

Palma Ciega talked about again at Parks Board

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

For a park that hasn't had much attention over the years, Palma Ciega Park has sure gotten a lot of notice recently.

After neighbors talked about the issue at the June 1 Keizer City Council meeting, the same people brought up the topic again at the June 9 Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting.

Gary Blake, a former West Keizer Neighborhood Association board member, noted he had talked to neighbors about the possibility of the park being sold. Parks Board members discussed the topic in May and ultimately the council decided to have an appraisal done on the property, which Parks Board members have emphasized would determine the direction of future conversations on the park.

"I have taken it upon myself, since I felt it's important to get in touch with as many neighbors, to see what they think of the park," Blake said. "What we're really concerned about now is this park has been part of the city for 50 years now. A lot of people

bought their house knowing the park is in the neighborhood. Most people will go to a park within a quarter mile. I would submit Palma Ciega needs to be developed so it looks and feels more like a park. Currently, people don't see anything except the sign."

Blake feels the park could be transformed with just a bit of work.

"If we spend just a little bit of time, we can make it a destination," he said. "The usage would minimize those that go down to hide and get into trouble. I interviewed 20 residents, anyone that borders the park. Without a doubt, the reaction was, 'What? They might sell it? Why don't we fix it up and make it a park?' They want to see it built into something more attractive. If it was only just a park bench, a swing set and a reasonably good access to the river, it would make a tremendous difference in the usability of the park. People around it are disturbed by the idea of it being sold. They are concerned of something else being built there. We want residents in the area to have more input."

David Loudon, chair of the Parks Board, noted asking for the value of the park was the start of a public process.

"When we get that information, we will have public hearings," Loudon said. "You are welcome to come back then. We'll make a recommendation to council (after the hearings)."

Blake wasn't quite satisfied. "You're asking for an appraisal, not an estimate," he said. "Why get an appraisal if you're not wanting to sell it? If you just want the value, you can do it relatively inexpensively."

Loudon pointed out councilors made the decision for an appraisal and said he wanted to see what the interest of neighbors would be.

Blake again stressed the need for neighbors to get their say.

"They should have a word in what they're going to do at the property," Blake said.

Loudon said it "would be a lot more effective" for the neighbors to come to a hearing for discussion.

Board member Tanya Hamilton encouraged Blake

to continue talking with his neighbors.

"We don't want to just sell parks," Hamilton said. "The more input we have, ideas for what the park could look like and what the goals would be, it's great to hear you are rallying your neighbors around the park."

Blake said one neighbor has offered to donate money to the park for maintenance or upgrades.

"There is interest," he said. "I realize this is an ongoing process, I'm just a little shocked we've gone this far without input from the public."

Board member Richard Walsh emphasized the issue has been discussed once.

"We haven't seen any real movement on this," Walsh said. "We haven't seen neighbors come forward until now. We've had one motion and it went to council. You're at the inception. You're at the very birthplace. It was an idea brought up at our last meeting."

Rhonda Rich, longtime WKNA president, was hoping there wouldn't be an appraisal.



Members of the Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board lead Keizer City Councilors on a tour of Palma Ciega Park last fall. The park was discussed at the June 9 Parks Board meeting.

"I was hoping you would not pursue the appraisal and drop the idea of selling the park," Rich said. "I'm glad Gary has taken charge of this. I was hoping too you would do some outreach."

As he did last month, Walsh emphasized the value of the property would likely steer

the conversation.

"If the appraisal says we could make \$5 million by selling it, we might say what do we do with it?" Walsh said. "But it could be \$20,000. Where do we get the best bang for the buck, not just for the citizens right around it but say within a quarter mile?"

Public Services Fair on June 23

Music, free food and plenty of exhibits.

That's all on tap at Keizer Rapids Park Tuesday, June 23 from noon to 5 p.m. at the annual Public Services Fair.

The event, hosted by Keizer

Public Works, is free. There will be events like equipment demonstrations and backhoe bowling, plus free hard hats for children and free snowcones and popcorn. The first 300 attendees will be able to

eat for free.

Organizations expected to be on hand include Keizer Fire District, Marion County Fire District No. 1, Marion County Public Works, Emergency Management, Marine Patrol and Environmental, plus Oregon State Police, City of Salem Environmental and many others.

There will be music on the amphitheater stage by Bobbi-lynn Forbus, Surefire Country Tribune Band, The Ghetto Band, JC and Prime Country, Jimbo, Gr8ful Ted and Southern Accent.

For more information contact Jennifer Warner at 503-856-3551 or warnerj@keizer.org.

Antique Powerland celebration in Brooks on Saturday, June 20

The Brooks Historical Society will hold a celebration of the influence of French families in the area on June 20 at Antique Powerland.

The celebration, a potluck lunch, will review histories of all settlers of French descent including the Moisan, LaPratte, Belleque, Gobin, LaFlemme and LaFollette families.

The celebration will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Attendees are encouraged to bring photos, stories, histories and memorabilia of French settlers to share.

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