

DEAL,

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more than a dozen years ago in an effort to acquire the rights-of-way and bundle the property that became Keizer Station for sale to developers. In the intervening years, much of it has been sold to developers, but the city has retained ownership of the cinema site, a piece of land across the street, west of the Keizer Transit Center, and a third site on the triangle-shaped land bordered by Chemawa Road Northeast, Lockhaven and McLeod.

"The (Salem Radiology) sale was time sensitive," Eppley said. "Buying the property for Keizer Rapids was kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I was opposed to it at the time, but it's been a great park," said Eppley. "The council saw an opportunity to bring in a big pot of money and something to do with it."

Past city councils have opposed leasing property in favor of selling it for reasons connected to other priorities, like Keizer Rapids Park, and some that are more philosophical.

"The primary question has been whether the city should be in the business of entrepreneurship? That's a good question, I said 'yes,' but other councils have said, 'no,'" Eppley said.

The current city council was the first to offer its approval, which means the city expects to collect about \$12,000 a month in rent for the foreseeable future with a 2 percent increase every year. The current lease contract is for 50 years with options to extend it up to 99 years.

Keizer will owe a broker 20 percent of the rent for the first 20 years, but it still amounts to nearly \$120,000 annually. It's not a huge sum, but it will take the sting out of the money if the city is asked to pay into the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), which comes out of the general fund. The only streams of revenue for the general fund are property taxes, franchise fees and monies the city receives from the state.

"It insulates us from negative impacts a little bit. When PERS comes up with a 22 percent increase, we have no way to absorb it right now," Eppley said. "It alleviates the strain on a part of the budget that is typically inflexible."

The crunch the city feels at such times doesn't typically mean layoffs, but it might mean positions go unfilled for a lengthy period of time before new hires are brought in. That exact scenario was one of the culprits that left Keizer Police Department understaffed for the past several years.

"This helps us insulate us from swings in other places. I am going to try to perpetuate this with other property the city owns," Eppley said.

He said the parcel across the street from the cinema could easily accommodate a 10,000-square-foot retail space.

While the steady revenue stream is a boon for the city, it is not without some risk. If the cinema owner defaults on the lease agreement before the building is fully constructed, he must return the property to its natural state. A default after construction is complete means Keizer would own the theater.

No one foresees a problem in meeting the obligations of the lease, but Keizer also has had issues in the past. When developer Chuck Sides defaulted on a \$26 million in city-backed bonds in 2011, Keizer had to extend its Urban Renewal District to settle the

debt, a situation that meant pleading with affected taxing agencies for approval. While the debt was settled more quickly than expected, the fiasco effectively killed all programs associated with improving River Road North.

Eppley isn't sure what Keizer would do with the reins of a movie theater, but he's hopeful it never comes to that.

"It's not a traditional way of doing business for a city, but we are not a traditional city," Eppley said.

CINEMA,

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while the smaller screens will have seating on six-inch risers.

There might be fewer seats, but there also won't be any jockeying for the best ones or for a place in line when big movies hit the screen. Assigned seating will be selected at the time tickets are purchased.

"There's no more showing up two hours ahead to get

into a show, just leave enough time to get your popcorn," Blissett said.

Contrary to what has been mentioned in previous discussions at the Keizer City Council level, the theater will not have a full menu available, Blissett said, but traditional concessions will be available.

"It would be possible to come back and retrofit the current design for alcohol sales, but right now it's what you would generally expect," Blissett said.

Help needed planting trees

Volunteers are invited to help plant trees and shrubs along a new floodplain forest in Willamette Mission State Park on Feb. 10. The event is a part of a larger habitat restoration project led by Willamette Riverkeeper, in partnership with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD).

The restoration "work party," now in its second year, is part of the Willamette Mission Floodplain Reforestation Project. Its goal is to restore vital fish and wildlife habitat on 600 acres across the state park. The project broke ground in 2014 and has continued under the guidance of Willamette Riverkeeper, a non-profit organization that works to protect and restore the Willamette River.

This winter, Willamette Riverkeeper members and volunteers intend to plant more than

107,000 native plants in Willamette Mission State Park.

"One of our project goals is to teach local community members, park user groups and youth about environmental stewardship," said Marci Krass, Restoration Manager for Willamette Riverkeeper. "We hope that by offering these service opportunities, people will invest in Willamette Mission State Park's transformation and feel a connection to the forest they are helping to restore."

The restoration work party will be held 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Feb. 10. Volunteers will meet in the gravel lot for the Wheatland ferry, at the north entrance to Willamette Mission State Park. Parking is free. Registration and more info is online: <https://goo.gl/8HsRcw>.

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