

Charter task force backs Sec. 44 deletion

By **MATT RAWLINGS**
Of the Keizertimes

The Keizer Charter Review Task Force held their fourth monthly meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 4, where they finished their initial review of a revised charter.

One of the main topics of discussion was Section 44, the anti-LGBTQ+ section of the charter approved by Keizer voters in 1993.

Section 44 prohibits the city from extending minority status to individuals based on sexual orientation and expending funds that “promote homosexuality or express approval of homosexual behavior.”

Eric Howald, a resident of Keizer and volunteer advisor to the Gay-Straight Alliance club at McNary High School, gave a heartfelt message to the members of the charter board towards the beginning of the meeting.

“I would love to see the residents of this city engage in a full-throated conversation of voting by district or ward in inclusivity resolutions. But I am concerned about losing sight of the diseased tree that spreads its plight to the rest of the forest. It’s true that the contents of section 44 was rendered unenforceable, but its words are still hurtful,” Howald said.

In previous meetings, topics like voting by ward or district and adding language attesting to Keizer being an inclusive community were discussed.

Howald passionately advocated for, not just a change in language of Section 44, but a complete removal of the section.

“Removing Section 44 needs to be of the utmost priority to this task force. If we keep the focus on that, I know dozens of students that will be better off for it,” Howald said.

When asked if revising the language of Section 44 would be enough, he said it was not.

“You could re-word sections of (Section 44), but I still fear that it still casts a cloud over this city. Leaving any remnant of this in there, whether they realize it or not, can impact the young people I work with,” Howald said.

City attorney Shannon Johnson also voiced his displeasure of Section 44.

“The issue of Section 44 has been a sore spot for a lot of years for the people that knew about it,” Johnson said.

“It doesn’t make sense to have it in there because it’s unlawful under state law.”

These words didn’t fall on deaf ears. Committee member Broderick Pack suggested that the board waste no more time and implored that the task force to motion for Section 44 to be eliminated from the charter, which was passed unanimously.

“I’m glad we were able to jump that ahead and get that on there,” committee member Kim Freeman said.

The committee also spent a large portion of time discussing Section 8.1 of the city charter, which affects the Keizer city manager position.

It was decided, with suggestion from Johnson, that the committee remove subsections 8.1 (8) and 8.1 (9) from the charter, which requires the city manager to encourage and support regional and intergovernmental cooperation, as well as promote cooperation among the council, staff and citizens in developing city policies and building a sense of community.

“It’s easy to see whether or not the (city) manager prepared and administered the city budget, but it seems more

difficult to say whether or not they promoted cooperation among the staff,” committee member Shannon Flowers said.

“If we remove (8 and 9), we’re not harming ourselves. I think who ever future councils will bring in as city manager will be looking at these traits without having it spelled out,” added committee member Garry Whalen.

The committee also decided to remove subsection 8.1c, which requires the city manager to reside within city limits. Additionally, the committee elected to move subsection 8.1i to a different part of the charter at a later date. Section 8.1i forbids city council members from attempting to coerce the manager or office of manager in the appointment or removal of any city employee, or in any administrative decisions regarding city properties or contracts.

The task force will review a draft of the new charter at the next meeting, which is on March 3, then will schedule a public forum sometime next month to give voters an opportunity to see what will potentially be at the ballot box in November.

Jazzed



The McNary Jazz 1 Band took third place in the High School Heavy Division at the West Salem Jazz Festival on Saturday, Feb. 8. Over 35 jazz bands from Oregon and Washington competed at the festival.

The McNary Jazz 1 Band also qualified for the Oregon Music Education Association State Jazz Band Competition, which will be held May 30 at Mount Hood Community College.

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Dr. David Thorsett, left, is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon. As an athlete, he knows what it feels like to be sidelined by injury. His passion is helping patients restore their health and active lifestyles.

Dr. Nicolas Stratton, center, is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon who has been providing compassionate care at Santiam Hospital for 15 years. He enjoys hiking, biking and snowboarding with his two daughters.

Dr. Blake Nonweiler, right, is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon. He believes in taking time to listen to his patients, combined with teamwork, produces the best patient experience and outcome.

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