

WKNA General Meeting

Nov. 12, 2020

At Keizer Civic Center, 930 Chemawa Road NE, Keizer, OR

Submitted by Carolyn Homan, WKNA Secretary

Call to Order: Carol Doerfler called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and welcomed about 20 attendees, including guest speaker Robert Johnson.

Approval of minutes – Kathy Lincoln moved to approve the minutes of the September meeting with one correction (partial sentence that should be deleted) and Art Mauer seconded. Minutes were approved. Carol D. noted there were no minutes from October, when a Candidate Forum sponsored by WKNA replaced the regular General meeting.

Guest speaker: Carol D. introduced the guest speaker, Robert Johnson, Parks and Facilities division Manager for the City of Keizer. He shared two handouts – Accomplishments Since Parks Fee Enacted and the Parks Priorities 3-5 year plan.

Before the parks fee's enactment in 2017, the Parks Department had a skeleton budget and crew and he is proud of what's been done since. The first surveyed citizens as to preferences and used the information to prioritize projects. The first need, however, was to purchase more equipment and hire two more full-time staff. Park enhancements started in earnest in 2018-19 with projects in nine parks, ranging from a gazebo roof replacement at Chalmers Jones to a complete play structure replacement at Meadows Park, as well as new sports and/or tennis courts at Northview Terrace and Bob Newton.

In 2019-20, a repair and remodel of the Carlson Skate Park at Chalmers Jones was done, Shade Sails at the Big Toy in Keizer Rapids were partially funded and the tennis court at Willamette Manor was replaced, among other projects. Now, in 2020-21, Claggett Creek Park is getting a new play structure – a project that was moved up because of the poor condition of the existing structure and the high level of use in this park. Another project they were able to fit in this year was the clean-out of the lower section of Wallace House Park, which had become a problem area because of homeless camps and a recent fire in the overgrown brush that was very difficult to fight. There was no access road for fire crews or for parks crews to get down and clean out brush. An access path has been created and a contractor took out the overgrown brush and vines. They have overseeded the area and sprayed blackberries. More native shrubs will be planted in future.

Projects are prioritized on the division's 3-5 year plan. Overall, a higher level of service is possible because of the fee, including additional porta-potties, more weed control and tree work and increased funding for temporary staff.

This year the focus is updating the overall Parks Master Plan. The Master Plan document is online at the Parks Division section of the City's website. A consultant has been hired – the MIG group, which handled the original Master Plan -- and public input will be sought. He said meetings should start in December but with the Covid situation, meetings may have to be held via remote technology. He said they want to involve as many groups as possible because citizen input is vital. In answer to a question, he said they would reach out to groups from outside Keizer (since Keizer Rapids is a regional park) but that Keizer is the main focus. If anyone knows of a group that should be included, he asked to be informed. The consultants will be developing an update proposal over the next 6 months, with the goal to have the update finished in time for the next budget cycle.

He said input is critically important because the Master Plan information shows what **could** be built over the next 10 to 15 years. If a project isn't on the plan, it can't be considered. The city needs to get citizens' vision of what they want in their parks so it can be included in the Master Plan. The 3-5 year plan can change depending on what's included in the Master Plan update. West Keizer neighbor concerns about the condition of Palma Ciega Park, for instance, need to be brought forward for inclusion in the Master Plan in order to be addressed. He said MIG staff will be in touch with neighborhood associations.

Without the parks fee, he said the division was within a year of removing all park structures (play structures, courts, etc.) and not replacing them because there was no way to maintain or upgrade any of the facilities. With the fee, there is now the crew to keep up with maintenance. But plans have to be realistic. They don't want to go back to the old situation where structures and facilities outstrip the ability to maintain them.

2019-20 Budget – Rhonda Rich reported that \$55 had been spent to “wrap” the second donation barrel WKNA is sponsoring to collect food for Keizer Community Food Bank. Another \$82 was spent for stands from which to hang signs above the barrels listing most needed foods. There is a \$413 balance in the \$550 annual budget.

REPORTS

Eric Bandonis, Marion Co. Parole and Probation officer – He shared a handout describing a new project as of October 2019 – the Marion County TJC (Transition from Jail to Community) Program. It involves non-violent offenders in work crews at parks, on roads, etc., to keep people active and using their time productively. Through transition parole officers, offenders get help with employment, problems with housing and other issues that escalate the probability of reoffending. This program is just open to people in custody.

The De Muniz Resource Center, a project of Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action, is open to anyone. It provides legal assistance, help in signing up for the Oregon Health Plan, help in finding employment, etc. All this is free to the community. He said he would do a fuller presentation on De Muniz for the February WKNA meeting.

He said the county has a new parole officer and two more are to be hired. Parole caseloads are fairly low right now – he has 50 and his highest ever was 90. He said Covid has changed the approach for parole officers. They have one meeting in-person with their parolees and then subsequent “visits” are done by phone.

Parks, Carol P. – She reported on the latest Parks Board meeting. An Eagle Scout project replaced the floor of the greenhouse at the Peggy and Jerry Moore Community Garden with a new brick floor. Another project has repainted the Chalmers Jones gazebo. At Sunset Park, neighbor Mike Leupitz has added a gravel driveway to access the rear of his property next to the park. Gary Blake again asked about Palma Ciega Park's condition and the fact it is not being mowed. Robert reiterated that any concerns about a park should be provided as part of the Master Plan update. He noted that Palma Ciega is mowed on an “as needed” basis and that it is considered an undeveloped park.

DISCUSSION

Cummings School Clean-up – Carol D. said WKNA has “adopted Cummings School as a project, annually planting the reader board and other planters at the school. The annual grounds cleanup was canceled due to Covid this year.

Roundtable comments

Keizer Miracle of Lights – Patti Tischer reported that the Miracle of Lights will happen but no volunteers will be staffing the donation tent. There will be a QR code to make donations to Marion-Polk Food Share. She said Keizer Network of Women usually gets food for its food boxes from the first weekend of Miracle of Lights. This year Farmers Insurance on River Road is hosting a food barrel to collect donations to help fill that need.

Cherriots/Transit information – Colleen Busch said the Safe Routes to School Partnership plans a meeting Dec. 14. The transit district was named the cleanest district in the state because of its natural gas

powered buses and 5 electric buses that are on order. The district got a \$5 million grant for the bus additions and infrastructure needed – charging stations, training mechanics, etc.

A thank you – Rhonda thanked Dennis for picking up the food donations from the barrels at Copper Creek and Mommy and Maddi's and delivering them to the Keizer Community Food Bank.

Upcoming meetings – City Council meeting – Monday, Nov. 16, 7 p.m., City Hall

WKNA has NO meetings in December

Next WKNA Board meeting – Thursday, Jan. 14, 5:45 p.m., City Hall lobby (Covid dependent)

Next WKNA General meeting – Thursday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m., City Hall lobby (Covid dependent). Board elections to be held