

Transit payroll tax gets debated

By **CRAIG MURPHY**
Of the Keizertimes

Leaders with the Keizer and Salem Chambers of Commerce have made it clear they're against a proposed payroll tax on local businesses to pay for transit improvements.

A community conversation took place Sept. 30 at the Keizer Quality Suites to air some of the frustrations business owners have about the tax.

The conversation was also a chance for proponents to explain the tax and to answer questions about the tax which will be on next month's ballot.

Needless to say, there were plenty of questions.

Leaders with the Salem-Keizer Transit District have proposed a 0.21 percent payroll tax for all local private businesses — not just small businesses, as erroneously reported previously — to bring in roughly \$5 million a year. That funding would help bring back extended weekend service as well as weekend and some holiday service. A special election is being held Nov. 3.

Governmental employers and non-profit employers (except for hospitals) would be exempt from the tax, though



Christine Dieker (left) and Robert Krebs (right) speak during a community conversation about a proposed transit payroll tax on Sept. 30.



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

an explanation of that loophole was explained during the conversation.

Bob Zielinski, president of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, made his position clear early.

"Another tax is too much to ask for," Zielinski said. "That's our position."

Nick Williams from the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce noted transit districts in Oregon have a "weird" budget. He noted his chamber leaders started a conversation with transit leaders in January, when both a payroll tax and property tax were being

looked at. Williams said transit leaders stressed polling had shown a property tax would not be successful, but a payroll tax would. That information was later confirmed by Robert Krebs, president of the Salem-Keizer Transit Board of Directors.

Williams said there are several reasons the payroll doesn't work, including higher costs due to health care.

"In Oregon, businesses are being looked at to pay for everything," Williams said. "With this tax, small businesses are being targeted. This is not an indictment on tran-

sit. This is an indictment on something that is not good for Salem. Regardless of the outcome, there's got to be a better fit for Salem. Our stakeholders are committed to figuring this out."

Krebs, who agreed with Williams there is a need for statewide transit funding, noted the payroll tax came out far ahead versus the alternative.

"The payroll tax came out 25 points ahead of the property tax," Krebs said. "We made a business decision to go with the payroll tax."

Krebs said the notion a payroll tax would have a drastic

impact on prices to consumers has been overstated. For example, he pointed out the tax on a \$500 payroll would be \$1.05. In addition, Krebs noted the state already pays a .6 percent tax currently.

"If we pass this tax, that's another \$5 million coming into the community," he said. "Then the funding would be 50 percent from property tax, 25 percent from the state and 25 percent from the payroll tax."

Krebs said the local transit system is behind the times due to a funding shortage.

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Art Burr dead at 86

1928 - 2015



Photo courtesy Phyllis Burr
Art Burr, a longtime Keizer volunteer shown on his boat on an old fishing trip, passed away Oct. 1 at the age of 86.

By **CRAIG MURPHY**
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Art Burr had everything lined up and organized.

Burr, 86, a longtime Keizer resident who volunteered for a number of organizations and groups over the years, passed away in the early morning hours Oct. 1.

For years Burr and wife Phyllis delivered meals for Meals-on-Wheels. He was also an active volunteer with the Keizer Community Library and had long been a member of the Chemeketans, a Salem-based outdoors group.

A celebration of life will

be held today, Oct. 9 from 1 to 3 p.m. on the second floor of the Keizer Heritage Center, 980 Chemawa Road NE. Burr requested the party before his passing.

"Hopefully it will make up somewhat for my reputation as the world's No. 1 party pooper," he wrote.

Burr wrote his own obituary (see page A3) and wrote some final thoughts shortly before passing. That's not too surprising, considering Burr was a regular writer of letters to the editor for this paper.

Please see BURR, Page A6

Big ally for Big Toy

By **CRAIG MURPHY**
Of the Keizertimes

For a second time, leaders of the Big Toy project are gathering the pieces to apply for a large grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Now they may have found a big boost: the man who used to be in charge of the OPRD's grant program is offering to help in any way needed.

Marion County Commission Janet Carlson, a member of the Community Build Task Force, reached out to Wayne Rawlins recently. Rawlins attended Tuesday's monthly CBTF meeting, where the main topic of conversation was what to put in the application for the OPRD's Local Government Grant.

In 2014, Nate Brown, director of Community Development for Keizer, applied for a \$150,000 grant through the program on behalf of the project. That application was denied.

