closed three homeless camps. Officers are still working on camps at Keizer Rapids Park. Asked how bad the situation was at KRP, he said it wasn't as bad as Polk County on the other side of the river. He said KPD bike patrols are going out on KRP trails to address camp sites there.

Also, there have been car break-ins at KRP and police are advising everyone to lock your doors, hide your belongings, etc. He also noted safety tips for Halloween -- keeping outdoor lights on, take care walking while trick or treating, etc.

Mayor Clark lauded the job parole/probation is going to keep people from repeat offending and cited the Giving People a Second Chance Breakfast Oct. 25, sponsored by the Marion County Reentry Initiative.

Eric referred attendees to the Sheriff's Office website for information: www.co.marion.or.us/SO

Keizer Council Candidate presentations:

Allen Barker and Laura Reid are vying for Position 1, Keizer City Council. Gary said Allen Barker was delayed by a family emergency and introduced Laura Reid.

Laura Reid: She has been a Keizer resident for 15 years and has taught at McNary High School all those years. She said Keizer is a wonderful place to live/work and she "would love to be part of decision making that's going on," adding that she respects the past/present council members and mayors who have worked hard to make Keizer a wonderful place to live.

With her background in education, she has "gotten to know Keizer citizens pretty well." She sees McNary as a key part of the city and it has "highlighted for me that this is a great place for kids to grow up." Her children grew up in Keizer, went to McNary and were well prepared for adult life. She sees her main qualification as being able to listen carefully. Part of being teacher, and being involved in organizations like Keizer Community Homegrown Theater, her church organization and leadership positions in those areas, has shown her the importance of listening carefully "to a variety of perspectives and seeking out perspectives that are not readily available, making sure everyone is heard, not just the loudest. I may not have the government background or qualifications of others but I'm a willing citizen and willing to listen to those who do know and make informed decisions that way."

In question/answer, she was asked what inspired her to take this step. She said that in following city happenings in the Keizertimes, she was concerned that people not stepping up, and taking a stand for positions. The city has many capable people, "but that willingness is important and to be able to give back, and say this is community I love. I want to be able to serve in the way that I can."

At McNary, she teaches English, specifically public speaking, and her background (an undergraduate degree in communications/public relations) informed a lot of what I do in reaching out to various publics. She and her husband lived in Corvallis 9 years while in graduate school. She said her husband a teacher too, currently teaching online courses for Brigham Young University-Idaho.

Kim Freeman – position 2: She is unopposed. She said this is her first time running, because she was appointed to her current position and has served about 3 ½ years. She noted that she was one of 7 people who applied for the position and she was fortunate to be selected. So far, it has been a whirlwind of activity and the job is a huge time commitment. Although it was on her “bucket list” to be on council, she didn’t run at 1st because she was in a new job. Her full-time job is with Oregon Housing and Community Services. Her reason for running again: “I wanted to see a lot of things through.” She feels she’s just gotten to be involved and understand council workings in detail. She previously served on the budget committee for three years, which was great background for council, and 12 years on the volunteer coordinating committee, which is a “great opportunity to see all the committees in Keizer and the wonderful people who apply to be involved.” Among the accomplishments of the city is a balanced budget. She noted there are challenges coming up but the council is committed to looking at new resources and options. She cited the city’s “great staff and volunteers.” She also cited the new roundabout and reminded people to turn their turn signal on when ready to exit roundabout. She noted that there are a lot of things city does very well with volunteers, citing Clint Holland and the annual summer concert series he coordinates. Among challenges ahead: The budget and parks, police decisions to be made. Public safety is always a top issue, she said. Citizens also will be hearing a lot about storm water and new regulations. Communication and how best to reach out and contact the most people is very important. She said the city needs to use all partners, including the Chamber, Rotary, etc., to inform people and get them involved. In question/answer, Clint Holland asked if the city ever thought about contracting w/Salem to use the storm water treatment facility on River Road. Mayor Cathy Clark said there was no need because Keizer is revamping its entire storm water system and additional capacity has been built in.

Cathy Clark – Running unopposed for another term as mayor. She said she is honored to be mayor of this city. It’s her 10th year on council, including two full terms as a councilor. From the start, her focus has been transportation issues. She is chair of the Salem/Keizer Area Transportation Study and also vice-chair of the Mid-Willamette Area Commission on Transportation, working on transportation planning for Salem/Keizer area, including transit. Also represents Keizer statewide on the Oregon Municipal Planning Organizations Consortium, where representatives from around the state work together on transportation policy and legislative agenda. She also is one of four co-chairs of the Mid Willamette Homeless Initiative, which includes representatives from Keizer and Salem and Marion and Polk counties. She cited a very tight housing market in Keizer. Mayor Clark and Councilor Kim Freeman both serve on the panel. Cathy said they are working on ways to collaborate to provide services, appropriate shelter, appropriate responses for those in crisis. She said the police have been great. “They get it. They want to get people’s problems solved.” Over the years, she said, issues may have changed but she hasn’t seen a change in Keizer’s heart. It’s still a great place with a strong volunteer spirit where people care about their neighbors. “I’m thrilled to work alongside some amazing people and working with you to make Keizer kind of place our children can raise their children.” In answer to a question, she said the next “Coffee with Cathy” event is this Saturday at McNary Golf Club. She said everyone welcome to come and discuss issues of importance. Michael Reid said he had wanted to identify a contact in city government regarding traffic/transit issues and noted that Cathy had self-identified as that source.

