

City pulls plug on economic development

In April, city officials walked previous commitments to helping the city develop its business sector.



N. Brown

After not meeting for months, the Keizer Economic Development Commission disbanded and left the goal of attracting businesses to Keizer to the Keizer Chamber of Commerce.

At one time, the city used taxes collected through an Urban Renewal District to help fund improvement projects along River Road North and Cherry Avenue Northeast, but the district was dissolved and cash-strapped Keizer has precious little surplus to fund projects with its existing tax base.

When asked by a council member whether previous ideas floated during the commission's meetings were dead or reduced, Community Development Director Nate Brown didn't mince words.

"To be blunt, my understanding it is dead because the city is struggling to pay for parks and police," Brown said.

Community heroes land in Keizer

In October, Keizer became the home turf for two community superheroes, Guardian Shield and Arachnight.

The duo don masks and patrol the streets looking for criminal activity and mostly trying to be good examples for others in the city. *Keizertimes* spent a night out patrol with the team while they reminded drivers to turn on their lights (or turn them off in parked cars), picking up litter and leaving a pair of Gatorades for a sleeping homeless person.

Their arrival in Keizer was met with a heaping helping of skepticism, but hosting a meet-and-greet seemed to help allay some of the fears.

"My only agenda is to make superheroes real," Shield said. "Why aren't they real? It takes a little guts, a little courage, but there's strength in numbers."



File Superheroes Guardian Shield and Arachnight came to Keizer in October.



Residents ask for city stance on inclusivity

Early in 2017, the Keizer City Council determined one of its goals was to do a better job of reaching out to residents of the Iris City. Less than a month later, a group of residents turned out at city hall asking for the council to adopt an inclusivity resolution.

The issue got a full airing at a work session in July when councilors discussed what the paths forward might be. While there was some reticence to adopt a formal resolution welcoming all people to the city and resolving to fight racism, discrimination, sexism and bullying, councilors seemed more open using an equity lens when making decisions. An equity lens essentially serves as a reminder to consider how any decision impacts minority groups.

The idea drew criticism as establishing potential cover for undocumented residents and as an attempt to legislate behavior. As of yet, the council hasn't revisited the issue despite promises to do so.

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