

Election conspiracy rally makes up for Redmond cancellation with Keizer date

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A controversial rally featuring election conspiracy theorists and prominent right-wing figures pardoned by former President Donald Trump is coming to Keizer's Volcano Stadium this April.

The announcement, made by leaders at The River Church on Portland Road in Salem, comes months after public scrutiny in Redmond led organizers to cancel the rally scheduled to be held at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center on April 1 and April 2.

The event drew controversy after the Bend Bulletin reported an event planner stated in an email that they had gotten personal assurance from Republican Deschutes County commissioners that the state's mask mandate wouldn't be enforced.

County officials deny that occurred, according to the Bulletin, and the county later asked event organizers to sign a contract addendum agreeing to follow the mandate.

The event in Redmond was scrapped. Leaders with The River Church then reached out to the organizer of the event, podcaster Clay Clark, and offered to host the rally in Salem, according to reporting from the Bend Bulletin.

Volcanoes Stadium was built in 1997 on land owned by the City of Keizer. Keizer Volcanoes owner Jerry Walker paid for the stadium construction and entered into a contract with the city to lease the site.

According to the KeizerTimes, the Volcanoes renewed their contract in 2015 for another 39 years.

The City leases the stadium to Salem-Keizer Sports Enterprises, LLC. Keizer interim City Manager Wes Hare said the city has no role in deciding what events are held at the stadium.

"The lease specifically allows entertainment and other events typically held at multi-purpose stadiums," he said.

Walker, the listed agent for Salem-Keizer Sports Enterprises, LLC, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the event being held at the stadium.

On the church's Lunch Hour of Power on Facebook, Wootan said the event



Volcanoes Stadium is pictured in Keizer, Oregon, on Thursday, Aug. 6, 2020. The stadium has found other uses with season canceled; it recently was the location of a weekend community market. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

was moved to the stadium following "overwhelming demand" for more space.

Instead of the 2,500 tickets initially announced, there were 4,000 tickets for sale at \$250 a pop. The Reawaken website lists the event in Salem as being 99% sold out.

On the Facebook video, Wootan said tickets would be available at a reduced price for those who could not afford to go otherwise.

The event at other locations has focused on support for former President Donald Trump, as well as false allegations surrounding the presidential election and COVID-19. Speakers advertised at the event include:

- Michael Flynn, the former national security advisor to Trump. Flynn pleaded guilty to a felony for making false statements to the FBI about an investigation into communications with Russia. Trump later pardoned him.

- Roger Stone, who was convicted on seven felony counts including witness tampering and making false statements. Trump pardoned him, too.

- Mike Lindell, the MyPillow CEO and conspiracy theorist known for spreading false claims about the 2020

Election.

- Arizona state Senator Wendy Rogers, who was recently censored by Republican and Democratic state senators in her home state for violent and discriminatory comments she made to a white nationalist conference.

River Church Pastor Lew Wootan has spoken at rallies in Salem in the past year, including a 2nd Amendment rally in May and an anti-vaccine mandate rally this winter.

The state's mask mandate was still in effect at the time of the controversy. But on Feb. 28, Gov. Kate Brown announced that the statewide indoor mask mandate would be lifted on March 12.

Wootan alluded to "shenanigans" and the high demand for tickets as the reason for relocating the rally. He also referenced "idiots that have been hating things and stuff."

Organizers with Black Joy Oregon called for city leaders to speak out against and take a stance against the rally when it was first scheduled for Salem. Their online petition said the event had the potential to bring violence, harassment and a public health risk to the region. They cast doubt that the participants and organizers would follow local

health guidelines. The mask mandate was still in effect when Black Joy Oregon created their petition.

"It is the duty as a public servant to let organizations like those who put together the 'Reawaken America Tour' know that in this city we do not stand for lawlessness, we do not stand for violence towards our residents, and we do not condone visitors to come into our city and disregard our safety by ignoring clear precautions and restrictions set forth by our governmental health agencies," Black Joy Oregon leaders said in the petition.

Wootan said in the video that the people who claimed the rally would bring hate and violence to Salem were actually the intolerant ones.

"To all of you that are like, you know, 'we can't have hate like that' - be careful," he said. "Be careful that you're not the hater."

Reporter Bill Poehler contributed to this story

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Advanced surgical technology available closer to home.

Karen Brady, MSN, RN
Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer
Legacy Silverton Medical Center

Imagine needing to undergo a surgical procedure. Understandably, you might wonder how long the recovery time would be or how painful the surgery might be. A recent advancement in robotic surgery makes surgery quicker and safer and is now available in your backyard.

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legacyhealth.org/roboticsurgery



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