

- After Yi Shen Market and Restaurant on West 11th Avenue suffered repeated incidences of vandalism, friends of restaurant owner Phung Hsieh launched a Go Fund Me page to raise money so that she can purchase security cameras. With a goal of \$4,000, the fundraiser has brought in \$9,373 to help Hsieh, but the vandalism has continued at Yi Shen and other Asian restaurants in the area, including LZ Chinese Dish, Jade Palace and Lotus Garden. Because of this, friends of Hsieh have set up a nightly security watch to prevent further vandalism until the security cameras are installed, and volunteers are needed. For more information on how to help, visit gofundme.com/Yi-Shen.

- The Refugee Resettlement Coalition of Lane County says it is looking for “volunteer Arabic, Kurdish and Farsi translators to help our first families periodically, as they settle into their new lives.” The RRCLC says it is looking for volunteers but may be able to pay a fee. The RRCLC is a “coalition of community volunteers who have banded together to support the Catholic Community Services’ newly launched program to resettle refugees in Lane County.” The coalition will be supporting the ongoing resettlement of refugees who already have a family tie here in the area. For more info go to ccslc.org/refugee-resettlement-program.

- The newly formed Lane County Equity and Access Advisory Board is looking for members and has extended its membership application deadline to 5 pm July 29. Lane County says, “The Equity and Access Advisory Board is interested in having diverse representation that includes people of different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds, identities, abilities and perspectives. Advisory Board members must live within the geographical boundaries of Lane County.” According to the county, “The mission of the Equity and Access Advisory Board is to guide and advise the county administrator on policies and practices surrounding equity, inclusion and access in both internal and external matters.” Applications are available online at lanecounty.org/volunteer and in the Board of Commissioners Office located at the Lane County Public Service Building, 125 E. 8th Avenue in Eugene. For more information email equity@co.lane.or.us or call 541-682-4203.

- The city of Springfield is accepting applications to fill a volunteer position on the 10-member Springfield Police Advisory Committee for a term expiring September 2020. The open position is for a representative from the minority community. The application packet is available at the City Manager’s Office in City Hall, 225 Fifth Street, Springfield, 541-726-3700. The Springfield City Council strongly recommends all applicants attend at least one committee meeting prior to the appointments. The group generally meets on the first Thursday evening of each month. For more information about the Springfield Police Advisory Committee or future meeting information, call Michael Harman at 541-726-2347.

LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY SCHEDULE

Oregon Department of Transportation is spraying roadsides. Call 503-986-3010 to talk with a vegetation management coordinator or call 1-888-996-8080 for recent herbicide application information. Hwy. 36 was recently sprayed.

Giustina Land & Timber Company, 345-2301, plans to hire Northwest Reforestation Services LLC, 554-0489, to backpack spray and hack and squirt a total of 119.3 acres on three units near Hamm Road, Goldson Road and the Long Tom River with glyphosate, imazapyr and/or Forest Crop Oil. See ODF notification 2016-771-07901, call Brian Peterson at 541-935-2283 with questions.

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NEWS

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF FRIENDS OF KESEY SQUARE GATHER IN THE DOWNTOWN PLAZA THEY HOPE TO REVITALIZE



FRIENDS OF KESEY SQUARE SEEK TO SAVE DOWNTOWN’S OPEN SPACE

While the furor over the proposed sale of Kesey Square has died down, those who love public spaces have not forgotten that the corner of Broadway and Willamette Street is not officially safe from future development.

A group, Friends of Kesey Square (FOKS), has formed in order to keep Kesey Square firmly in the public domain and to revitalize its use as a downtown space.

One of the first items on FOKS’ agenda is to officially rename the square. Cary Thompson, one of FOKS’ founders, points out that there are probably one hundred “Broadway Plazas” across the county, but there is only one Kesey Square.

Currently the square’s formal title is indeed “Broadway Plaza,” according to the city of Eugene, but the Kesey name came into being in 2003 when local sculptor Pete Helzer’s iconic statue of literary luminary Ken Kesey, “The Storyteller,” was placed there.

Kesey Square “speaks to us all and says ‘Hey, you’ve arrived,’” says FOKS member and landscape architect David Dougherty.

Despite the square’s use for more than a decade as a public space, the land is still zoned commercial, leaving it in jeopardy of being developed.

In October 2015, the Eugene City Council went into executive session to discuss possibly selling the square to a development group, 2EB LLC (2 East Broadway), to have a mixed-use building with apartments built on it. As word went out, controversy grew. While some saw Kesey Square as an eyesore, many more called for saving Eugene’s downtown open space. The city then later put out a call for other ideas for the square.

In response, Eugene businessman Ali Emami, who owns the buildings flanking the square, yet again proposed opening up the square’s tall brick walls, a proposal the city has made unworkable in the past by saying it could later revoke the decision to open the walls. A compromise was floated, which Mayor Kitty Piercy called “win-win,” that would have attempted to bring Emami together with 2EB to both keep the plaza open and build apartments, but it did not succeed.

In April, the City Council, in a 5-3 tally, voted down a proposal to prohibit the sale of Kesey Square. Councilors George Brown, Claire Syrett and Betty Taylor were in support of the motion.

As Dougherty told the City Club of Eugene in December,

“It is the responsibility of the building to ‘capture’ and activate the space that it defines.” Dougherty said, “The activities of the buildings must spill out, overflow and mingle with the public space to create the vibrancy that we all desire.”

Kesey is the “heart and soul” of the city, Dougherty tells EW.

Fellow landscape architect Jerry Diethelm says that in order to get a public open space to work, there must be fewer obstacles to those seeking to hold events there. Diethelm says FOKS will look at short-term enhancements to the square. At a June 30 launch and photo session for FOKS, group members pointed to a lack of seating and food carts that could be arranged more invitingly in the space.

Ward 1 City Council candidate and FOKS member Emily Semple says that the goal is for Kesey Square to be a publicly owned plaza, not a park. Eugene parks have curfews, she points out, whereas Kesey Square “is the last remaining place in Eugene where it is legal to practice our First Amendment right to peaceful assembly and free speech between 11 pm and 6 am.”

A public square is not the same as a park, Thompson says, it’s a different entity. A square has businesses down the sides it interacts with.

Downtown business owner Jewel Murphy, proprietor of Passionflower on Broadway, says of FOKS, “I am interested in being part of a group that wants Kesey to stay in the public domain and wants to develop a plan involving lots of members of the community that come together in agreement and that does ongoing fundraising to keep Kesey beautiful.”

That statement, Diethelm says, sums up the mission of Friends of Kesey Square.

The group’s founding statement says it wishes to officially change the name to Kesey Square, “it will take whatever legal steps are necessary to keep Kesey Square public,” and it seeks to reprogram and redesign the space “in keeping with the imaginative, innovative, adventurous and creative spirit of its namesake storyteller.”

Founding members of FOKS are Murphy, Thompson, Dougherty, Diethelm, Randy McGowan, Gwendolyn Iris and Ruth Miller. ■

To join FOKS, send an email saying, “I’m a Friend of Kesey Square” to Jerry Diethelm at diethelm@comcast.net or Cary Thompson at cdthompson58@gmail.com.