

# Chamber hosting conversations

By CRAIG MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

The Keizer Chamber of Commerce is looking to have community conversations throughout 2015.

Dan Clem, director of the chamber's Government Affairs Committee, gave an update on the plans during the Jan. 20 Economic Development and Government Affairs Committee meeting, held at the chamber office in Keizer Station.

"We will have 12 community conversations throughout the year," Clem said. "We had our first meeting Jan. 6 at JC's Pizzeria and had about 12 people. We hope to have another with the health care industry on Feb. 26 at noon. We will talk about business and supporting Keizer business. Our intent is to carry on community conversations

once a month. At the Jan. 6 meeting we connected with a couple of businesses. We are trying to strengthen that connection."

AJ Nash, a commercial broker with Hancock Real Estate, noted Nick Harville with SEDCOR (Strategic Economic Development Corporation) has been collecting information from tenants.

"What he's doing gives you the answers you're looking for," Nash said. "The access point is the property owner. If you have a good handle on the current tenant mix, Nick has gotten access to communities looking to go forward at the same time. That could be an incredible value for this organization. Rather than reinvent the wheel, get an idea of questions other communities are asking. There's no better place

than the chamber to deploy that."

Clem noted chamber leaders have offered to partner with city leaders on surveys.

"We have copies of questionnaires," Clem said. "I figure we will have the community conversations."

Nate Brown, director of Community Development for the city, noted the importance of communication.

"For that to gain traction, you need to have dialogue," Brown said. "You need to have that dialogue with as many people as possible before budget time."

Harville noted he's been doing some of that.

"One good part of the project is it's about the community," Harville said. "The community leaders are the people you need to reach."

Mayor Cathy Clark opined efforts need to be stepped up.

"Previous conversations have not yielded enough good information to bring to budget time," Clark said. "I would urge the board to weigh in and to have a board conversation."

Clark noted the new Economic Development Commission met on Jan. 6 as well, which included a conversation about what to talk about with the owners of Schoolhouse Square at the corner of Chemawa and River Roads.

"How can we encourage them with specific ideas that would be good for Keizer?" Clark said. "We shared some of our vision for a Keizer renaissance area. We want them to know who they are, so they'd be able to bring their vision to us."

Clark believes engaging business owners will pay dividends down the road.

"The reason River Road sidewalks didn't get done (in the past) is the business owners don't live here," she said. "It wasn't on their radar. If we can engage them early and show them we have ideas to benefit both parties, it will help us move forward. The business climate now is much better than three to five years ago."

# Access to Northridge Park brought up at Parks Board meeting

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It's a topic that comes up from time to time at Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meetings: what to do with Northridge Park.

The hidden park along Claggett Creek and 10th Street is nearly impossible to access, even though technically it is a city park. Keizer resident Cris Dudek asked during last month's Parks Board meeting why the park was blocked off.

"Northridge has three accesses, but none are approved," Public Works director Bill Lawyer said. "A small piece of property bisects the park property. There is public access, but it's very poor. At the Verda (Lane) one, the banking is steep. Homeowners there have built their own access, but there's nothing on the property the city owns."

That led Dudek to ask if the public can enter.

"Yes," Lawyer said. "The last I know, there were no gates along the property we own. If you and your neighbors would be interested in punching a trail through, we would be interested."

Donna Bradley, a new Parks Board member, asked later if Northridge is the only park like that in Keizer.

"It's more of a natural area," Lawyer said, noting there are several parks that fit such a description. "We don't really have parks, other than Palma Ciega, that are undeveloped."

Lawyer noted neighbors can come to the city if they have interest in the development of access to Northridge, which was part of the annual Parks Tour in 2013.

Richard Walsh wondered if a Boys Scout troop could put a trail in.

"Do we have enough right of way for a trail and sign?" Walsh asked.

Lawyer answered with a somewhat conflicting yes.

"Is there room to put a sign? Yes, but I'm very hesitant to put up a sign until a reasonable access is made," he said. "For Northridge, it's a very large undertaking. To find the property line is difficult because of the overgrown status of that property. It's a lot of brush. It's not impossible, but it's a difficult or expensive undertaking. Once you get over the bank is where it gets difficult."

Walsh felt signs could help the process.

"You will start to hear from more people and have more interest if you have signs up," he said.

Lawyer said doing extensive work is hard at the Claggett Creek entrance due to the hilly and narrow space. "We can't get equipment into Northridge," he said.

In other Parks Board business:

Two new members joined in January, Bradley and Dylan Juran. A third new member, Scott Klug, was approved by Keizer City Councilors this week. Two of the vacancies were created when former Parks Board members Roland Herrera and Brandon Smith joined council, while another was created when the term of Robert Jones expired.

David Loudon was selected to serve as the new Parks Board chair, taking over the position vacated by Smith. Tanya Hamilton was appointed as vice chair.

There was supposed to be a presentation from Lincoln City-based Dreamland Skateparks about renovating the Carlson Skate Park behind the Keizer Civic Center. However, the company owners weren't present so Parks Board member Jason Bruster gave a brief update.

"I have taken on mentorship with the group," Bruster said. "We'll be doing some fundraisers this year (for the project). I'm working with Town and Country Lane to do a fundraiser with them."

Bruster said Dreamland will be resubmitting a grant application for the Parks Board's matching grant program.

"We're going to try and come in at a different dollar amount from what they've asked for (\$12,000 in November, nearly the entire amount in the matching grant program), to make it easier on the grant program so that it doesn't deplete that program."

The topic is expected to be brought up again at the Feb. 10 Parks Board meeting.

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53	54	55	56					57			58	59
60						61					62	
63						64					65	
66						67					68	

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- Eggshell
- Computes
- Clip's partner
- Weighty
- Collins, CO
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- Mighty oak
- Fortuitous
- Spare
- Exec's note
- Brooder
- Sort of soup
- Fax's kin
- Spill the beans
- Aniseed liqueur
- Lakme highlight
- State a price
- Mouth, slangily
- Do- : moolah
- Importune
- Be generous
- Madre
- Java
- Laid off
- Montaigne opus
- Really expensive
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- Gum up
- City on the Oka
- Shakespearean role
- Wrest
- Tiber feeder
- Just makes do
- Frogner Park city
- Kind of party
- Like the leaves of Ulalume
- Muslim lady's garment
- Trot along
- Gobs
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- Rickey need
- Prickle
- Record
- Downed
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- Circadian woe
- share
- Bird of a feather
- Up and at it
- Gun-collector's prize
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- Parisian ones
- Straggle
- Pasta choice
- Olympian queen
- Pry

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