

PLUG: 'One thing speaks to business and that's money'

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Talk quickly turned to the future of the commission and what role, if any, the current commissioners would play.

One of the ideas floated at earlier meetings was hosting a business-oriented event at the Keizer Civic Center as a show of being "open for business." However, Brown said that fell more under the umbrella of marketing and might be a task better-suited to the Keizer Chamber of Commerce. Regardless of the purpose of such an event, the city does not offer much in terms of incentives for luring businesses to Keizer.

Commissioner Carlos Soto, who is also a member of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce board, said the group is enthusiastic about taking on a larger role in enticing businesses to Keizer.

"I think it will be a good thing for us because that's exactly what we do," Soto said.

Day requested clarification as to whether the existing commission would be disbanded and whether city staff would still be available as a resource.

Brown said city staff would be available to work in collaboration with the new Chamber-

led group after Day expressed dissatisfaction with an answer supplied by Mayor Cathy Clark.

Commissioner AJ Nash, a commercial realtor, said for economic development to begin in earnest, the city needs to put money on the table.

"One thing speaks to business and that's money, and until that happens we are not as open for business as the surrounding communities," Nash said, adding that system development charge credits and grants would be a start.

He also suggested that the new group lobby for some of the proceeds gleaned from the sale and lease of city property be reinvested in economic development.

Commissioners agreed to take part in the initial meeting of the new group, but several hoped the Chamber would include non-member voices on the new committee.

"Healthy, targeted diversity and removing the requirement of being a chamber member would move it in the right direction," Nash said.

While the commission was not formally disbanded by the current members, it is not expected they will meet after the establishment of the Chamber-led group. No timeline was established for putting the new group in motion.

FISTS,

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of my goals was to bring in something new and exciting and targets a younger audience and maybe get some people that don't normally go to the theatre."

To reach that group, the cast of *Hearts Like Fists* had a booth at Cherry City Comic Con. They'll also be at Tony's Kingdom of Comics on Saturday May 6—Free Comic Book Day.

The playwright, Adam Szymkowitz, has created a four panel comic strip about the play that will be handed out at the event. The strip will be illustrated by Annmare Cruz, daughter of Tony Grove, owner of Tony's Kingdom of Comics.

Hearts Like Fists tells the story of four female crime fighters, Lisa, played by Rachael Wiggins, Sally, played by Penelope Wright Bays, Nina, played by Elizabeth Ming and Jazmin, played by Kyrie Haskins, as they defend the city against



Penelope Wright Bays and Craig Will battle during *Hearts Like Fists*, debuting at Chemeketa Community College on Friday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m. KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Doctor X (Craig Will), who is sneaking into apartments and injecting lovers with a lethal poison.

The cast also includes Sam Byers-Tibbits, who portrays Peter, a lonely heart surgeon who has failed at love until he meets Lisa. Mike Jaffe plays the commissioner of the city and Mathew Willem and Elijah Rodriguez make up the ensemble.

"It's very strongly feminist," Gipson-King said. "It's an all female crime fighting team and they get to wield weapons and fight the bad guy and it's all very exciting."

The cast worked with John Elliot, a choreographer from Eugene, blocking the five fight scenes over just three days.

"It's pretty amazing and speaks very highly of John's skill level as a choreographer," Gipson-King said. "He specializes in exciting flashy style of

fighting as well as the weapons. Every night (of rehearsal) we do fight call over and over again."

Additional shows are April 29 and 30 and May 5, 6, 12 and 13 at 7:30 p.m. Matinees are scheduled for April 30 and May 7 at 2 p.m. Doors open 30 minutes prior to the start of the play.

Tickets are \$15 and available at the door or online at Brown Paper Tickets www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2929658.

The show is recommended for ages 10 and older.

"There's one pretty sexy kissing scene," Gipson-King said.

The first 25 ticket holders can enjoy a free cupcake happy hour with sparkling cider and coffee.

The auditorium is in Building 6 at Chemeketa Community College. The closest parking is in the purple lot.

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"That being said, if I had to ask my drivers to come in and pay \$50 apiece to do pick-ups here, no one would come in," Wakefield said.

Until recently, Keizer had honored taxi licenses issued in Salem, but Brown said the development department was recently approached by a single operator who wanted to get his license in Keizer and have Salem honor it. The Keizer license is cheaper.

It ended up being the only Keizer taxi license issued since the adoption of the ordinance covering vehicle-for-hire operators in 1994.

"The city manager before Chris Ep-

pley directed staff to simply honor the Salem licenses," Brown said.

However, with the rapid expansion of ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft, there is now more money on the table.

In the case of Willamette Valley Yellow Cab, Wakefield said he employs about 70 drivers. If each of those drivers had to pay for an additional license, Keizer would see revenues climb about \$6,000 in the first year. After the initial licensing, the amount would drop to about \$2,500 annually.

That may seem like a drop in an oversized bucket, but consider this: for the 2017-18 fiscal year, city staff are projecting a budget increase of only about \$30,000 after making a substantial payment to help cover Public Employee

Retirement System (PERS) costs.

"The issue has been elevated with the questions about Uber and Lyft, but there is still some disagreement over how to proceed among the leadership at the city," Brown said after the meeting.

Keizer ordinances would have to be modified to permit ridesharing services. The City of Salem is already working on plans to do so.

At the city council meeting, Mayor Cathy Clark requested city staff develop a report on how the city has handled taxi licensing in the past and a look at potential options for the next steps.

"I would like to look at the impact on a business with a large number of drivers and how (the current ordinance) meets Keizer's needs," she said.

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