

Keizertimes

SECTION A

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PERS increases mean more status quo in Keizer budget

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Anyone holding their breath in hope that the next city budget will have room for additional police officers or parks employees should probably stop now.

Based on increases to the rates the city pays to the Public Employees Retirement System, Keizer will probably have another status quo budget in 2017-18. The city will have to come up with an additional \$165,100 for PERS, and it's likely to eat up the lion's share of any property tax increases, including any additional revenues from new construction.

"That is almost two officers

"There are few expenses the city has that would ever see an increase like this."

— Tim Wood,
Keizer Finance Director



for the police department or at least two parks employees," said Tim Wood, Keizer's finance director.

Wood lowered the boom on the Keizer city council at its meeting last week, but the picture is somewhat more rosy now. He anticipated a \$250,000 increase at the meeting, but had the chance to crunch the numbers since then.

While the rates are increasing at different rates for the different types of PERS recipients, the bulk, roughly \$107,000, will go toward benefits for Keizer's 37 Tier 1 and Tier 2 PERS employees. The rate for those employees is increasing by 3.63 percent,

but that number is a little deceiving, it's actually a nearly 26 percent increase over the rates being paid this year. Other categories of employees like police and general services (public works, for example) are increasing by more than 17 percent over the previous rates.

"That's the part that is a little alarming. By comparison, we're expecting a health insurance increase of about 7 to 10 percent," Wood said. "There are few expenses the city has that would ever see an increase like this."

The increase will have to be folded into budget discussions next spring.

"One of the big things

we've tried to put aside money for is repair and maintenance of (the Keizer Civic Center). We've been here about seven years and have already deferred some projects, this will likely mean we have less money to put toward those," Wood said.

Perhaps more worrying, is that PERS officials are telling employers to expect similar payment hikes over the next two two-year cycles. PERS rates are adjusted biennially, which means Keizer might be in for another six years of status quo budgets.

The increases come as PERS adjusts its investment outlook for the foreseeable future.

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A chat with the council candidates



A. Barker L. Reid

The Keizertimes editorial board met with the two competing candidates for Position 1 on the Keizer City Council last week.

We asked Allen Barker, a retired Jack-of-all-trades, and Laura Reid, a teacher at McNary High School, about some of the most pressing topics and issues on the horizon within city hall. We are presenting their answers in a question and answer format.

Keizertimes: What is your position on current talks regarding adding a fee to utility bills that would create dedicated funds for police and parks?

Allen Barker: I like the idea of dedicated funds for the parks and each particular issue that comes up. I wish we could have created a means to do the same thing they are talking about but make it opt-in vs.

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Artist sows Combat Grass

By ERIC A. HOWALD
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Before he headed to the war front in Iraq in 2003, Matthew Boulay's preferred reading list was nonfiction for the most part.

When he returned home and was trying to find his way back to civilian life, he continued to read, but poetry, specifically work by veterans, took on new meaning.

"I began by reading the poems of soldiers from 100 years ago who were expressing emotions and thoughts that were all in my head. It was a different war and different circumstances, but I would have written exactly what they wrote," Boulay said. "It

struck me that there was a universal element to being a soldier at war."

The poems inspired him to try his hand at painting and explore other mediums, and his latest exhibit is the centerpiece of a new military history display at the Keizer Heritage Center Museum.

One of the poems Boulay encountered, *Grass* by Carl Sandburg, spoke to him unlike many others. The poem juxtaposes scenes of the war dead with the voice of the grass that will cover their bodies and, eventually, the memory of their deeds. It inspired the exhibit at the museum.

Boulay's exhibit, *Combat*

Grass 1916-2016, brings his experiences, the poem and death notices sent to families during World War I into a single space. It is contained in a glass display case, and he has to water and seed it regularly.

The exhibit starts with combat paper. It's made in San Francisco by a group of veterans who mill their military uniforms into paper.

"I aged it with coffee and

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KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
ABOVE: The Combat Grass exhibit, just after seeding.. LEFT: Artist Matthew Boulay in front of Carl Sandburg's poem.



Into the light Why talking about suicide matters

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald

Writer's note: At the Out of the Darkness Walk in Salem last weekend, organizers handed out honor beads for participants to symbolize their loved ones and friends. Purple signifies loss of a friend or relative. Teal signifies support for a friend who struggles or has attempted suicide. Green signifies personal struggle.

PURPLE

Name: Herb Westerman. Age: 60s. Method: Gunshot. Relationship: Family friend. My age: single digits.

Lessons learned: Mr. Westerman taught me that we don't talk about suicide the same way we talk about other methods of dying. Instead of brave battles, we talk about suicide in hushed whispers, and only when pressed. No one presses hard.

Until his suicide, life was

binary – living and dying – and I assumed we didn't get much of a say in either one. Mr. Westerman showed me a door I hadn't seen when I arrived. "Choice" is stenciled on the glass. I've examined the typography in all its fine detail nearly every day since.

TEAL

Name: Mike. Age: 18. Method: Overdose (revived four minutes after heart stopped beating). Relationship: Best friend. My age: 18.

Lessons learned: By the time I learned of Mike's overdose, several weeks after the event itself, calling us estranged would have been generous. I hadn't seen him in months. I confronted him about his drinking and drug use on the stoop of his mother's porch almost a year prior, if memory serves. I cried, he giggled. I was not ignorant of his struggles, but I denied them for a long time. To the point where I'd convinced myself I wasn't sitting in my car waiting for him to make a buy before taking him home.

Mike taught me I couldn't love someone enough to make them want to stay.

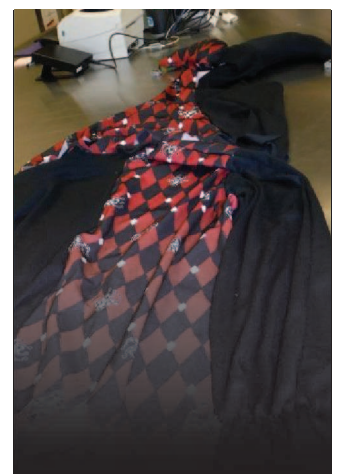
PURPLE

Name: Billy Bohmie. Age: 38. Method: Gunshot. Relationship: Extended family. My age: 21.

Lessons learned: Billy was my preteen cousin/godchild's uncle. I was 600 miles away at college when he killed himself in his bedroom at his parent's home. I drove home for the funeral because I knew the effect Mr. Westerman's suicide had on me at a young age. I needed to be sure my cousin had someone who would listen if he wanted to talk about it.

Billy's suicide seemed to be proof that my own battles with suicidal ideation were not something I was going to "grow out of." I, and I assumed others, were in it for the long haul, and the ones that decided to walk through Choice's door amounted to circumstances and a coin flip.

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Boys ticketed for clown scare
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Adopt-a-park goes nowhere
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B-Boyz at MHS
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Celts shock Grizzlies
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