

West Keizer Neighborhood Association General Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2014

Submitted by Carolyn Homan, secretary

Introductions -- President Rhonda Rich called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. at the Keizer Civic Center. Approximately 20 people were in attendance and introductions were made around the room. Among guests in attendance were Lt. Andrew Copeland from Keizer Police Dept.

Approval of minutes -- Rhonda asked for approval of minutes from the February 13, 2014 WKNA General Meeting, which had been emailed to members and copies of which were also available at the door. Ron Freeman moved to approve the minutes as submitted and Clint Holland seconded. Motion carried.

Budget for 2013-14 -- Rhonda noted that the WKNA budget for 2014 is due by the end of March and that the association Board had decided to ask Keizer City Council to budget \$500 again this year for WKNA. About \$485 of the \$500 budgeted for 2013 will be spent by the end of the fiscal year, June 30, she said. She also clarified that the funds are earmarked for communication -- things such as the website, lawn signs advertising WKNA meetings, WKNA brochures, a banner, etc. She said the city's budget hearings will be held in May and will be televised on Channel 23 if people are interested. Budget details are on the city's website, she said. City Councilor Kim Freeman said six citizen members will be appointed to the budget committee and she encouraged anyone interested to apply for a spot. She also urged citizens to talk to any council member if they have an issue they would like addressed.

Law enforcement update -- Rhonda introduced Lt. Andrew Copeland, from Keizer Police Department, who gave a run-down of current police activities in Keizer. He said daytime burglaries have been an issue and police made seven arrests recently in connection with these incidents. So far, 17 different burglaries, some of which occurred in the West Keizer area, have been connected to those who were arrested. He noted that the mode of operation was to knock on the front door and if no one answered, to try to break in the back. He told the group that if they knew of anyone whose home has been broken into to urge them to contact police.

KPD hopes to see a reduction in these incidents thanks to these arrests but there are things residents can do to reduce the likelihood of a break-in, he said: Make sure papers don't pile up on the porch; turn off your porch light during the day; be sure trash cans are taken in off the street; trim bushes around your house; know your neighbors! Get a neighbor to watch out for your place when you're away. It was noted that KPD has vacation notification forms online and reserve officers will check your property while you're gone. They will take packages off porches and deal with other tell-tale issues for homeowners as part of this service.

Lt. Copeland also spoke of the recent homicide on Ventura Loop.

Sherri Tosi, president of Cummings Elementary PTC, asked about a transient who has been sleeping at the Wells Fargo property on River Road. Lt. Copeland urged her to call police. There are resources for homeless people and the department would work to connect this individual with help.

Lt. Copeland said the KPD is going to start bike patrols in West Keizer. Officers underwent training just this week. He said it is part of a ramped up Community Response Team. He said that the bike patrols will not operate in inclement weather.

He also alerted citizens to current phone scams. One ploy is to tell people there is a warrant they need to pay. His advice: Don't -- just call police about it. He also asked people to call if they see anything suspicious in their neighborhood. There have been issues with late night car break-ins and citizens can help by keeping an eye out for anyone out of place in the neighborhood.

He advised using the non-emergency line if an issue is not urgent -- something such as a transient in the neighborhood. But don't hesitate to use 911 if you feel it's warranted, he said.

In answer to a question, he said that the amount of crime isn't up, it's just fairly steady with low-level crimes such as the car break-ins. He said KPD is getting better at processing cars for evidence, which may help curtail this problem.

There has been no rise in "stranger" crimes such as assaults. Gang activity goes up and down and drugs continue to cause a lot of problems. Medical marijuana has caused a lot of thefts.

Sherri Tosi, Cummings PTC president, noted the recent beautification project at the school provided by WKNA. The reader board area was cleaned out and improved with bark dust and pansies, planted by Rhonda Rich, Carol Doerfler and Gary Blake. The bark dust was provided by Copper Creek Mercantile. City Councilor Cathy Clark said she would like to post a photo of the project on her Facebook page.

Tosi also alerted the group to an Arts & Authors event planned at Cummings school at 6 p.m. April 1 to promote literacy. There will be a silent auction and she said they are looking for artists and authors to participate in the event.

Rhonda thanked Sherri for the information and noted that she and Carol Doerfler had attended the recent PTC meeting to help build neighborhood association connections with the school. A topic for future cooperation will be sidewalks along Delight Street to improve safety for school children walking to Cummings and to McNary High School.