Marlene Parsons – Running for Position No. 3, Incumbent, unopposed. She ran against 2 other candidates four years ago and has served on council four years. She moved to Keizer 1994. She had taught school in Portland. She had attended an event at McNary High School and she and her husband were so impressed with the town that when decided to move, they knew Keizer was where they wanted to go. They got involved in Little League right away. In 1998, she was talked into volunteering on Parks Board and ended up serving about 10 years. She also was on the River Road Renaissance committee and other service, including the volunteer coordinating committee for 6-7 years. She eventually decided she wanted to do more and have a bigger voice. Keizer’s volunteer committees are advisory boards; they work on issues and take recommendations to council, but she wanted to be on the decision side. Since joining council, she has been chair of the Big Toy effort, which was well worth the 2 ½ year commitment, she said. She serves on the planning commission and was council liaison to the Parks board. She also praised city staff as second to none and said she’s proud that the council and city “work within our budget.” The biggest concerns she sees – public safety and parks. Ten years ago Keizer had 41 sworn police officers and 8,000 less people; now it has 37 officers and 8,000 more people and has issues we didn’t have 10 years ago,

including homelessness, drugs. There will always be crime but we want enough officers to keep things safe, she said. "We're going to have to have conversations about what people are willing to pay for and what they want." Parks also are very important. Keizer has parks maintenance issues – courts that need resurfacing, grass that needs mowing, etc. A good development was the matching grants program set up through Parks board but Keizer still has to find a way to maintain amenities like the Big Toy. That's one reason she's running again. "I wanted to do more" and wants to come up with ways to fund safety, parks, work with more volunteers. She cited the city's housing crisis but noted that the council sits as judge on any land use issue. When applicants come before the council with projects, if they follow the city's land-use criteria, the council has to OK them. If they don't, the council can say no.

On another issue, she said she's working with Rep. Bill Post on getting Keizer its own Zip code. Technically, according to Zip codes, she said, Keizer has three grocery stores – Safeway, Roth's on Portland Road and Fred Meyer (across from Riverfront Park). For that reason and others, backers want to cut ties with Salem and get Keizer its own Zip. Sen. Merkely and Rep. Schrader also are involved.

Allen Barker, running for Position 1 against Laura Reid – He moved to Keizer about 1 ½ years ago. He serves on Keizer's Budget Committee. He's from Spokane originally and has a variety of work experience, including finance, security and construction. Through his many career paths, he said he knows a lot about budgets and how they can affect people at the national, state and city levels. He invited people to check out his website at VoteForAllenBarker.com. He also has a video done by CCTV (there's a link on his website). He cited citizen notification of city issues and activities as an important topic and that it's important to get people involved. People need to be properly informed on issues and, in turn, council needs their feedback on priorities. Web tools can be important. He described an application in which each registered voter's voter ID, email and phone number (smart phone) can be requested so that the council can notify everyone when an important issue arises and ask for input. There's no excuse for people not to be informed if such an app can be put in place. He reinforced opinions about city staff being great to work with and staff taking ownership of services and city facilities and systems. He praised the new roundabout as working well and also praised the job the police are doing. (Sorry -- could not hear some of his presentation well enough to transcribe.)

Old business:

A follow up on the September general meeting discussion about the timing of road and sidewalk repair in Keizer: Colleen Busch, member of the Board of Directors for the Salem Keizer Transit District recommends toing to

<http://mwvcog.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=8c6248fe680942ffa5ef5b96d85de77c>

for more information

September 10th Adopt a Street report: Kim Freeman reported on a "great day for clean up," which started an hour early, at 9 a.m., which worked well and allowed people to attend the new Town and Country mural dedication later on that same day.

Participants were coordinators Ron and Kim Freeman; Ron and Karyl Allen; Carolyn Homan; Davis Dyer; Kathy Lincoln; and Gary Blake.

Five 5 bags of trash were collected, all about half full. Kim received thanks at the check-in point and others received thank yous on the route.

Mark your calendar:

WKNA Board meeting – Thursday, Nov. 3, 6:30 p.m.

WKNA General meeting – Thursday, Nov. 10, 7 p.m. Speaker: Elizabeth Sagmiller, manager for Environmental & Technical Division of the Keizer Public Works Dept./Stormwater.

Meeting adjourned: 8:55 p.m. p.m55 p.m.