

Planning commission backs UGB expansion

Approval would pave way for third bridge

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

The urban growth boundary (UGB) that contains sprawl in the Salem-Keizer area might be expanding, but not in a way that many in Keizer have pushed for.

The Keizer Planning Commission recommended approving an expansion of UGB to accommodate a new bridge across the Willamette River, known as the Salem River Crossing, at its meeting Wednesday, Nov. 9.

Planning commissioners forwarded a recommendation to approve the UGB expansion with a 6-1 vote. Commissioner Michael DeBlasi opposed.

If the plan gains approval from Salem, Keizer, Marion County and Polk County, the new bridge would span the Willamette River at Hickory and Pine streets in north Salem. The plans call for the annexation of 32 acres into the UGB to make way for the bridge and other connecting roads on the west side of the Willamette River.

In discussing the issue at the Keizer Planning Commission level, commissioners advocated for a long-term view of growth in the area.

“You’re building a bridge for infrastructure needed 20 years from now,” said Commissioner Hersch Sangster. “It’s not so much personal travel or commuters, it’s truck traffic.”

The bridge would create a pathway for traffic to travel across the River with relative ease from the Salem-Keizer Parkway.

Commissioners and the Keizer City Council attended a special meeting last month that brought together all of the affected jurisdictions and invited public comment. More than 60 people testified during the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Commissioner Jim Jacks said that while there was lots of testimony regarding the impact of the bridge construction, the issue at hand was the UGB expansion.

“If we recommend that the UGB be expanded tonight, it will probably be 10, 20 or even 30 years before (a bridge) gets funded. If we don’t do something now, it’s going to be 40 or 50 years from now,” Jacks said.

Despite opposing the plan, DeBlasi said he understood the need for a bridge, but that the other costs associated with it needed to be considered.

“We’re going to allow people to drive as much as they want and externalize the cost in terms of cost of roads, climate change, accidents and then costs of loss of revenue on lands to accommodate the cars,” he said. “Why not look at ways to squeeze all the efficiency out of the use of the land before we decide to approve the expansion and then build a bridge?”

He also took issue with a Keizer city staff report, which suggested that the bridge would improve employment prospects and livability in the local area.

“That seems like a giant leap,” DeBlasi said. “The staff comment was intended to convey that a far-reaching discussion had taken place, more than editorializing,” said Nate Brown, Keizer’s community development director, and preparer of the staff report.

Commissioner Jerry Crane, a local caterer, said he plans for extra time whenever he has to cross the existing Marion Street bridge for a job, which was one factor in his support of the plan. However, he said he was most moved by testimony from a west Salem resident during the special meeting last month.

“He told us that his daughter had severe asthma and she could die if there was a problem at the existing bridge,” Crane said.

The commissioners’ recommendation will now go to the Keizer City Council, which will make the final decision regarding the city’s support on the matter.

“You’re building a bridge for infrastructure needed 20 years from now”

— Hersch Sangster

Deals, deals, deals



Vendor Braunda Gilchrist talks with customer Linda Bishop at the 5th Annual McNary High School Holiday Bazaar Saturday, Nov. 12.

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obituaries

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Neal J. Bigger

December 13, 1939 — November 11, 2016

Neal John Bigger passed away on Nov. 11 at the age of 76.

He was born in Helena, Mont. but spent most of his early life in Anchorage, Alaska, with his parents William and Dorothy.

Neal was married, and raised his family in Salinas, Cal., moving to Keizer, Ore. in 1979. He worked as a civil engineer for 30 years. He retired from work with the City of Salem and happily spent the rest of his years.

Neal was and always will be, remembered for his devotion to family, his gentleness, thoughtful ways, and joyful laugh. He had many interests and hobbies, such as fishing, bowling, dancing, and breeding tropical fish. An avid reader, he could always be found with a book in his back pocket.

Neal is survived by his loving wife Roberta, four children: Debra Coder, Sandra (Thomas II) Ayers, Brent (Carla), and Charlotte Bigger; one stepson Guy Gouneau; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and two sisters Sandra Dodgson and Kathleen Sarzotti. He is preceded in death by his beloved wife of 40 years, Nita.

A celebration of life will be held at 3 p.m. on Sat, Nov. 19, 2016 at Restlawn Cemetery.



N. Bigger

Empty Bowls on sale at WAC Sat.-Sun.

Empty Bowls, the annual pottery event to support hunger relief, will take place Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 19 and 20, at Willamette Art Center. More than 1,200 handcrafted pottery pieces are on sale to the public, and all proceeds will go to Marion-Polk Food Share.

More than 20 local artisans spend all year preparing the event. Saturday hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday hours are noon until 4 p.m. while supplies last.

Willamette Art Center is located on the Oregon State Fairgrounds through the yellow gate off Silverton Road in Salem. Willamette Art Center will be accepting donations of non-perishable food during and continuing through their holiday sale on Dec. 3 and 4.

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