

SPEED,

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The tumult caught the attention of Carol Doerfler and Patti Tischer, presidents of the West Keizer Neighborhood Association and Greater Gubser Neighborhood Association, respectively.

The pair have been closely watching the conversations and even experienced some of the infractions themselves. Tischer said she has been passed on McLeod Lane Northeast while traveling the speed limit multiple times.

"There are people who come to meetings and complain and there was a recent discussion on Nextdoor[.com] that had more than 150 people talking about it," Doerfler said.

At traffic safety meetings, residents repeatedly asked for more traffic enforcement, but, at best, the city currently has three officers dedicated to traffic control (See related story on Page A1). In addition to attending to resident complaints, those same officers are called in as back-up when responding to major incidents and are frequently expected to be seen by the public in multiple places at the same time.

Keizer police once had a reputation of being tough on traffic control matters and Doerfler advocates for a return to those days.

"It may be time to do that again, to maybe get that reputation back," Doerfler said. "They could change the speeds but, if they're going to ignore 25-mile an hour sign, they're going to ignore 20-mile an hour sign."

Doerfler added that the

complaints make neighborhood traffic seem like an epidemic. She and Tischer are hoping to get more of the residents with concerns to come to neighborhood association meetings before heading to the city.

"I don't know whether people look at the neighborhood associations as just a bunch of people getting together and complaining, but we've actually accomplished some things. You just got to keep after it, hammering, hammering and hammering away," Doerfler said.

On the small scale, efforts by WKNA helped get some curbs painted to increase visibility around Holiday Swim Club on 5th Avenue. WKNA also banded together with large groups of neighbors to voice concerns at public meetings in Keizer and Polk County about a quarry being used as a shooting range across the Willamette River.

"I felt like being part of the neighborhood association is important because it is a way for us to support each other. We encourage the people who we encounter online to come to meetings so we can work together, but I don't know any of them and the don't come [to meetings]," Tischer added.

The Greater Gubser Neighborhood Association meets the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. The West Keizer Neighborhood Association meets the second Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. The Southeast Keizer Neighborhood Association meets the first Thursday of every month at 6:30 p.m. All meetings are held at the Keizer Civic Center.

Contact the reporter editor@keizertimes.com

POLICE: 'The problems tend to be from about 5% of drivers'

(Continued from Page A1) and 1:30 p.m. Those specifics gave Martin what he needed to investigate.

"I went out there and sat the full two hours. The top speed was 31 mph in a 25 mph zone and that was only two cars. I also made a mental note that most of the drivers were adults," Powell said.

It's not an uncommon occurrence.

"We can watch a car, with the proper training, and get a good feel for the speed it's traveling," Wenning said. "What they're hearing is the sound – the mufflers accelerating from stop signs – and it sounds like they're going really fast, but in reality they're not. If there's a slight curve in the road, the curvature makes that car appear that it's going faster until it starts coming directly at you."

Wenning has worked traffic in Keizer, at various level, for a decade. He teaches traffic patrolling to incoming officers at the Department of Public Safety Standards & Training in Salem. He grew up in Keizer and some of the same spots where the current team sets up to monitor traffic are the ones he passed by when he was a kid and teenager, but the traffic team tries to be as responsive to complaints as possible.

"If someone comes in and says there is a problem in this spot between 6 a.m. and 6:45 a.m., chances are we will catch the offender or offender because there's a pattern that isn't going to change," Wenning said.

On the other hand if someone comes in claiming their street is a racetrack 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it's not a lot of info to go on. However, even armed with good information, speed enforcement isn't a hard-and-fast science.

"If you're going 26 in a 25 mph zone, we can give someone a ticket, but speedometers have a margin of error that we allow for so that changes the dynamic. If you're going 10, 11 or 12 miles over the speed limit, I'll stop you and give you a warning. If you hit 13, you're probably getting a ticket," Wenning said.

Completely independent of each other, Martin and Wenning arrived at the same threshold for issuing citations.

"I don't even know where I picked it up, it was probably from my training officers," Powell said.

But, that doesn't give everyone the green light to push the limit. The judgement traffic officers exercise is also situational. An officer might apply a different standard in an area heavily trafficked by children or pedestrian. Adverse weather – think, heavy fog – also enters into the equation.

Even with the best of intentions, the other duties of the job can get in the way of the most dedicated enforcement officer.

"If there's a major accident, I might have to leave where I'm stationed to provide back-up for the patrol officers. A DUI stop might take multiple hours," Powell said. "We always have to

ask ourselves if we are being good stewards of our time."

When an officer can't be present in person, radar trailers are deployed to problem spots. If there isn't a new problem spot, Wenning will have them set up in past problem spots to make certain something wasn't missed. Another tool, a portable radar counter, can track the number of vehicles and their speed to inform an objective assessment of purported problems.

Another perception problem is that traffic enforcement officers are expected to be everywhere all the time to satisfy the public.

"If I'm spending a lot of time in the neighborhoods, then there are other people wondering why they're not seeing me on River Road," Powell said. Parking complaints

are also routed through the traffic team.

And, for now, Powell and Wenning comprise the traffic team. A sergeant that oversees the unit is out on medical leave. The department is waiting for some recent recruits to finish police academy training and then supervised patrols before it reinstating a full two-officer-and-one-sergeant team. There's already a motorcycle in Eugene needing a few replacement parts and waiting for a KPD rider.

Ideally, Wenning would like a third officer to help cover Keizer traffic, but that's not likely given a city budget that grows almost imperceptibly rather than by leaps and bounds.

"The problems tend to be from about 5 percent of drivers who will keep doing the same things no matter how many tickets we give them," Wenning said. "But we do our best to be responsive. And we also know our statistics largely don't support reductions in speed."

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LET'S MEET Lauren Murphy

Reporter (Born: Hillsboro, Resides: Keizer)

EDUCATION: Currently attending college

MY ROLE: Friendly neighborhood reporter

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MY PASSION: Twilight series

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