Speakers -- 1) Christine Dieker was scheduled to update the group on Iris Festival events but was unable to attend.

2) City Councilor Cathy Clark then presented information on transportation issues affecting Keizer and the West Keizer neighborhood. She has spent 7 1/2 years representing Keizer on various transportation-related committees, including the one developing the city's state-required transportation plan. She said Keizer has a reputation for being frugal with tax dollars but despite that, she said Keizer's plan is very complete and well thought out. It includes the whole system from roads to bike lanes and sidewalks.

She began by addressing her work with the group looking at the feasibility of a third bridge across the Willamette River. She has been Keizer's representative to the bridge project planning group in recent years, succeeding former councilor Richard Walsh. Keizer's exit from Interstate 5 puts the city in a unique spot between Portland and the Oregon Coast, she said. It also makes the third bridge project across the Willamette very important to Keizer, even though none of it is in Keizer. Studies show that 60% of the traffic across the bridge starts and ends outside the Salem-Keizer area. "We're a pass through," she said.

The group has voted to pursue what is called the "Salem alternative" -- a scaled down version of what she called the "engineers' dream." This version is buildable. It will improve bike lanes on both sides of the river. It will be better for livability in downtown Salem and it will help the local economy, she said. The group is starting to talk about financing and detailed engineering. She urged people to check out www.salemrivercrossing.org for details.

In answer to a question, she acknowledged there is a dedicated group of residents in opposition to a third bridge. While she understands their concerns, she said a big issue for opponents has been the cost. She said that the current alternative comes in at about \$400 million, compared with \$800 million for some of the first designs. In addition, some opponents believe oil is going to run out, making new roads

unnecessary. As for those who back alternative modes of transportation, she said alternatives those will help with congestion but studies show that even elaborate changes would only eliminate 8% of the bridge traffic.

The Salem Alternative bridge would cross the Willamette at Pine and Hickory. A north-south alternative will be built to parallel Wallace Road and connect with Highway 22.

On Keizer transportation issues, she updated the group on plans for completing Chemawa and improving Shoreline. The Shoreline project will be done this summer with local dollars. Bill Lawyer, head of Public Works, already is working with neighbors to communicate the timeline and details of planned improvements. The sidewalks have to be widened in accordance with ADA standards (5 feet wide) -- a federal requirement with any rebuild, along with handicapped cutouts at intersections. Plans are to "soften" the sharp curve at Shoreline and Wayne but it will not be eliminated, she said.

The Chemawa Road project will get finished. She has been talking frequently with the Oregon Department of Transportation area 3 manager, as well as Bill Lawyer, about plans. There have been major issues with utilities along the road. A \$1 million transportation grant is part of the \$2.5 million in total cost for the Chemawa project. The project's rain gardens are expensive to put in but they save money in the long run on maintenance, she said. And they do a great job when there are heavy rains. A traffic light at the intersection with Delight, at the entrance to McNary High School, also will be part of the project.

In looking at sidewalks around Cummings School, she said Cummings Lane is included in the transportation project. Sherrie Tosi emphasized the dangers for children walking along Delight Street and pointed out that the school's main entrance used to be on Cummings, but it is now on Delight. As a result, traffic on Judes Street, flowing east/west from River Road toward the school, is now very heavy. She encouraged the city to look at those other streets.

Part of the problem is knowing the issues, Councilor Clark said. One factor that has increased foot traffic along Delight is the loss of an easement off Dearborn into the open play field north of Cummings. Questions were raised about that because property owners can't just close off an easement. Apparently a resident has placed a utility shed in the area of the easement. Councilor Clark said she had called about it but hasn't been able to get any answers from the county or the school district. She urged the group to engage school parents and the neighborhood in planning changes.

On another transportation issue, Councilor Clark talked about Oregon Passenger Rail planning. She noted that Councilor Marlene Quinn has handled a lot of this for the city. Alignment is still an issue but she noted that Keizer Station was named that for a reason. The city is pushing for Keizer Station to be a passenger stop. Current plans call for partial use of existing rails. Would a stop at Keizer Station disrupt traffic on Chemawa? Yes. She referred the group to www.oregonpassengerrail.org for details.

