

West Keizer Neighborhood Association General Meeting Minutes  
Oct. 8, 2015 at the Keizer Civic Center  
Submitted by Carolyn Homan, WKNA secretary

**Call to order** – President Rhonda Rich called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. at Keizer Civic Center and welcomed approximately 20 people attending, including guest speakers Ben Crosby, Keizer Code Enforcement officer and Rod Conway, Keizer Fire District Fire Marshal, and Craig Murphy, Keizertimes. Rhonda encouraged everyone to sign in and introductions were made around the room.

**Presentations:**

**Keizer Code Enforcement** – Rhonda introduced **Ben Crosby** to discuss his new position as Keizer’s code enforcement officer. Although he’s new to Keizer, he said he’s lived all his life in the area, spending the past 9 years in enforcement, mainly with Salem’s compliance and enforcement. He has been on the job in Keizer for 6 months. In addition to code enforcement, he also has assumed graffiti and parking enforcement duties from Keizer Police.

He looks to work with a home owner to get compliance, rather than issue tickets right away. He said people are listening and working to comply. Most complaints are called in – about unmown weeds, junk vehicles, etc. If the fire department sees something unsafe in an inspection, that could trigger involvement by Department of Human Services or the police department, to remove endangered children, for instance.

A lot depends on “neighborhood expectations,” he said. In some neighborhoods, multiple cars or trucks in a yard, an overgrown yard or some trash is more accepted by the neighborhood and there no complaints are submitted. In others, a few weeds will trigger a call. He emphasized that in any case, he enforces the ordinances fairly and consistently across the board.

A bigger case recently arose after a fire at a home on Cade Ave. The property had no water or electric service yet several families were living in the house and several trailers were housing other people on the property. The Red Cross was called and children were removed for their safety. People are cooperating so the landlord can come in and clean up.

In answer to a question, he said he doesn’t have a list of abandoned properties but will respond with regard to unmown yards and weeds, etc., because there is code to deal with that. He noted response will not be overnight, however. It starts with an informal, “nice” notice. In 2-3 weeks, a more formal notice will go out and then finally, a formal notification will be mailed by the city. After that, a citation will be written. With an abandoned property, they will go right to the formal notice but it’s really a minimum of a 14-day delay, unless there is an immediate safety issue.

Another question dealt with storage PODS on streets and free-standing basketball hoops blocking sidewalks. He said there’s nothing on the city’s books re: street

obstructions like these. There are varying neighborhood expectations, but he has to go by code. He has dealt with some instances just by talking with the home owners and he's gotten cooperation. Most people don't realize it's an issue with their neighbors.

Right now he's just reacting to calls, because summer is the busiest time of the year for code enforcement. He does follow up with complainant if they request it or he feels there is a need. He assured people that he does not divulge names of complainants and statute allows the name to be blacked out if a record is requested. Should the matter go to court, however, names would be made public.

As for semi trucks or trailers parked in residential zones, he said to call the KPD's non-emergency number. He probably would be the responder, but it could be a KPD officer. Abandoned vehicles can be problematic on a street with no curbs or sidewalks – is the car on private property or not? However, in Keizer, a car is abandoned after 72 hours. And if it's on private property, it's a "yard car" and that's a \$500 fine, so either way, there is recourse.

As a final note, he urged people to first try the neighbor-to-neighbor, direct approach to resolve issues before any enforcement process starts. It makes for a better neighborhood. He shared his email – [crosbyb@keizer.org](mailto:crosbyb@keizer.org) – should anyone have questions. He also can be reached at (503) 856-3438.

Rhonda also introduced **Rod Conway, KFD Fire Marshal**, who has worked in the fire industry for 25 years. He talked about the city's tag-team approach to code enforcement. Conway said he has no jurisdiction on private property, but commercial property's a different story. The fire code has many elements that lend themselves to enforcement.

Back-yard burning, banned 8 years ago, is still a pretty big issue. People should know it's a \$500 ticket, but in addition they can be billed \$1,000 or more for personnel and equipment costs if the city has to respond to a back-yard burning call. He also gets lots of calls regarding grass fires and fireworks.

Business inspections are his duty, although most are not inspected annually. Annual inspections are the goal for schools, churches and apartments/multi-family housing units. He also has a lot of work with new construction, noting the several new care homes under way in Keizer. Marijuana facilities also are of interest because of the wiring and chemicals involved that could be fire hazards.

Keizer records 60 to 65 fires a year, many of them grass and cooking fires. Conway noted that "clean houses don't burn," citing the clutter found in the aftermath of many home fire.

As it was Fire Prevention Week, he recommended having a fire extinguisher as a first line of defense and said people could get them on sale at most home improvement

stores. He recommended a 2-A:10-B:C model. He can be reached with any questions at [rconway@keizerfire.com](mailto:rconway@keizerfire.com), or 503-390-9111.

**Salem Area Mass Transit payroll tax measure** – Rhonda introduced **Kathy Lincoln, Mass Transit board member and member of WKNA**, to explain the details of this measure to fund renewed bus service on evenings and weekends and return the student bus pass for 6th through 12th graders. The lack of 7-day-a-week and evening bus service is a big problem for people who are transit dependent, Lincoln said. In addition, buses help reduce congestion and pollution, alleviate parking issues and are an essential public service, she said.

The transit board rejected seeking a property tax measure because it would fall unequally on some areas, including West Salem and Keizer. A public poll showed people favored the payroll tax. At .21%, or \$2.10/\$1,000 of payroll a business with an \$80,000 payroll would pay \$169 annually. That is tax deductible.

The tax won't be levied until 2017. By statute, the rate could increase .02% a year if necessary, she said, but there's no intention of raising it. With the economy good and businesses growing, there should be no need to raise the rate, she said.

The district currently is funded with \$10 million in property tax; \$5.3 million from the state of Oregon; and fares. The area's privately owned and self-run businesses will pay the tax but not government agencies, or nonprofits, except the hospital would be subject to the payroll tax, according to state law. Lincoln urged people to support the measure and to vote. Ballots are due on Nov. 3.

Questions for Lincoln included what percent of ridership is subsidized (she was not sure) and why students would need free bus passes. A lively discussion ensued, with support and non-support of the measure expressed. One neighbor said they supported the bus service and even planned their moved to West Keizer around the availability of bus service.

Approval of Minutes for September 10, 2015 – Rhonda asked for a motion. Ron Freeman moved for approval and Art Mauer seconded. Motion carried.

Budget for 2015-16 – Rhonda reported expenditures of \$100 from the \$500 budget, which funded development of the new WKNA logo. The logo can be seen on the WKNA website.

Parks update – Gary Blake reported that he's still working on Palma Ciega Park, which drew a call from city council earlier this year for an appraisal after the Parks Board recommended selling this little-used property. Neighbors and WKNA made a case for keeping and improving the park and the city council has put appraisal plans on hold, Blake said. In the meantime, Gary is working with Clint Holland to organize volunteers for a leaf cleanup at Sunset Park, to prevent leaves from killing out grass at the park. Rhonda will get information out so that people can sign up to help.

**Next meetings** – The next general meeting is at **7 p.m. Nov. 12 at the Civic Center.** Speaker Diane Childs will talk about ID theft. Rhonda thanked Councilor Kim Freeman for helping make contact with this speaker. The last board meeting of the calendar year will be 6 p.m. Nov. 5 at Rhonda's house.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.