

# CHAT,

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making it fee or a tax. I don't want anybody to misconstrue it as part of their water bill. For people who are doing everything they can to make their bills and then a new fee shows up, I don't want them to feel like they were misled. That aspect is concerning to me.

**Laura Reid:** I like that they are presenting the options and involving the community. It's important to have a sustainable source of funding. I'm not sure it's entirely enough. If we could do a bond measure to get the parks up to snuff, that might be doable. We've been successful with bond measures in the past, but the sustainability would still be a question.

**KT:** Mayor Cathy Clark has tried to set up the discussion without pitting parks and police supporters against each other. However, would you give precedence to one over the other if it came down to that?

**Barker:** I think that the police are more necessary than the parks. The parks help create the demeanor of a population. If we have the things in the city that people want, families will come here and not necessarily the entities that make it more troublesome. But, we've got 38 officers and other cities our size have 42 to 45 officers. That creates a lot of stress for our officers who are having to do more in the same amount of time.

**Reid:** I think the police force is doing a fantastic job and I know we just added one officer, but the parks are kind

of in critical condition right now. They are falling apart and in need of maintenance. If they don't get addressed it's going to cost more in the long run. Overall, the police seem to have a good handle on community relations and safety.

**KT:** How would you like to see Keizer improve the services of the division you would give preference to?

**Barker (on police):** I witnessed someone walking in front of an officer on Cherry Avenue and flipping them off. It shouldn't be allowed for our citizens to treat them that way. If we make the situation better for them, they will be more likely to do more for us when we ask more of them. I would like to see more city ordinances to give our officers a chance to say that's not acceptable.

**Reid (on parks):** When I was a coach, practice fields were hard to come by, but the parks discussion also has to take into consideration what the schools have. We need to look at the city as a whole and figure out what is needed and where and do it with the input of neighbors.

**KT:** City officials recently found out that payments to the Public Employees Retirement System will increase. If the situation leads to belt-tightening where would you look for cost savings?

**Barker:** We are going to have to ask for help from the employees. We are not in the same situation now as we were when PERS was created. We may be forced to make cuts. I like everyone who works for the city. I would hate for any of them to get cut because they take ownership in what they do. Would it be hard? Yes. Would I be able to do it? Yes.

If they can't take a cut in pay, that's another option.

**Reid:** I think parks might be the first place I look. I think the safety issues are a priority and then others can be determined on an as-needed basis. I think we could probably involve neighborhood associations and community groups to help maintain parts of the parks in their areas. If people want parks, they either have to be willing to pay for them or support them through volunteer efforts. The fact is some parks are used more than others and we could look into making our efforts more efficient.

**KT:** Discussions regarding expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary may or may not come to fruition during your tenure on the council. In the meantime, how would you as a city council try to mold infill development to avoid quality-of-life impacts on current residents?

**Barker:** What I hear is that there's lots of infill we can do, but we can't get the revenue we need from those properties. I made a point of visiting some of the properties with these larger open spaces and some of them aren't going to change it because it would change the texture of the neighborhood. The input of everyone in an area creates a lot of noise, but we have to have that input. If you have a spot that someone that is willing to sell and it's zoned for residential, let it happen. But for multi-family in a residential area? It better be pretty close to a commercial area.

**Reid:** One of the things that concerns me is the empty businesses around year after year after year. If we're talking about growth and

we have all these empty lots, maybe we should look into rezoning some business areas for residential. It's a concern because it doesn't look like a thriving community when you have all these empty spots. It's important to not feel like you're living in a ghost town and we need to work with the business community to optimize our resources.

**KT:** What would you do to attract business to Keizer? Would that be a priority for you as a city councilor?

**Barker:** What we need is business. We need to be able to offer more properties on River Road and add housing to the top of it, then we're solved two problems. I've seen that work in other places and in projects I worked on. The housing spaces stay full most of the time. Right now, there is limited ability for our current businesses to invest in redeveloping spaces. I've walked into several of our local businesses and asked what it would take for them to move to one of our empty spaces. They say they can't afford it. There are some, maybe, but not for a lot of them.

**Reid:** The kind of business matters. We have a lot of retail, but not a lot of corporate properties. I would probably need to be more involved with the Keizer Chamber of Commerce and Rotary before forming a solid opinion on that. People should want to come and do business because of the community they are working in and serving. We have to make the community the best we can make it and then reach out to business.

**KT:** Given that you are a Keizer resident, what has been your best experience with city staff or processes?

**Barker:** I've never had anyone at the city who wasn't able to get me an answer to a question within a matter of hours. In most government offices, you're waiting and waiting and waiting. If the person you're talking to doesn't know, the person sitting a few cubicles behind them is calling you down because they have the answer. That's cool.

**Reid:** My biggest interactions have been with the mayors and their intimate involvement in goings-on. Last year, Cathy Clark and I were both judging the talent show at McNary High School and I don't know how she found time to do that. I like how both she and Lore Christopher work on their priorities and toward convincing people of the need. They are definitely not on a pedestal.

**KT:** Was there a worst interaction?

**Barker:** Only with what I saw recently in terms of Keizer Station apartments. I'm concerned about parking and traffic around that area, but a lot of the things that have been done have worked. I didn't think the roundabout would work, I thought the space was too tight, but they did it. I also think we should decline the extra space at the bottom of the Herber property (it may be deeded to the city as park space). Making that area work is going to take a lot of landfill and we can't take care of the park spaces we already have. We don't have money for that.

**Reid:** The decisions I've seen have all been unanimous and that's a little disturbing. We have to have someone willing to stand up and say there is something else to consider. I think I would

bring a fresh perspective. I think I'm good at asking questions, and I think those questions are needed in the discourse of the city council.

**KT:** From city staff down to the volunteer committee level, there isn't what anyone would call a healthy amount of diversity in the ranks. Is promoting diversity within city governance a priority for you? If so, what steps would you take to move in that direction?

**Barker:** I would like to see the city have a phone app for collecting feedback from residents. That would allow us to push out to residents questions like, "Do you support a fee for parks and police?" If we can tie that to their voter identification number and they can only vote once that gives us a quantitative assessment of what the residents are feeling. If we can reach them by text and email, that would be a great way to bring what the city does to the people.

**Reid:** We absolutely need to do that. The demographics at McNary have changed considerably and its required to learn how to hear and understand their perspectives. We need to be able to understand our community, and it doesn't always come from the people who step forward. It would take going to the events and meetings and the organizations. It might start with the kids and finding out where their parents go. Pulling people in to be tokens is not helpful and we need to commit to bringing them in as full voices in the city government. Maybe look at some of the colleges and their minority leaders or the churches to help us understand and get their voices heard.

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