

West Keizer Neighborhood Association General Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2015
Keizer Civic Center

Submitted by Carolyn Homan, WKNA secretary

Call to order – In the absence of President Rhonda Rich, WKNA Board member Ron Freeman called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. at Keizer Civic Center and welcomed approximately 17 people attending, including guest speaker Jenny Meisel, with Marion Soil and Water Conservation District. Introductions were made around the room and Ron encouraged everyone to sign in.

Approval of Minutes for April 9 – Ron asked for a motion to approve the minutes, which was made by Clint Holland; Kim Freeman seconded. Motion carried.

Budget for 2014-15 – Ron reported expenditures so far of \$486.79 from the \$900 budget and noted that the Board had approved spending another \$150 for yard signs to notify residents of the WKNA meetings, \$100 on brochure holders and stands and another \$100 for design of a WKNA logo.

Budget request for 2015-16 – Rhonda presented the \$500 request at the May 5 Budget Committee meeting. This includes \$100 for the website, \$200 for printing and \$200 for signage. Council member Kim Freeman said that the budget amount was approved by the budget committee. The budget will go to Council for approval in June.

Presentations:

Mary Jo Emmett, coordinator, John Knox Community Garden, 452 Cummings Lane N – Mary Jo helps coordinate the garden along with her husband. She presented an update on what's new at the garden since her talk to WKNA in 2014. She noted that volunteers have been working every year since 2009 to improve the garden. From the original 16 plots, expansion was begun in 2012 with four "E" plots and they have added raised beds thanks to grants and help from Marion-Polk Food Share. That has pretty much maximized the space, she said.

Thanks to a grant from Sunrise Rotary, they erected a fence and gate along Cummings to indicate to neighbors that everything behind the fence belongs to people tending the plots. In front of the fence is a "public nibbling area" and passersby and neighbors are encouraged to sample fresh produce from that area.

The community gardeners are encouraged to donate to food banks or others outlets any excess produce that they can't use or preserve so that nothing goes to waste.

She said there's a waiting list for garden plots.

In answer to a question, she said a new gazebo/pergola/grape arbor has been added near the front of the garden. The structure, as well as the raised bed boxes, were built

last fall by members of the Willamette University football team. The plan is to add some blueberry plants and flower beds up front, too. A blueberry patch was added at the back of the garden in 2013.

She also was asked about where to share excess items like home-grown pears. She suggested the Keizer Community Food Bank at Faith Lutheran Church on River Road, Simonka Place or Marion-Polk Food Share.

She encouraged everyone to stop by and check out the garden.

Jenny Meisel, Marion Soil and Water Conservation District, Creating Backyard Habitat for Wildlife and Pollinators – Jenny is a Resource Conservationist with the district. She gave a brief introduction to the Marion SWCD, including the fact that it is not a regulatory organization. Its mission is to protect, enhance and improve the natural resources in Marion County through education, technical assistance and grants. It offers free technical advice to help landowners conserve soil and water, operating thanks to a small tax levy.

Statistics show that there is a lot of potential in backyards to provide habitat for wildlife. And use of native species in your landscape has several benefits, she said, including less water required because they are adapted to the climate and less need for fertilizer and pesticides.

Increasing your backyard habitat has educational and esthetic values, as well as benefits to wildlife and pollinators.

One goal is to create diversity, so that the landscape is not as susceptible to one pest or plant disease. Birds, wildlife and insects also benefit from diversity. Rocks and brush piles provide shelter for lots of wildlife and many birds favor snags and bushes, in addition to trees. A mix of evergreens and deciduous plantings is good. To protect nesting birds, she advised avoiding tree and brush removal between Feb. 1 and July 31.

For pollinators, she noted that bee deaths have been an issue in Oregon in recent years, with several major die-offs in 2014. If you notice a die-off of 50+ bees, the Oregon Department of Agriculture invites you to call them at 503-986-6466.

There are ways to provide habitat for bees in a landscape. Many bees live in the ground and bare patches are good for them. Mason bees like cavities. Nesting boards can be made by drilling holes in blocks of wood or by tying together bundles of hollow sticks. Bamboo, elderberry and teasel are among plants with hollow stems that can be tied together and placed in the yard as habitat. There are a variety of plants that attract bees as well, including Ceanothus, Coreopsis, aster, currant, penstemon, rosemary and many others.

