

Cleaning up Palma Ciega Park still being studied

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

Gary Blake is still wanting to get Palma Ciega Park cleaned up.

Blake, president of the West Keizer Neighborhood Association, has spoken to the Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board several times in the past year about the park. He did so again at the most recent Parks Board meeting on March 8.

"We're very much ready to put together a program, in conjunction with the city, to bring Palma Ciega Park to something that looks presentable," Blake said. "The main thing we'd like to be able to see is help with things like cleaning the property. I walked through the park this week. It's still pretty much the way it's been. We can trim it and make it more attractive for people to want to spend time at the park."

Blake suggested some improvements that could be made.

"We can limb the trees so that we can get a better view of the river," he said. "Maybe a tree trimming company can come limb the trees for free and haul them away. We did discuss quite a bit the vines that are growing around the trees."

"We also have some neighbors willing to donate a park bench, which would be inviting for people to sit at," Blake added. "Another person has suggested having a little more pronounced walkway down to the water, so you don't have to go through any dangerous areas. We would have to get it cleared. The idea of having a walkway there is good."

Parks Board member Richard Walsh suggested taking advantage of the matching grant program, though that option seemed to be taken off the table later in the meeting when the remaining funds were pledged to work at Keizer Little League Park.

"I think it's fantastic you're working on this," Walsh told Blake. "This is exactly what we hoped would happen, you getting some volunteers. My question is, are you envisioning coming back with a request from the grant program? And what kind of timeline are you looking at?"

Blake figured the grant application could be done within a week.

Scott Klug suggested applying for a grant from SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism) to help pay for improvements.

Blake, who noted he has been working with parks su-

pervisor Robert Johnson, is seeking guidance for the work.

"What we're hoping to do is to have the city direct the performance of the work so we can make sure we're doing the right thing," Blake said.

J.T. Hager said there are some simple things to put on the matching grant application.

"You have some obvious things you can go after right away, like the invasive species on the trees," Hager said. "A park bench is a good thing and a pathway is a good thing. You could estimate the hours of labor and get credit for that. You come to us and say here's what we want, here's our manpower, here's what we need. You set the agenda. We want you to do it, put it on paper and tell us what it will cost."

Clint Holland had concern about things like ivy.

"I'm really in favor of this, but one of my concerns is doing the job right," Holland said. "Twice we've cleaned it up. You need a commitment from the city you're going to kill the poison ivy on the oak. If not, you'll spend a lot of time for nothing. We did it years ago. The ivy has grown back. If you do it, you need to do it right."

Parks Board chair David



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

Overgrown vegetation means Palma Ciega Park hasn't seen much use in recent years.

Louden expressed frustration. "I'm a little disappointed with the plan right now,"

Louden said. "I was figuring on some more details so we could start sooner rather

than later. Right now you're not giving us a lot. I expected more detail."

Koho returns to council

By CRAIG MURPHY
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There weren't a whole lot of people at Monday's Keizer City Council meeting.

Councilor Amy Ryan and youth councilor Siri Scales were absent, while Brandon Smith's former seat is still vacant.

City attorney Shannon Johnson and Public Works director Bill Lawyer were absent, as was police chief John Teague. Only three audience members were present, in addition to a Keizertimes reporter.

All of which made Dennis Koho's presence that much more surprising.

Less than two weeks after being released from the hospital following a Feb. 6 heart attack (see last week's issue for more details), Koho was slowly easing back into a normal routine. At the previous council meeting on March 7, councilors approved a month-long leave of absence for Koho.

And yet, there was the council president, seated between fellow councilors Roland Herrera and Marlene Parsons. Mayor Cathy Clark welcomed Koho back to the dais three times, with the former mayor getting a round of applause the first time. Before the meeting, councilor Roland Herrera took a selfie



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

Keizer City Councilor Dennis Koho (left), flanked by Roland Herrera, returned to the council on March 21 for the first time since suffering a heart attack on Feb. 6.

— after all, this is 2016 — with Koho.

Later in the meeting, councilors gave an update on recent meetings or events they have attended. Koho's well-known humor came through.

"I could tell you all about the hospital and rehab center," Koho said. "You don't want to go to the rehab center if you don't have to. But the alternative wasn't good, so I was happy to be there. I've been in a tiny hospital room for the last six weeks, so I've been trying to get up to speed."

Clark, who was suffering from a cold and thus had Koho sitting further away from her than usual, welcomed him back again.

"Welcome back," the mayor said. "We're so glad to have

you here."

In other business March 21:

- Hersch Sangster gave reports on both the Planning Commission and Traffic/Bikeways/Pedestrians meetings from last week. The Planning Commission approved a motion for pre-application conferences with city staff to be free. That motion is expected to be brought to the council next month.

As far as the other committee, Sangster said he'll start filling out an application soon to get Keizer designated as a bicycle-friendly community. Work is also being done for a grant to pay for signage alerting bicyclists to areas of interest in Keizer.

- Councilors unanimously approved an ordinance updating the Keizer Development Code in regards to daycare facilities, bringing city code in line with state code. The ordinance was approved without any comment.

- In addition to a shortage of people at the meeting, the meeting was also short. The meeting was over in less than 35 minutes. There was only one administrative action. When it came time for councilor liaison reports late in the meeting, two councilors weren't ready because of how quickly the meeting was moving.

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