

West Keizer Neighborhood Association General Meeting

7 p.m., Nov. 13, 2014, at Keizer Civic Center
Minutes submitted by Carolyn Homan, secretary

Call to order, introductions -- WKNA President Rhonda Rich called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., with about 22 people attending. Rhonda welcomed everyone, urged attendees to sign in and asked for introductions to be made around the room. Attendees included guests Eric Bandonis, Marion County Parole and Probation officer housed at Keizer Police Dept.; Sgt. Bob Trump, Keizer Police Dept.; and Bill Lawyer, Keizer Public Works. Arriving later was Keizer Councilman Jim Taylor.

Approval of Minutes for Oct. 9, 2014 – Rhonda asked for approval of minutes. Ron Freeman moved approval and Darrell Richardson seconded. The minutes were approved.

WKNA Budget for 2013-14 – Rhonda reported that WKNA has spent \$83.49 for printing out of the \$900 budget for 2014-15.

Police Report – Sgt. Trump reported on the recent clean-up of homeless camps at Wallace House Park. Police worked within city ordinances and state law to get the homeless individuals removed and city employees worked with hazardous materials professionals on the cleanup. Sgt. Trump said he hoped that next spring, the city could thin brush in the lower, riverside areas of Wallace House to make the area less hospitable to the homeless.

As a holiday season reminder, Sgt. Trump urged people to lock their car doors, not to leave presents inside cars where they can be seen, to leave house lights on if they leave on vacation and notify neighbors that they will be away.

He said the Community Response bike patrols this summer were a success. Officers talked to a lot of people and identified a lot of concerns that wouldn't have been possible had they been passing by in a patrol car. They also identified a lot of vacant houses, which is a relatively new phenomenon because of the rash of foreclosures in recent years. Police recently arrested a woman who was parked in front of a vacant house taking pictures to post on the web so people would know it was available for squatters. This is an increasing problem, as illustrated by the police arrests that occurred recently at a vacant house on Verda Lane. Drug problems and squatters there had made the property a disaster, he said.

"This is a livability issue," Sgt. Trump said and police are monitoring the situation. In answer to a question, he said that police attempt to contact the owners because getting people out of a property can be difficult without approval of an owner. In the case of the Verda property, a bank was the owner and officials cooperated to get the squatters out. Otherwise it can mean a mound of paperwork and working with judges to get an eviction, Trump said.

He urged people to contact KPD if they know of a vacant house. Police will keep track of it and drive by occasionally to help make sure it's not a comfortable place for transients to occupy.

Rhonda noted that there are a lot of riverside parks in the West Keizer neighborhood and asked if police could do a night-time sweep every few months as a way to check for transients or homeless people who might be camping illegally. Sgt. Trump said that should be no problem, since people are not to be in the parks at night.

Cathy Clark asked about an individual who was sleeping on a bench near Wells Fargo bank on River Road earlier this year. Trump said he did not know what had happened but would find out.

Deputy Bandonis – He noted that caseloads for parole/probation officers have dropped into more manageable levels. He's supervising 51 or so people and the average is 53, compared with the 90 or so people he was supervising when he started. He handles drug and crime cases, but no domestic violence, which is a specific unit. Less than 154 people are on supervision in all in Keizer. He said the decrease is the result of the cognitive approach now being used, as opposed to the old approach which basically was a containment issue where officers waited for a person to reoffend. Under the cognitive approach, "we're teaching them skills" -- things as simple as learning to have a conversation. They work on parenting skills, getting proper ID, setting up a bank account, applying for jobs, getting into school – most anything the probationers need help with and that will help prevent more victims, he said. He also said that the county doesn't now provide gender specific parole supervision but that might occur in the future because women tend to have higher needs, mainly due to parenting situations.

Marion Co. Sheriff also has a Victims Advocate who works with victims of crime.

In answer to a question, he said many probationers do participate in community service but most times placement is arranged through another organization. He said he does have some say in some placements and works with a contact at the City of Keizer on city- and parks-related projects.

Guest speaker – Bill Lawyer, Keizer Public Works Director: He provided an overview of various city public works projects, starting with storm water. Upgrades here started in 2007, primarily because of state and federal requirements for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit to discharge storm water runoff to waterways. The permit came with a lot of regulations but no funding mechanism, he said, so the city created a storm water utility and fee structure to support it.

