

Commission: Reluctant endorsement on housing needs report

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

The Keizer Planning Commission provided feedback on the final report of the Keizer Housing Needs Analysis at its meeting Sept. 11.

The housing needs report is one of three documents that will help the city chart the path for future growth. Planning commissioners could not change the findings of the report, but offered their insights on the recommendations it contains.

The group decided to table discussion on the big question, whether Keizer should attempt to expand its Urban Growth Boundary, for a future meeting. The rest of the recommendations were covered in the meeting.

Aside from the UGB question, the report includes the following recommendations:

- Encouraging a broader mix of housing types
- Supporting affordable housing
- Find and evaluate funding tools for supporting residential development

On the topic of encouraging a broader mix of housing types, Senior Planner Shane Witham asked whether the city should take part in potential "early adopter" programs offered by the state in relation to House Bill 2001.

The bill effectively ditched single-family zoning in any community with a population of 10,000 or more. Depending on the size of the community, it means allowing duplexes in single-family zones. In Keizer, which has a population of about 39,000, it means three- and four-unit homes will be permitted. Keizer was already moving in that direction with recent zoning changes, but might benefit from state assistance in covering the costs associated with the changes.

"I think we are at the threshold for a lot of our systems right now. Looking at the early-adopter might benefit from opportunities to invest, but we need to be aware of any strings attached and the effect on city staff," said Commissioner Matt Lawyer.

Commissioner Mark Caillier echoed the concerns.

"I support diverse housing, but it's market driven. I've worked for employers who love grants and had them blow up in our face while others had great outcomes," Caillier said.

On the issue of supporting affordable housing, the main concern was what to do about parking, which seemed like an odd starting point. Witham soon cleared it up.

"The eye is toward multifamily housing and

how we will handle transportation issues if we are promoting that type of development," he said.

In other words, multifamily housing will require a different type of parking and would require the city to change existing parking requirements as they pertain to residential, single-family zones.

Commissioner Jeffrey Watson offered support with a caution.

"The easier it is to get around without cars, the fewer cars there will be as the population increases, but reducing parking in one area means you are increasing it in another area," Watson said.

Funding for new development or redevelopment is likely to be the major obstacle. Keizer has some of the lowest costs in the area when it comes to fees collected by the city, but that means there is little left over to create incentive programs to attract development.

One opportunity to create additional revenue and direct it toward subsidizing affordable housing is implementing a construction excise tax. It would increase the overall cost of a development by up to 1 percent.

That notion did not find immediate favor among commissioners.

"I know we need affordable housing, but I

don't know what kind of welcome mat that is," Watson said.

"My concern is that an excise tax can be placed on everything from new construction to remodeling," added Caillier.

Other options include establishing an urban renewal district and local improvement districts that would collect money from property within a specific area and reinvest them in the same.

While the commission punted on the UGB question, two members, Kyle Juran and Mike DeBlasi, were taking part in their final meeting and offered input for the day when the commission tackles the issue. The committee that oversaw the housing needs analysis recommended absorbing the projected growth within the existing UGB, but Juran felt expansion is needed.

"If Keizer increases density, Keizer will change. I'm a little afraid that if we don't increase the urban growth boundary it will affect livability, it will change the function and feel of Keizer," he said.

DeBlasi said he wanted to see what sort of return Keizer would get on the large investment required to expand the boundary.

"The tax base is increased, but will we get [the investment] back?" he said.

Post will run for 4th term

Rep. Bill Post filed to run for his fourth term as the State Representative from House District 25, which includes Keizer, St. Paul, and Newberg. Post was first elected in 2014.

"I truly enjoy representing Marion and Yamhill counties. It's been a privilege to serve

this constituency," said Post.

Although in a super minority, Post was involved in passing legislation to make roads safer, promote affordable housing, strengthen public indecency laws, and establish permanent Daylight Savings Time.

In a fourth term, Post

said he would focus on behind-the-counter Sudafed purchases, the death penalty, address Measure 11 concerns and expose "hidden sales taxes."

For more information on Post and his efforts, visit www.billpost.com.

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