

Colm Willis looks to represent the common man in D.C.

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

Colm Willis feels he knows the pulse of the everyday Oregonian.

He wants to take that cause all the way to Washington, D.C.

Willis is one of four Republicans in next week's primary for the 5th District Congressional seat currently held by Kurt Schrader. Next week's winner will face Schrader in the fall primary.

Willis, the only candidate to reach out to the *Keizertimes*, noted he opened his own law firm in Stayton last fall.

The other candidates are Ben West, Seth Allan and Earl Rainey.

"I'm just a working person here in Oregon," Willis said. "I

know what it's like. There are voices not being heard. Today people are fighting for their jobs. I want to take that fight to Washington."

Willis, 29, has not run for political office before.

"I help companies comply with regulations," he said. "My wife is a nurse and I started my own business. I went through all of those headaches. The process made it clear to me our representatives have left us working people behind."

Willis noted he has been talking with plenty of people like him.

"I grew up here," he said. "Over the last few years, it's clear that Oregon is changing. In talking to voters, it's clear that people are worried. They are worried about their jobs,



Willis

their safety, their loss of rights. I think they have reason to be worried. If we don't change the trajectory of this country, our kids will grow up in a country that is not as free, safe or prosperous."

Willis said he was hired to join a joint economic committee in D.C. in the spring of 2008.

"I got a front row seat to the economic collapse later

that year," he said. "I watched in disgust as Congress gave billions in bailouts to companies with the biggest lobbyists. I was in D.C. for a year. We were doing economic research. I was beating my head against the wall. I thought it would be great, doing economic research. But when I got there, I realized a lot of representatives in Congress were taking care of their lobbyist friends. I wanted to change that."

Willis, a father of two young children, came back to Oregon in 2010 as the Oregon Right to Life political director. At the same time, he went to law school at Willamette University to earn his law degree.

Willis talked to a small business owner while cam-

paigned who didn't have the luxury of a bailout.

"His creditors came looking for him," Willis said. "There was no bailout for him. He had to go into his savings. That just felt wrong."

Willis vowed he would not be in Congress to benefit lobbyists.

"I will have to prove to my constituents I am working for them, not the lobbyists," he said. "If lobbyists say, 'We will give you money to vote this way,' the voters will know and kick me out."

Willis feels being in D.C. has changed Schrader and led him to side with lobbyists.

"He hasn't sided with the people and small businesses here in Oregon," Willis said. "I think people are hungry for

change. People are looking for someone who is not a career politician. People are looking for authenticity, they're looking for someone to address their concerns, safety, the loss of their rights.

"When I grew up, Oregon was a place of incredible economic freedom," he added. "You could make a shoe with a waffle maker in your garage. You could come here and be anything you wanted to be. We created new opportunities. It was an exciting time and it gave lot of people reason for hope. Then in the 2000s, leaders started picking winners and losers. They talked about bailouts. With Obamacare, they took over an entire industry. It has hurt small businesses here in Oregon."

City saves more than \$500,000 in interest

By CRAIG MURPHY
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Thanks to the recent sale of a property in Keizer Station, the city is saving more than \$500,000.

The topic came up during the May 2 Keizer City Council meeting and has to deal with the hotel property between Panera Bread and Outback Steakhouse.

As mentioned recently in the *Keizertimes*, Jack Yarbrough recently sold the property to developer Cheo Tzeo, who has announced plans to build a Holiday Inn Express on the site.

Tim Wood, finance director for the city, requested a supplemental budget related to the sale, as the city received approximately \$685,000 last month as an assessment payoff for the property in the Keizer

Station Local Improvement District (LID).

The Keizer Station LID debt obligation has an outstanding balance of \$16,585,000 with semi-annual interest payments, with a balloon payment for all unpaid principal due in 2031.

"By using the assessment payoff amount to reduce the outstanding principal, the city can save approximately \$530,000 in interest over the remaining life of the loan," Wood said.

Mayor Cathy Clark took a moment to emphasize the money being saved.

"We'll be saving taxpayers \$530,000 over the lifetime of this loan," Clark said. "That's interest that won't be paid. It's important to point it out. The model we set is one that is already fiscally prudent. When

we have the chance to pay off more, that's wonderful."

Wood noted the money wasn't expected.

City Manager Chris Eppley said each property owner in Keizer Station has a timeline to pay off debts.

"Yarbrough decided to pay it off and to make it simple for the new owners," he said. "We weren't expecting this. This is great. It's great whenever something like this happens."

The supplemental budget was approved on a unanimous 6-0 vote, with councilor Dennis Koho absent.

In other council business May 2:

- Councilor Marlene Parsons asked a question about the upcoming closure for roundabout construction at the corner of Chemawa Road and Verda Lane. Work is ex-

pected to begin next month and should conclude by early September, converting the current four-way stop into a single lane roundabout.

"Will there be detours listed?" Parsons asked Bill Lawyer, public works director for Keizer.

"We will put message boards up a week ahead about the closure," Lawyer said. "Unfortunately, there is no good detour route for any one direction. My suggestion is to take Lockhaven (Drive) to River Road and go from there. There are some ways to get around, but they are not good ways. We have identified some detour routes, but they are not complete detours since we don't know where people are going."

- Clark highlighted a report from the Keizer Police De-

partment on the disbursement of petty cash funds.

"This speaks extremely well of the police and how they take care of people during an emergency," the mayor said.

Police chief John Teague said the issue goes back several years.

"Officers were crossing people who were desperate financially," Teague said. "Cops were pulling money from their pockets to help these people out. Putting in \$20 out of a \$6 million police budget is money well spent."

Teague gave an example of an officer paying to have an RV towed to an RV park.

"It cost \$50 and solved a problem," he said. "That's what we use this money for. It's money well spent."

Clark first heard about the

fund while in budget discussions several years ago.

"It speaks well to how we try to solve problems in Keizer," she said.

Councilor Amy Ryan noted she has witnessed officers doing the good deeds.

"With the homeless we've been working with, I have seen officers taking money from their pockets to help," Ryan said. "I would like to have a resource for them, since that opportunity is there quite a bit. They truly are making the time and the commitment."

Teague said the fund is less than \$500.

"I know it is adequate," he said. "If we ran across the need to spend more, I would come back to you. They are trying to solve a problem at the moment."

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