Richard Walsh, a CBTF



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy
Wayne Rawlins on Tuesday offered to help Big Toy leaders apply for a grant he used to be in charge of for the state.

member, noted that denial was a big reason why the Big Toy play structure opened in June with engineered wood fiber ground covering instead of the highly desired poured-in-place rubber surface.

"We could not reach our goal so we had to cut back," Walsh said. "We cut out the spongy surface for \$150,000. That was going to be for fall

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Utility boxes to be wrapped?

By **CRAIG MURPHY**
Of the Keizertimes

Hopefully it won't be a smokin' deal.

Members of the Keizer Public Arts Association have talked about the idea of painting utility boxes along River Road for some time. Now there's a possible new twist: doing wraps on the boxes.

Nate Brown, director of Community Development for Keizer, brought up the idea during the most recent KPAC meeting.

"This company will do a template, then wrap the box," Brown said. "It costs \$300 to \$600 for them to wrap the box. It's graffiti-resistant. It's a like a vinyl car wrap."

In response to a question from KPAC chair Lore Christopher, Brown said art gets printed digitally onto the wrap before installation. A

JPEG file is sent, which gets printed on the vinyl.

Jessi Long pointed out the elections department in the Marion County Clerk's Office uses a similar product for ballot boxes.

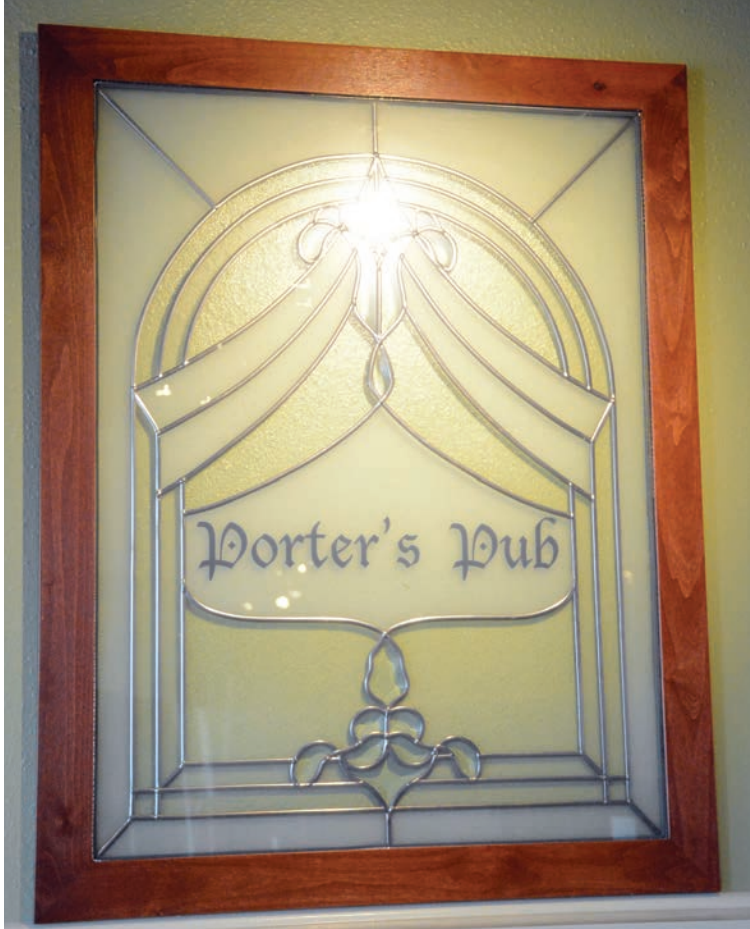
Beth Melendy wanted to make sure research has been done to ensure the wraps won't cause the boxes to over-heat.

"3M says the material doesn't add to the thermal loading," Brown said. "If it's black, it raises the internal temperature by 15 degrees. This company is working with Salem and will do this on six boxes. We will be able to use that and see."

Christopher liked the idea and suggested doing fundraising to secure the necessary money.

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Salute to the past



Full Monty's Bistro and Taphouse officially opened Oct. 1 at 4820 River Road N. One of the more unique decorations inside is the glass that used to be in the front door when the business was Porter's Pub. For more photos, please see page A3.

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Craig Murphy

Celts win on
late INT
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ESPN

Local team
makes ESPN
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2015

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