

Keizertimes

SECTION A

JANUARY 1, 2016

\$1.00

Keizer's top stories of 2015

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

When a city keeps getting new housing developments, apartments and senior living centers, it may seem logical to assume more core services would follow.

Such was not the case in Keizer in 2015.

As recently as mid-2012, Keizer had three grocery stores. Then Roth's closed that year.

Albertsons closed this year, replaced by a Haggen. A few months later, Haggen closed as well, leaving just Safeway.

The stark contrast between Keizer being down to one grocery store and the new growth highlights the top stories of 2015.

Grocery store saga

The initial plan seemed ambitious. It proved to be an epic disaster.

In 2014, grocery store giants Safeway and Albertsons announced a merger. Both companies had a store in Keizer. As part of the merger agreement, the newly merged company had to sell off a number of stores.

Late in 2014, Washington-based retailer Haggen took advantage of the situation and went from 18 stores to 164 stores practically overnight. The ambitious plan for the regional chain included converting stores quickly – in 72 hours or less. Such was the case with the former Albertsons in Keizer, which became a Haggen in late April.

From the start, things didn't go well. There were complaints that prices at Haggen stores – in Keizer and elsewhere – were higher than in other stores. There were grumbles that Haggen didn't put in a full effort to renovating the stores it took over.

And then there were the ugly lawsuits. Haggen sued Albertsons and claimed, among other things, Albertsons didn't fulfill its end of the deal. Albertsons sued Haggen.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Haggen soon declared bank-



The juxtaposition that was Keizer in 2015: as new construction such as the Mountain West/Bonaventure project on McLeod Lane (right; seen this week) happened all over town, one of the city's two grocery stores closed when Haggen shuttered (left).



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

ruptcy and announced plans to close most of the stores it had recently purchased, including the Keizer location. The Keizer Haggen quietly closed in late September.

In the time since, the town has been abuzz with hopes and rumors of a new grocery store coming. A Keizertimes reader poll found the majority of respondents preferred having a WinCo come to town. A Facebook page was created and a number of e-mails were sent to company headquarters. Nothing has been announced yet, but the entire saga was front page news throughout the year, with little signs of stopping in the new year.

Growth in Keizer

The most visible sign of growth in Keizer is taking shape on McLeod Lane. The newly expanded part off Chemawa Road, that is.

That's where McLeod has been punched out to the east and foundations are being laid for both the 180-apartment complex by Mountain West Investment and the 154-unit senior living center by Bonaventure. The first buildings started going up within the last week.

Growth can also be seen on the north end of town, as a new senior living community is under construction and the Hawks Pointe Apartments are being added to.

In addition, several new

housing developments have either been added or are being added. In the first half of 2015, there were 62 permits for single family residential units applied for. That included 18 on one day alone in June.

Another sign of growth is the roundabout being added at Chemawa and Verda Lane.

The project was supposed to be done this year, but got pushed back to next summer. Despite objections to the project, bids were opened in November.

November election: transit and KFD
Few would argue the Sa-

lem-Keizer area needs improved bus service, especially in terms of how long the buses should run and how many days a week. Thus, efforts by Salem Area Mass Transit District officials to run a ballot measure asking for more funding seemed logical.

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What is the next priority for KRP?



KEIZERTIMES file/Craig Murphy
Recent changes at Keizer Rapids Park have included ones at the amphitheater, but what will the next ones be?

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

The Big Toy portion of Keizer Rapids Park is pretty much figured out.

What about the rest of the park?

In 2014, the master plan for KRP was updated as part of moving the play structure to its location in the filbert orchard.

While amenities were put into place on a map, there wasn't much discussion about costs or priorities.

Such a conversation took place during December's Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting.

Robert Johnson, parks director for the city, said a pathway from the boat-in campground along the Willamette River to the gate where disc golf begins would be about

2,500 feet in length and cost about \$100,000.

"With multi-use sports courts, the options are endless," Johnson said. "It depends on what you're looking for. If that's a priority, I can get some numbers."

Parks Board member Richard Walsh said sports courts have been talked about for several years.

"The reason being is it could be done cheaper than a parking lot," Walsh said. "We really don't have an outdoor basketball court area."

Johnson noted he's had a request for a different type of court.

"I've had people ask me if they can play pickleball," he said. "It's a life size version of ping pong, played on a tennis court."

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KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy
After serving as Keizer's Finance Director for 18 years, Susan Gahlsdorf is retiring and will be focused on things like skiing, not financial and compliance books.

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

If you're looking to catch up with Susan Gahlsdorf after Jan. 8, make sure your skis are ready.

That's the day Gahlsdorf officially retires from the city of Keizer after 18 years as Finance Manager. Tim Wood is filling the spot on an interim basis and has expressed interest in the job on a permanent basis.

Gahlsdorf has been in public service for more than 30 years, including her time at the state, but is looking forward to her next phase. In a way, her timing couldn't be better.

"I plan to do a lot of skiing and this season has started out great with lots of snow," she said. "I skied regularly as a kid as I grew up near Mt. Bachelor. Then I set it aside to spend time with my family and to focus on my work. Over 30 years later, I took it up again. After a few runs, it all came back to me and now I'm hooked again."

Mind you, Gahlsdorf won't be just skiing after retiring.

"I've worked a very sedentary job in my 30-some years in finance," she said. "Now I look

forward to a more active lifestyle and plan to ski, cycle, golf, travel and learn new stuff while I am still young enough to enjoy these things."

As mentioned in a September 2010 Keizertimes story, Gahlsdorf is the daughter of a pilot yet was scared of flying herself. She credits her sons, now 28 and 24, for getting her over that fear.

"My kids were my inspiration," she said. "Oliver flew off to Australia to become a surfer dude for a year and Wendell left to pursue studies in Colorado. I admired their courage and realized I couldn't just hang out at home. I was missing out."

"So I decided to take a 'face your fears' cycling tour in Italy," Gahlsdorf added. "I hadn't been on a bike since I crash landed in the hospital several years earlier. I had to get on a plane, then get on a bike. It was the best trip ever. Last year we did another cycling tour, this time in Germany, Austria and Czech Republic. Next year we're headed to Sicily with our group of cycling friends and we look forward to many more adventures."

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MHS boys basketball
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The New Year always starts with a choice!



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