

SKIING,

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While Gahlsdorf is leaving the city on Jan. 8, she has been easing into the retirement and put a transition plan into place well in advance.

"I've put a lot of thought into retirement over the past couple of years," she said. "I've seen others retire and the rest of us move on. I've heard it can be hurtful and isolating. The transition I've worked on over the past year has been very purposeful and I believe good for the city and me. I didn't want to wake up one day not knowing what to do with myself. And I didn't want to leave the city scratching its head wondering what all my responsibilities were and what direction I was going. Now, staff is cross-trained on all my major duties and I have a huge list of new pursuits. It's good closure for all involved."

One of Gahlsdorf's chief jobs has been preparing the budget for city councilors each year. The process typically starts in October, when staff reviews the city's financial position and identifies emerging issues. The budget document

is updated with fresh data, formulas and templates. The next step comes this month when councilors update their goals for the year ahead, giving direction to funding priorities. The final budget has to be approved by councilors by the end of June.

"We make a point each year to focus on improvements to our budget," Gahlsdorf said. "Over the years, we have automated many processes, which have simplified things. That has freed up our time for long-range planning, scenario testing and improved forecasting techniques."

The effort has paid off: the past two years, Keizer has gotten a national award from the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award Program.

"It's all about priorities," Gahlsdorf said of balancing requests with the budget limit. "What's hard is telling people what they need to know which is often not what they want to hear. It's very emotional for people. Staff does not control the revenue stream. We work with what we have and manage the city's funds responsibly."

Gahlsdorf noted the city is

in good shape financially.

"We have a strong control system to safeguard our assets," she said. "We adhere to best practices for reporting, accounting and budgeting. We have a transparent operation, clean books, clean audit opinions and knowledgeable staff. Our approach is moderation; not too conservative as to constrain services and not too aggressive which would risk our basic operations. We have a strong bond rating and a secure revenue stream to repay our debt. This is a good foundation for the next finance director."

Over the years, Gahlsdorf said the city has built cash reserves and has sufficient working capital for daily operations as well as bigger projects that have come up, in addition to future ones.

Gahlsdorf called resolving the Keizer Station Local Improvement District finances the most challenging as well as the most rewarding work. The city had more than \$20 million in debt on the development and several properties went into default. The LID debt has since been paid down.

"I had the privilege of working with a great group

of people in a great community," Gahlsdorf said. "I am most proud of the finance staff and the team we've built over the years. They are a very hard working, dedicated group and many of them have been with the city for more than 10 years. They are committed to service and finding solutions that will fit both the customer's and the city's needs."

Now Gahlsdorf looks forward to the future, no matter where that adventure might take her.

"I am so fortunate because I have the life I envisioned all those years ago — and much more," she said. "No regrets here. Even the most difficult challenges and experiences provide the best opportunity for growth and an appreciation for what I have. My husband Dave and I have worked hard building our careers, raising our two sons, renovating our home and building our financial security. We met in business school at Oregon State University and have been together for over 35 years. We enjoy many of the same things. We have a fabulous life, and family and friends with whom to share it. I am looking forward to enjoying what we've built together."

KRP: 'Where do we want to focus the money?'

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Bill Lawyer, Public Work director, said old Systems Development Charges (SDC) money cannot be used for restrooms, but could be used for other projects like surfacing.

"What is the priority?" Lawyer asked. "Where do we want to focus the money?"

Walsh said the answer hinges partially on whether the city is successful in getting an Oregon Parks and Recreation Department grant for Big Toy improvements.

"The Big Toy is our priority," Walsh said. "We won't know if we need more money for the Big Toy surface until after we learn if we got the grant. If we fail to get the grant, we might need more."

Parks Board member J.T. Hager wanted more information.

"Our priority is to do all of them," Hager said. "Knowing that's not going to happen, what options do we have? We've been solid in wanting to get the Big Toy done. For restrooms, do we want to

draw in people but not have restrooms?"

Lawyer said the budget needs to be refined.

"We're not even sure how much cash we need to come up with," he said.

Lawyer noted there has been an uptick in vandalism inside the park, with several items used for maintenance being stolen.

"It's difficult to curb vandalism," he said. "The police department can only do so much."

Clint Holland suggested putting up reward signs like there used to be at Keizer Little League Park.

"We had a reward of \$500," Holland said. "We never had problems. As soon as they took the sign down, they had all kinds of problems. A buddy will turn another buddy in for \$500."

Fellow Parks Board member Donna Bradley suggested an alarm system.

"I hadn't thought about the alarm idea," Lawyer said. "That's a good idea."

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