



It's curtains for the cows

In June, the descendants of Joseph and Rosalie Herber petitioned the city to rezone property affectionately known as the "cow pasture" between Chemawa Road and Dearborn Avenue on the west side of Verda Lane.

It was the second time in three years the family requested a rezoning that would pave the way for apartments on the site. The new proposal added cosmetic improvements, but the total number of apartments only dropped from 120 to 112.

Local residents turned out

in droves to speak in opposition to the plan over the course of the next two months, others put pen to paper to voice their concerns. Citing school impacts, traffic concerns, livability issues and more, they implored the council to deny the request and keep it zoned for single-family development. The historic significance of one home on the property was even called into question.

In the end, Keizer city councilors couldn't find fault with the application and granted the rezoning. There is no timetable as yet for constructing the new apartments.

Tight vote for councilor

In August, an open Keizer city council seat drew two candidates for the office, Allen Barker and Laura Reid.

Barker is something of a newcomer to the city, but jumped right onto the city budget committee. Reid, on the other hand, has lived here for more than 15 years and has probably taught a substantial percentage of Keizer voters and/or their children through her work at McNary High School.

On election night, Barker held on to a slim lead and, with all precincts supposedly reporting, *Keizertimes* erroneously called the race for him.

Forty-eight hours later, another 1,400 new votes appeared and gave Reid a lead she never relinquished. Reid will join the council at its first meeting in January.

Roundabout opens

After seemingly years of anxiety, the traffic roundabout at Chemawa Road Northeast and Verda Lane Northeast finally opened September.

When the idea was first put forth numerous local residents voiced opposition, but city officials had been claiming for years that the four-way stop was failing.

While a nearly three-month closure led to long lines of traffic around town during the summer months, the roundabout has fared well. While some residents are surely avoiding it and others are still learning to use it, the intersection has been largely crash-free.

A spate of violence

Violence found its way to Keizer in 2016.

On Valentine's Day, Jerrod Goodpaster was murdered at Keizer Station in what police believe was a marijuana deal gone wrong. Two suspects were later arrested and one of them charged with the killing.

A little over a month later, a 59-year-old man was shot in the parking lot of Bi-Mart in another suspected drug deal gone bad. The victim survived the shooting, and the suspect was arrested as he tried to flee north on River Road North. The shooter pleaded guilty to the crime and was sentenced to 90 months in prison not long after the incident.

In April, a teenage boy fatally stabbed the abusive boyfriend of his mother on Brooks Avenue N.E. Jeffrey Holly, the victim, had several previous run-ins with police and neighbors. The Marion County District Attorney's Office chose not to press charges against the boy.

"Generally speaking, Keizer is a safe place to live. Everyone involved (were) living a high-risk lifestyle," said Chief John Teague of Keizer Police Department, though he added the teenage boy was not part of the problem.

2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

Ch- Ch- Ch- Changes on River Road

When Starbucks decided to move a block south on River Road it displaced five other businesses that called the now-raised strip mall home.

The building that once housed the coffee chain and Mr. Video has also been demolished. Mr. Video found a new home, sans Limeberry, at 3836 River Road N. Back at Schoolhouse Square, the new building under construction will become home to a Human Bean coffee shop, a Jersey Mike's sandwich shop, and a to-be-determined third tenant.

Elsewhere on River Road, Tony's Kingdom of Com-



ics moved south to 3856 River Road N. Taco Bell and Shari's got makeovers. Keizer Liquor moved north to 5023 River Road N. in Schoolhouse Square. In December, Bricks & Minifigs, a dedicat-

ed shop for Lego enthusiasts, opened at 3670 River Road N. Bank of the Cascades, GISI Marketing Group and Big Town Hero closed and two new marijuana shops opened.

Keizer parks funding in crisis

Early in 2016, Keizer resident Eamon Bishop called upon the city to consider closing several of the city parks and parks amenities.

While the proposal was met with skepticism at the time, it launched a sprawling and still growing conversation about the state of Keizer's green spaces. For months, the city's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has grappled

with overdue repairs and finding a way to create a dedicated parks fund to cover maintenance and improvements. The most likely option at the moment is a fee added to utility bills, but the exact amount is still in question.

Currently, parks funds are supplied by a thinly-stretched city general fund which also provides funding for the Keizer Police Department.

KPD staff needs grow

While parks have dominated headlines in 2016, another city department is also in need of better funding: the Keizer Police Department.

When the city convened its budget advisory committee in May, several members called upon the city to add another police officer, but City Manager Chris Eppley wanted to see a healthier reserve before moving forward.

KPD Chief John Teague brought forth a proposal in August saying that while the need isn't dire, yet, he would like to add five officers.

Teague also cautioned the council not to confuse an increased number of officers with an immediate decrease in crime.

"It's more about customer service. When we get one more detective, you're going to have a detective show up at your house after a burglary, not just a patrolman," Teague said.

Homelessness in spotlight

In early 2016, the Salem City Council, Keizer City Council, and Marion and Polk counties convened a task force to look at issues of homelessness in the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Through the year, the group has heard from local groups tackling issues surrounding homelessness and tried to chart a path forward. Growing numbers of homeless individuals, a shortage of housing and numerous other factors are contributing to the more visible presence in the area.

The situation in Keizer reached a head in November, when a camp of homeless individuals set down stakes under an awning in Schoolhouse Square. The camp ebbed and flowed in size over the course of four days before Keizer police requested they move on.

The task force wraps up its work in February 2017 and hopes to have a plan for what comes next after its final meeting.

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