

CHAMBER,

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Bethell applied for the position the first time around, but withdrew her application. When the search was opened a second time, Bethell submitted her application again and was ready to commit.

Since funding for her position with the Marion County Fire District No. 1 ran out last October, Bethell had been studying to become a financial advisor while also staying busy with projects such as being president of the McNary High School Athletic Booster Club and helping to run a McKay High School turf field project – much like the similar one she spearheaded for McNary last year.

"I still think (being a financial advisor) is a wonderful career," Bethell said. "But I've always had a heart for community service. The chamber thing was something that was always in the back of my mind. I thought of it constantly. I haven't been directly involved with every step, but I have been involved. I couldn't shake the concept out of my brain. I was thinking about it all the time."

Bethell noted that didn't

start when Dieler announced she was retiring.

"I had always wanted Christine's job," said Bethell, a mother of three who owns NW Events and Promotions. "When I think of the role of executive director of the chamber, I define it in my personality. All the experiences I've had, including Marion County Fire District, have developed a personality trait where I can go into a situation, assess what is going on, determine if I can give them something and if there's something they can do for me."

Bethell noted the MCFD job allowed her to help repair relations after a bitter battle between the MCFD and Keizer Fire District.

"I learned a lot from that job about who I am, challenges I can take on, working with personalities and what they want to happen, how to formulate a plan and how to be successful at that," she said. "I believe I'm a natural born leader. I'm not a dictator or micromanager. I enjoy working with idea thinkers."

Despite her new full-time job, Bethell made it clear her priorities haven't changed.

"My first priority is still being a mom," she said. "I feel that makes me a better

person. Our children should have the opportunity to grow up in a great community. The presidents (at the chamber) are supportive of that, which is fantastic. As a female who is driven, that can be a hurdle for some companies. But they were all very supportive of that."

Current Keizer Chamber President Bob Zielinski, who bestowed Bethell with the President's Award at the chamber's First Citizen Awards Banquet in January, is excited about the new hire.

"We are grateful that the Keizer Chamber has a new executive director that comes from our local community; we've appreciated her professionalism, power of persuasion and the ability to accomplish goals," said Zielinski, who worked closely with Bethell last year on the turf field project. "We know Danielle to be strategic and proactive with community leaders and are confident the chamber's services and programs will continue to be a tremendous success under her leadership."

Bethell said she will continue as president of the booster club at MHS.

"I feel like that's part of my job already," she said. "It's no different than being executive

director of the chamber. I rally people around a concept. I'm not doing all of the work. I have excellent teams in all the things I do, including my family."

Scott White, the Keizer Chamber president-elect, looks forward to what Bethell will accomplish as the new executive director.

"I am confident in Danielle's future leadership role in accomplishing three goals of the chamber: increasing our membership base to 500, enhancing our destination marketing services with the city of Keizer and owning a building on River Road."

Bethell said she's indeed ready to tackle those three goals – and more.

"Challenges are good," she said. "I'm willing to take on challenges and bring key people to the table. Keizer is ready to grow, businesses are ready to be on the map. Getting the chamber back on River Road is huge. How's that look like? Can I rally the city to make it happen? I don't know if it will happen this year. Businesses will slowly see the benefit the chamber can give them. I have some ideas I'll be bringing in for the board of directors to ponder. There are some things that need to be



KEIZERTIMES file/Craig Murphy
Danielle Bethell (left) will be working closely with Bob Zielinski (right) as the new executive director of the Keizer Chamber.

done. We need to do a capital campaign and raise money to get the chamber back on River Road.

"I think it's really important for people to see our chamber," Bethell added. "Finances are the primary reason it got moved to Keizer Station and I also think they wanted it to be a visitor's center, which is something that's still important, to bring in that tourist group coming off the freeway. But for the people and businesses in Keizer, having the office on River Road is important. Out of sight, out of mind is a concept I think of with the chamber being at Keizer Station."

Along the same lines,

Bethell wants to see River Road made a priority.

"There are a lot of things in Keizer that need to happen," she said. "River Road needs a facelift and we need to bring attention back to River Road. As a mom of kids who will be going to MHS, they can't walk a block and sit down and have a soda with their friends close by. That bothers me. That small town concept is getting lost. I want to see that come back. A lot of businesses are in Keizer because of that. I don't know why businesses are leaving, but rent is obviously an issue in a lot of occasions. Businesses want to continue to grow during Keizer's transition and I want to be part of the conversation."

McLEOD,

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"That group has the potential to claim one-third of home sales in 2016, which represents about two million home purchases," McLeod said.

One problem for realtors has been getting enough homes to sell.

"Current supply levels are not close to what's needed,"

McLeod said. "We've had a housing supply negative since July. All through the winter, we were calling people, telling them to get their house on the market. We couldn't get enough people to get their house on the market. This is definitely a seller's market."

McLeod said low interest rates are helping to fuel the industry currently, in addition to baby boomers and millennials alike wanting to move at the same time.

"The availability of credit

has gone up," she said. "It's not impossible to get credit. There is money there, with FHA (Federal Housing Administration) programs. And with a 3.875 percent interest rate, they are practically giving money away. The money is almost free."

McLeod said people sometimes see neighbors sell their house in a day, then assume that means they can sell their own house for \$20,000 more.

"I tell them it won't work

that way," she said. "You have to sell three times: you have to get a realtor to go with your plan, the buyer to go with your price and then the appraiser. The appraisers are not letting this turn into the housing bubble it was before."

That's because revised rules have added accountability for mortgage lenders and appraisers, meaning both are less willing to go out on a limb for you, according to McLeod.

"You may get your crazy offer, but not the appraisal," she

said. "If you get your cake and icing, consider yourself lucky. But if you have to scrape off the icing, don't be surprised."

McLeod said don't be surprised if interest rates go up next year with a new president in the White House.

"We can't live at these numbers forever," she said. "This is the year to act. When (the rates) are going up, we're knocking out the lower market of buyers."

For now, buyers have a shortage of homes to choose

from.

"Existing home sales are through the roof," McLeod said. "We need more houses to sell. Inventory is down, which tells the story. Younger people are coming into the market and we don't have the inventory for them."

In response to a question from Chris Eppley, McLeod said the hot price point locally seems to be \$150,000 to \$275,000, though a case could be made for a slightly higher top end to that.

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