

Banding together



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
McNary High School band members Emilio Aguilar, Caleb O'Dell and Chris Lane-Massee spent Saturday, Sept. 10, collecting cans and bottles as part of the Celtic band's annual fundraiser.

PARKS,

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parks supervisor, said the hope is to attract someone else willing to take the project on. Resurfacing costs alone are expected to reach \$25,000.

Another area of concern in Chalmers Jones is the gazebo, its roof needs new shingles.

"It's not terrible now, but the longer we wait, the more it is going to cost," Johnson said.

Mayor Cathy Clark wanted to see an itemized list of projects starting with the most urgent safety needs. While Johnson has kept a growing list of projects, it has by no means meant there is funding available to take care of it.

"A great example of that is the south parking lot at Claggett Creek Park. It was on the list two years ago and we just couldn't afford it," Walsh said.

Claggett was the tour's next stop. The south parking lot gets a lot of use on a daily basis. During lunch times, it is frequently packed with visitors eating meals in their cars. On weekends, the park is host to intramural sporting events as well as parties that reserve the covered eating area. Johnson said a lot of contractors pull into the lot just to use the portable toilets.

"That's a lot of use, sometimes from heavy trucks, and now there are huge potholes with more on the way," Johnson said.

Johnson got estimates to repair the parking lot two years ago and they clocked in around \$7,000. After two years of kicking the can down the road due to lack of funding, the cost to repair it has more than doubled. A large section of the parking lot will now need to be removed and replaced. It's on track to be repaired this year.

Councilors also surveyed a small basketball court on the west side of the park that is nearing the end of its lifespan. Johnson estimated that the asphalt surface was 30 to 40 years old and unsafe for the last decade.

"What I would like to see us do now is replace the whole thing with a multi-use court for tennis, pickleball and



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
ABOVE: Cracks like the ones seen in the bowl of Carlson Skate Park are the reason the park needs to be resurfaced. RIGHT: Similar issues are affecting a basketball court at Claggett Creek Park.



basketball," Johnson said. "With a multi-use court, we can bring in more park visitors for just a little more money than it would take to replace what's already here."

The price tag would be about \$50,000.

During the Claggett stop, City Councilor Amy Ryan suggested creating an adopt-a-park program to entice local businesses looking for ways to support the community. Business sponsors could be encouraged to help with clean-up as well as providing new amenities in the parks they sponsor, she suggested.

Johnson said he would prefer a program that focused on repairing existing amenities and adding new ones, even small additions like benches and tables.

During a tour of Ben Miller Park in southeast Keizer, Clark directed parks advisory board members to look into adopt-a-park programs in other city's and determine what a Keizer program might look like.

The idea met with some resistance from JT Hager, a member of the parks advisory board.

"My goal as a member of the parks board is stabilized, long-term funding and not sponsorships that can go away at any moment," Hager said.

When other members of the group pushed back

suggesting it was a way to promote ownership within the community, Hager pressed forward.

"If we are adding a fee to utility bills in the city, that's also ownership and it's going to get more people engaged," he said.

City leaders are exploring the options for a fee added to utility bills that would create dedicated funds for parks and police.

The final stop of the tour was Keizer Little League (KLL) Park where Clint Holland, a member of the parks board and prominent Keizer booster, is leading up an effort to rehabilitate the facilities.

After years of neglect, the condition of the park and its fields reached critical mass a few years ago.

Holland received a \$10,000 matching grant from the city to begin work on a multiyear, large-scale overhaul, and

announced during the tour that he'd secured another \$50,000 from Keizer Rotary Club to advance his plans. The Rotary grant will be delivered in \$10,000 increments over the next four years.

Holland hopes to lure more tournaments to the facility, but that isn't the end run, he said.

"In the best years of KLL park, the concession stand netted \$35,000 a year. It bottomed out at around \$1,500 a few years ago, but now its back up to \$15,000. If we can get some of the tournaments, that revenue is going to go back up and that's more money we can use to help maintain the park," Holland said.

The maintenance of the park is delegated to a local youth sports group that takes on a contract with the city. KLL is the current contractor, but the agreement is up for renewal in October. City officials could also choose a new contractor.

In the past week, two of the fields at KLL have been killed and are scheduled to be replaced before the beginning of the season next year. Holland's next plans include lighting four additional fields that would allow for more nighttime games, and by extension, more tournament play.

"I really want us to get back to the point where we have a big Iris Festival tournament every year," Holland said.



Submitted photo
Fletcher Lee took his Keizertimes to Pyongyang, North Korea, on a recent trip that included a week in China. Send your KT on Vacation photos to kt@keizertimes.com.

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