

# KFD budget grows by 12.2 percent

## District to add three employees

By **DEREK WILEY**  
Of the *Keizertimes*

The Keizer Fire District Board of Directors unanimously approved to adopt its 2017-18 budget on Tuesday, June 20.

The budget calls for a 12.2 percent increase of \$764,113.

Most of the expansion, \$695,388, comes in personnel services, which includes three new positions (firefighter/paramedic, information technology analyst and volunteer coordinator), as well as PERS and union costs.

The district has applied for a SAFER Grant for the volunteer coordinator position to help with recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

Revenue is also up, a projected \$367,354 from the previous year.

With \$3.2 million in net working capital, more than \$4.2 million in taxes, and \$1.3 million in ambulance revenue, KFD has \$9,293,830 in total resources.

According to the Marion County

Assessor's office, KFD will not receive most of the revenue from new construction projects, like Bonaventure, until future years as construction projects are added to the property tax rolls.

KFD's budget has three funds—the general fund, which consists of the four organizational units (administration, fire, EMS and training), and the capital projects and bond funds.

The general fund budget of \$6,995,355 provides funding for 35.5 full time career staff, up from 32.5, and approximately 20 volunteers. It also includes materials and services as well as reserve/contingency.

The budget sets aside the usual \$150,000 for contingency as well as an additional \$25,000 each for fire and EMS to begin building a reserve for future PERS expenses.

KFD responded to 4,685 service calls in 2016 compared to 4,512 in 2015, a 3.9 percent increase. So far this year, call volume has dramatically increased, running 1,756 calls as of May 4 compared to 1,485 for the

same period last year, which is an increase of 18.2 percent.

Keizer Fire Chief Jeff Cowan said the budget provides the community with another year of programs and services at improved staffing levels and the ability to meet the district's goal of arriving at an emergency within six minutes or less 90 percent of the time. Throughout 2016, KFD met that goal 93.6 percent of the time.

In other news, Candis Mediger was appointed to the Civil Service Commission. The district's worker's compensation package was renewed and the board voted to increase ambulance rates by 2.58 percent, effective July 1.

During staff reports, operations chief Brian Butler said that the district's call volume has been at its highest ever in each of the first five months of the year and June was heading in the same direction.

Cowan announced that public education specialist Anne-Marie Storms has been promoted to deputy fire marshal.

"We couldn't ask for a better person in that position," Cowan said. "She crushed her competition. I'm very proud of her."

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to be almost entirely rebuilt by the time we repair them," he said.

The vast majority of the refreshed parks budget is already spoken for. The only major project Johnson is even planning right now is a repair effort at Carlson Skate Park behind the Keizer Civic Center.

The Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board agreed to suspend a matching grant program to help free up \$27,000 to repair large and growing cracks throughout the park's surface.

"It isn't a lot of money, but enough to keep it open and operating and safe. It's not a remodel or taking care of design flaws," Johnson said.

He hopes to start as soon as possible, but even finding someone willing to do just the specialized repair work is difficult.

"I've talked to a lot of people with different ideas and big costs, but my only focus is safety, safety, safety," he said.

Even now, Johnson is waiting on next year's funding to catch up on tree work

that needs to get done. The immediate priority is Sunset Park along the Willamette River.

"We've got to do some pruning, brush removal and there is a cottonwood that is going to have to come down before it becomes a danger," Johnson said.

Summer months are actually some of the most hazardous for trees that are on the bubble. After taking on additional water to feed branches and leaves, a summer wind storm can make them easier to topple. Johnson said the cottonwood in question is already beginning to drop branches, which is a bad sign.

Other major projects are going to have to wait yet again. After fixing Carlson, Johnson wants to replace the play structure and widen paths at Meadows Park. Once that is done, a sports court at Bob Newton Park needs resurfacing before it reaches the point of no return.

"All the resources are going into the skate park and everything else gets pushed out at least another year," Johnson said.

The Keizer City Council is expected to host a public hearing on a potential fee to create a dedicated parks fund at its July 16 meeting.

"Everything else gets pushed out at least another year."

— Robert Johnson  
Keizer Parks Supervisor

# Man arrested in teen sex sting

A Hubbard man is being held without bail after attempting to lure an underage victim to the Pilot Travel Center in Brooks with the intent of trading money and marijuana for sex acts.

Keizer Police detectives arrested Joseph Ronald Ahre, 41,

for multiple counts of sexual related crimes after foiling his plan to meet a female victim.

Keizer police detectives arrested Ahre at 12:41 a.m. Saturday, June 10, at the Pilot Travel Center as he waited in a private shower room for what he believed was a 16-year old girl.

Ahre thought he was going to personally meet the girl after communicating with her through text messages and making payment using PayPal, but in reality he was communicating with a Keizer detective who posed as the victim. Keizer police were made aware of Ahre's activities after a prior allegation of similar contact with a teenage victim via Skype.

Ahre was taken into custody without incident and is currently being held for the crimes of using a child in the display of sexually explicit conduct, on-line corruption of a child, pur-

chasing sex with a minor and luring a minor. He was transported to the Marion County Correctional Facility.

Due to the nature of the allegations against Ahre and his admission to having similar online contact with other girls, investigators are concerned there may be additional victims of whom they are not aware.

Anyone who experienced or is aware of concerning and/or inappropriate contact involving Ahre is asked to contact Keizer Police Det. Ben Howden directly at howdenb@keizer.org or 503-390-3713, ext. 3525.



J. Ahre

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## TREES: Carving would not begin until 2019

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will have a final charette to bring all the ideas together."

Christopher hopes to begin design meetings in August and continue through February 2018, and to select an artist for the carving in late 2018. She said the process would resemble The Big Toy planning more than the Iris Festival Mural design process.

Project endorsements were also forthcoming from KPAC and the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, Christopher said.

The city won't hear back on the Oregon Community Foundation grant until late 2017 or early 2018. The actual carving of the poles would not begin until March 2019, according to the projected timeline.

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