Where to go? How to get there?

Task force digs into tough questions about KLL Park

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Conversations about the future management of Keizer Little League Park were wide ranging at the second meeting of a task force charged with developing plans for its sustainability.

The group, dubbed the Keizer Little League Park Task Force, met Tuesday, Nov. 20, at the Keizer Civic Center. Mayor Cathy Clark led the discussions that focused on developing policies and procedures to ensure as little disruption as possible if or when the contract for park management is handed off to a new group.

To date, the city has contracted with one of two youth sports leagues – either Keizer Little League or McNary Youth Baseball (formerly KYSA). However, since the 2007 schism that created two different leagues, contracting with one organization over the other has created friction between the two. Both have run afoul of the agreement at various points in time and that history resulted in the creation of the task force.

During the meeting, the members of the task force which includes representatives of the city council, both sports leagues, city volunteers and others, wrestled with two fundamental questions: (1) should the park remain focused on Keizer-centric youth leagues or evolve into a major tournament site, and (2) how does its future change the management?

"We don't know where we want to be yet," said Ryan Walsh, president of MYB.

The group didn't come up with a definitive answer to that question during the meeting, but conceded that some of the hoped-for improvements, such as adding lights for night play and turf to the fields are intended to draw outside groups to the complex.

City Manager Chris Eppley said the original intended use for the field was as a home for youth baseball and softball, but it did not have to stay that way. More importantly, Eppley said, the city did not want to be involved in the day-to-day aspects of management.

"Some of the big projects might be simply out of [the managing group's] reach. The city might be able to supply some match funding for those and we can make the really big things more attainable," Eppley said.

Evolving into a destination for tournaments would also likely require a paid position for scheduling and oversight of the operations, something not addressed in the current management contract.

Clark encouraged a broader range of perspective be brought to the floor in addressing the matter.

"This is a community-owned asset and the people of Keizer get to decide. How do we ensure the safe maintenance and future of the facility?" she said.

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>
> — Lisa Buik
> KLL secretary

On that question, Matt Lawyer, a member of the Keizer Parks Advisory Board, felt there was room to evolve.

"Can [KLL and MYB] continue to live as independent organizations, and come together where the sole focus maintenance of the park?" Lawyer asked.

Walsh and Brad Arnsmeier, president of KLL, said that was something talked about previously, but no action was taken because of the differing goals of the two organizations.

"We talked about taking members of each board and spinning them off as the complex board," Walsh said.

"The biggest problem has been the communication, and not reaching out," said Lisa Buik, KLL secretary.

"We differ on rule sets and that will keep us from coming together. Until that happens, we will operate as two different groups," Arnsmeier added.

Eppley said his concern regarding a new board overseeing the complex was the potential that volunteerism for the complex, not necessarily the sports leagues, would atrophy.

Keizer Public Works Director Bill Lawyer said that as long as there was representation on a new complex oversight board from both leagues, enlisting volunteers from both would become the responsibility of the respective board members.

The task force will continue the discussion at its next meeting Jan. 2, 2019.

Krampus visits Keizer Mart

Visits with Santa are nice and all, but one Keizer business is hosting a visitor for the misbehaving kids next week.

Keizer Mart owner Ryan Alonzo is bringing Krampus to Keizer at his store the Dec. 1 through Dec. 5. Krampus will be available for visits each day from 7 to 10 p.m.

"I've invested a lot of time and money into an elaborate costume and throne for Krampus to be able to make an appearance at the store this year," Alonzo said.

Dec. 5 is Krampusnacht in Germany. According to lore, Krampus, a horned-and-hooved beast described as "half-goat, half-demon," punishes children who have misbehaved during the Christmas season.

Despite his fearsome face, Krampus allegedly works in tandem with St. Nick as he doles out gifts.

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