Monarch butterflies also have seen an 82% die-off in the past 20 years nationwide -- from 1 billion down to 56 million. As a result, monarchs may be added to the

Endangered Species list. Planting milkweed can help, since this is their preferred habitat. It was noted that Willamette University has planted milkweed as part of its garden. There may be online sources of seed.

She also covered the importance of insects, including the fact that 96% of terrestrial birds rely on bugs to feed their young. Bugs also aerate and enrich the soil, among other benefits.

Jenny shared several handouts on attracting pollinators, lists of natives to plant and invasives to avoid, how to provide habitat for bees and other topics. She also explained a new Backyard Habitat Improvement Program MSWCD is piloting in Salem this fall. It's patterned after a program in Portland and will be expanded as need develops and time permits. Focus areas are removal of invasives, use of native plants in the landscape, stormwater management and creating wildlife and pollinator habitat. Homeowners can be certified in these areas through the program.

If you have natural resource questions, Jenny can be reached at 503-391-9927, x312. The website is www.marionswcd.net.

Iris Fest update – Ron noted that the festival kicked off tonight and that West Keizer streets would be affected by various events through the weekend, including the marathon and other races, a bike ride and Saturday's parade. WKNA Board members recently distributed informational door hangers to residents on Manbrin and Shoreline along the race and ride route.

West Keizer Parks reports –

KRP community build playstructure -- Ron said the Big Toy dedication is set for a month from today, following the community build June 10-14. The effort is still looking for volunteers and he urged everyone to sign up at www.keizerbigtoy.org or just show up during the build. The Big Toy is a major happening for Keizer and the culmination of a three-year effort, he said. There will be three work shifts/day during the build, starting at 8:30 a.m. Skilled or unskilled, there are tasks for everyone. People can sign up for an hour, a four-hour shift, a full day or whatever fits their schedule.

In answer to a question, he said tool donations are being accepted. Organizers will mark tools so they can be returned. They are buying drill bits and saw blades, so donors don't have to worry about that. They still are hoping for a big donation from Makita. Ron said another need is for 1 gallon milk jugs and coffee cans to hold bolts to be used in construction.

Mayor Cathy Clark said that her alma mater, University of California/Davis, will have a build team and she challenged other alumni groups to step up as well. Ron said the Boys and Girls Club is providing 50 staff members for a day, adding that people are stepping up.

West Keizer Parks update – WKNA Parks representative Clint Holland said the Parks Advisory Board met Tuesday evening and approved a new improvement at Keizer Rapids Park. Hans Schneider is donating three sand volleyball courts, with work to start in July.

He asked people to thank Parks employee Robert Johnson for the good work he does if they get the chance. Cathy Clark noted that the city had to turn down a proposal to add another parks staffer this year because of budget concerns raised by a recent statewide decision concerning the PERS retirement system.

Clint said the Advisory Board is considering the sale of Palma Ceia Park. City staff are getting an appraisal and will make a recommendation to City Council. West Keizer resident Darryl Richardson disagreed with the idea, saying that it just takes away a riverside park. “Thirty years ago, Sunset Park looked just like Palma Ceia,” he said. Another resident also registered objections to the sale. Clint advised anyone with an opinion to let city council know.

Cathy advised speaking to the Parks Board about it at the next meeting on Tuesday, June 9. “It’s not a done deal,” she said. “We need to have a robust discussion about it.” She added that one idea is to use proceeds from the sale as an endowment for the matching grant program set up to help fund parks improvements.

Darryl Richardson also questioned the plans to add more picnic tables at Sunset Park. “It’s a walk-in, walk-out park” with no bathrooms.

Clint also reported that resurfacing of the tennis court at Willamette Manor Park has been approved and is in the budget. Kim Freeman noted that the budget will go to City Council at the June 1 meeting.

Upcoming meetings – Ron said this is the last WKNA meeting until Sept. 10. Fire Chief Cowan has been invited to speak in September on the bond measure coming up in November. Cathy asked if there will be a speaker to present an opposing view and Ron said he would check on that.

The WKNA Board meets at 6 p.m. June 4 at Rhonda’s home. Ron again alerted everyone to the community build June 10-14 and said WKNA’s Adopt-A-Street quarterly cleanup is still planned for Saturday, June 13, if enough volunteers can be solicited.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.