As for a pedestrian crossing to the Kroc Center, she said this will be addressed in two phases: a path from Hyacinth to the center and second, an overpass across Salem Parkway. The bicycle/pedestrian trail along the railroad tracks from Hyacinth is desirable because there are sidewalks and bus service along Hyacinth. Once this is accomplished, planners can begin looking at funding for an overpass over the Parkway, which will be expensive.

Councilor Clark noted that a traffic circle at Verda and Chemawa will be built, probably in 2015. Funding is in hand. The project will move the intersection south a bit, taking a corner of the farm field there. That property has been sold for development, she said.

In closing, she said that citizen feedback is always appreciated.

Keizer Rapids Park playstructure update -- Rhonda noted that \$50 had been collected (\$40 at the last general WKNA meeting and \$10 at the WKNA Board meeting) to buy a commemorative picket as part of the fence to be erected around the Keizer Rapids Park Big Toy play structure. Because lettering is limited to 18 characters (including spaces), the picket will say **W Keizer Neighbors**.

Ron Freeman, WKNA's representative to the playstructure planning group, reported on the group's recent meeting. He said discussion centers around the different committees organized to handle the build, which are starting to have their own meetings. He and his wife, City Councilor Kim Freeman, are in charge of the committee to recruit the many volunteers that will be needed to complete the project. There is a Big Toy Facebook page and they are in the process of setting up a website that will have volunteer forms to download and perhaps an automated form that can be filled out on line.

The playstructure planning is also focusing on fundraising. One committee is looking at grants and another at sponsors for different sections of the project.

He said there has been a lot of back and forth on the design with the consultant at Leathers & Associates, especially around how things were imagined and how things are coming out on the plans. A trapeze element was a recent issue, as well as the water feature.

Rhonda noted that at its March 6 meeting, the WKNA Board again discussed placement of the playstructure and once again endorsed Area B, the triangular area north of the boat ramp. Area B also was endorsed by a majority at the February WKNA general meeting. She informed meeting attendees that there were surveys at the back of the room regarding playstructure siting and urged anyone interested to fill one out.

"Area C" along Chemawa east of the dog park, which was suggested by Mayor Christopher, is in play. If this area is selected, the Urban Growth Boundary will have to be changed by July if the 2014 construction schedule is to be met. Ron displayed the Keizer Rapids Park aerial map to point out the potential sites. He said there are pros and cons to both sites but the design can accommodate either area. He said the consultant also backed Area B siting.

Ron said the playstructure Facebook page is at keizerrapidsparkplaygroundproject. The website is being set up under www.keizerbigtoy.org. As volunteer coordinators, he and Kim want to have information on what jobs are available, and to have potential volunteers fill in their skills so they can match people with opportunities.

As for fundraising, Keizer Parks Foundation is selling the pickets at \$35 for an individual and \$50 for a business. Keizer Rotary granted \$30,000 to the build and the committee is working on grants through other organizations. Ron said that a good thing with this structure is that the design can be adapted, depending on fundraising success. The build is set for Sept. 17-21 and will require three shifts of 75 people each per day.

For those who are interested, he said that the Leathers web page has links to other build projects around the country so you can follow the progress and see what is involved.

Councilor Clark noted that she had extra tickets to the Parks Foundation's Pinot for the Parks fundraiser Friday night, March 14, if anyone was interested. All proceeds this year will go toward the Big Toy.

New business -- Rhonda announced that Art Mauer had volunteered to be WKNA's representative to the Medical Marijuana Facilities Regulation Task Force that the city organized. Regulations regarding zoning, fee structure and other pertinent policy issues must be developed in 150 days. He said the committee had not met yet.

Upcoming meetings -- Rhonda noted the next WKNA Board meeting will be at 6 p.m. April 3 at her house and the next general meeting will be at 7 p.m. April 10 at the Civic Center. The program will

include the city's Community Development Director Nate Brown talking about the UGB expansion and Bill Lawyer and Robert Johnson from Public Works and parks.

Adopt-a-Street Cleanup Day -- Rhonda alerted the group to the Adopt-A-Street Clean Up Day Saturday, March 15. Volunteers are to meet at 10 a.m. at Shoreline and Chemawa. The group will patrol the length of Chemawa from River Road to KRP. All volunteers are welcome!

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.