Basically, storm water is runoff from driveways, streets, sidewalks, etc., that goes into the ground and in Keizer, is discharged into three main waterways – Labish Ditch, Claggett Creek and, ultimately, the Willamette. A TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) is established for pollutants including mercury, bacteria and temperature and the water's condition can't get any worse as it flows through Keizer. To accomplish this, Keizer proactively manages the system, whereas before, the system was complaint driven, he said.

A new phenomenon is storm water swales to help purify runoff. These are being required in new subdivisions and projects such as the Chemawa Road improvements.

In answer to a question, he said that the River Road facility across from Fred Meyer North is a Salem sanitary sewer overflow project, not a storm water project. Salem got a permit to build it and it's one of the first in the country. It takes sewer overflow during major precipitation events and treats it so it can be safely discharged into the river. The flow comes mainly from leaky pipes, he said.

Drinking water – All of Keizer's drinking water comes from wells. Nothing is added except fluoride, Lawyer said. The water contains many minerals – manganese, iron, calcium – which cause build-up in toilet tanks and elsewhere. It looks bad, but the water itself is pure and clean, he said. At times, hydrogen sulfide in the water will cause odor problems, and the city has taken the well in the Lacey Court area offline because of odor issues.

A typical scenario is when water smells first thing in the morning – caused when water sits in the line overnight and the hydrogen sulfide precipitates out. If you're having odor problems with this "first-draw water," Lawyer said, changing the section of water line from the wall to your sink from flexible material to copper will help. He also asked that people call him if there is a problem. "We need to know." If water has an odor all the time, there is some other issue at work.

As for water usage and your bill, Lawyer explained that the city calculates rates based on a four-month average. For West Keizer, November through February are used to set sewer rates. Being conservative in use during those months will lower your bills. If you experience a leak during those months, he said to let the city know because they can research usage history and reset rates.

He also said there is a minimum average rate used for households on wells where there is no way to monitor usage.

Street projects – Construction on the roundabout project planned for Verda Lane at Chemawa will begin in June 2015 and continue for about 90 days, Lawyer said. The intersection will be CLOSED during this period, he said. The city could have kept it open and used detours, but it would have created a longer construction period and some confusing traffic patterns.

The Chemawa Road improvements are very close to completion and he has been advised that the traffic signal should be active this week or at least very soon. The project has been “complicated,” he said.

In contrast, the Shoreline Drive improvement project this summer went very smoothly with a cooperative contractor, good communications with neighbors and a good job done on time.

The annual resurfacing list for summer of 2015 will be developed soon. The city is awaiting the pavement condition index done by Marion County. The lower the number, the worse the street’s condition. Shoreline, for instance, was 24 out of 100.

Because the city has steadily been working to improve its streets, the average condition is now in the high 50s and low 60s, he said. Those numbers are before “failure,” so the city is at the point where it can put off residential street projects for a year or so to begin more expensive projects such as River Road.

In the Water Division, water main replacements are to begin this winter. The city has a lot of 60-year-old pipes that have started leaking so Keizer is trying to get out in front of it, Lawyer said. Bids will determine whether the city can do all planned replacements this winter. Projects involve about 5,000 feet of pipe.

Streets may experience brief closures but the work goes quickly, Lawyer said. If all projects are funded, sections of Rivercrest, Menlo, Marino, Manbrin, Larry, Toni and Rowan will be affected at various times.

In answer to questions, Lawyer said formal requests for no parking to improve sight lines at intersections can be made to him. He has the authority to declare a 50 foot no parking zone but normally doesn’t use it unless there is an obvious safety issue. He will evaluate formal requests, however, and make a recommendation to city council. This happened recently for the intersection of Rafael and Shoreline.

He noted the high level of development under way in Keizer – 54 homes being constructed on Windsor Island Road, 32 on Willow Lake, 30 in two other areas, a large apartment complex on McGee and the assisted living complex behind Emerald Pointe.

Parks projects – The main item is the Master Plan for Keizer Rapids Park. On Dec. 1, City Council will consider amendments that were recommended by the Parks Advisory Board. On Nov. 3, City Council directed city staff to move the Big Toy to the open grass area between the filbert orchard sections and create a path (ADA compliant) from the parking lot to the toy.

Other changes include making the buffer on the east edge 25 feet, not 75 feet. Rhonda also has requested improvements to the connector path from Tate Ave. into the park and Lawyer said that should be possible once Master Plan improvements begin.

Referring to Sgt. Trump's suggestion that the city thin brush next spring in Wallace House Park, Lawyer noted that the city is regulated as to what it can do there because it's a natural area. In addition, it's impossible to get equipment into the lower area, making brush trimming a challenge. The problem of homeless in remote park areas is a longstanding problem, he said, while acknowledging that the issue escalated this past summer. Given Keizer's limited parks funding, a solution is hard to come by.

Rhonda asked about the issue of sidewalks or other improvements along Delight Street, to enhance safety for children walking to and from Cummings Elementary as well as McNary High School. Lawyer said the second round of traffic counts is in and he anticipates being able to start conversations about what to do early in 2015. Lawyer has only looked at right-of-way needs and talks also need to be initiated with the school district. He said the City Engineer does have some plans in the works.

In closing, he urged anyone with issues or questions to call or email him.

West Keizer Parks report – Update on KRP community build play structure: Ron Freeman, the WKNA Board's representative to the Big Toy Task Force, reported that the Big Toy website is up and running. There are a lot of pictures of similar structures and the gallery also includes photos of the children's drawings used in helping design the Keizer project. The website has opportunities for people to donate to the project, buy a commemorative fence picket or sign up to volunteer. The address is www.KeizerBigToy.org.

At the next committee meeting, the group should have the final site for the toy (Council is to approve it Dec. 1) and the build is scheduled next June.

Keizer Rapids Park Master Planning – Rhonda reviewed the process so far, including testimony she and WKNA Vice President Carol Doerfler's testimony at the Parks Advisory Board and again at the City Council meeting Nov. 3 about neighborhood concerns, including traffic and noise. About eight neighbors attended the council meeting, including a couple of Tate Ave. residents concerned about the buffer and potential lighting of sports fields.

There was some talk of keeping the park in a natural state and one neighbor testified about the possibility of use of the filbert orchard in science experiments regarding natural succession. Clint Holland addressed parking concerns, noting that plans call for about 250 spaces but more will be needed.

Rhonda shared a handout recapping discussion of the Master Plan from the Nov. 6 WKNA Board Meeting that included the 13 amendments being considered by the city council. These are: 1) Lighting (has to be "dark sky.") 2) Trimming brush along the river to improve views. 3) Moving the fence at the southwest corner of the orchard over next to Walsh Way. 4) Putting the Big Toy in the grassy area between the orchard blocks. 5) Creating overflow parking for amphitheater north of the boat ramp parking. 6) Creating ADA parking in the "big tree" area (original site for Big Toy.) 7) Adding bike parking and

charging stations. 8) Creating adult-size softball fields in northeast section of orchard. 9) Creating horseshoe pit. 10) Creating additional dog park parking on north end of dog park. 11) Designating southern field east of boat ramp parking as open play and event area. 12) Adding directional signage and maps throughout the park. 13) Creating 25-foot buffer along eastern edge of the park, River to Chemawa Road.

Rhonda contacted City Attorney Shannon Johnson about whether neighbors can still email concerns to city councilors and he said it's permissible because this is not a quasi-judicial vote.

She urged people to attend the council meeting but also noted that council, planning commission and parks board meetings are televised on Channel K23.

Adopt-A-Street cleanup for Chemawa Road – Four people helped out with cleanup on Oct. 11, working Chemawa from Windsor Island to KRP. Rhonda encouraged everyone to be conscious of picking up trash as they are out and about in order to help keep the neighborhood clean on an ongoing basis.

New Business – Rhonda shared a handout of activities planned in Keizer during the upcoming holiday season.

City Council Kim Freeman urged anyone interested to join in a clean-up at City Hall planned at 9 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 15. Mark Callier is lead organizer. She said people should bring rakes and shovels. People also will be planting some new trees.

Future meetings – There will be no WKNA meeting in December. The next meeting is Jan. 9, 2015, which will open with the annual meeting and election of officers. She urged people to consider Board service to fill some upcoming vacancies.

She is inviting Police Chief John Teague to be the guest speaker for the regular meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.