

# GRASSROOTS GOVERNMENT

## Changing street design standards sparks debate

The Keizer Traffic Safety, Bikeways and Pedestrian Committee had its most recent meeting Sept. 10. Here's what was discussed:

Chair Mike DeBlasi attempted to get a discussion off the ground regarding the standards Keizer uses when designing streets — it met with resistance from City Councilor Dan Kohler, the council's liaison to the committee.

DeBlasi and past members of the committee have championed a different blueprint than the ones the city currently uses. Keizer's roads generally are designed according to standards issued National Association of Transportation Officials (NACTO), a set of guidelines that focuses on rural road and highway safety. DeBlasi and others would like the city to consider alternative standards, issued by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), that considers multimodal and pedestrian safety to a higher degree.

"AASHTO would be more bike and pedestrian friendly and a lot of it is in traffic-calming design," DeBlasi said.

DeBlasi noted that the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been open to experimentation with the guidelines in other cities, but that it requires local leaders to sign off on the proposals before advancing.

Kohler said there didn't appear to be much political will when it comes to changing the standards at all. "When I ask city or county (officials) about the standards, I haven't found a whole lot of interest in changing the standards," Kohler said.

DeBlasi countered, "I un-

derstand that there is some inertia, but we can come up with a plan and figure out how to compromise."

Kohler said emergency service officials contend changing the standards would make it harder for emergency response. DeBlasi cited a recent example of the city council going against the wishes of the Keizer Fire District when it approved a gas station development in the parking lot of Safeway.

The Keizer Fire District chief spoke out against the development on multiple occasions.

"These kinds of designs are used in lots of larger cities, like Portland, and the emergency vehicles still get around," DeBlasi said.

Committee members moved on to other agenda items without pursuing the issue further.

DeBlasi suggested looking into applying for a community program called Tree City USA, which offers grants and other funding for planting trees in urban communities.

"We've all been driving down the streets in the blinding sun, and this program offers money to put in a canopy," DeBlasi said.

Committee member Wayne Frey reported on his investigation into the Oregon Community Paths Program, a new ODOT program offering funding to connect Oregon communities with pathways. The committee would need to identify a project and submit a letter of interest by Oct. 31 to be eligible for the first round of grants.

# KPD Lt: Misinformation not helpful to any active case, fire or otherwise

By LAUREN MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

Even though officials have named lightning as the chief suspect in starting the Beachie Creek and Loinshead fires, which are the two deeply affecting Marion County, the internet suspects a more sinister hand at play.

Social media has been abuzz with rumors that members of Antifa have been setting the fires that are raging across our state. Both Marion and Clackamas Sheriff's Offices have denied these claims.

Antifa is described by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as, "a loose collection of groups, networks and individuals who believe in active, aggressive opposition to far right-wing movements."

When confronted with the fact that no one has been arrested for arson in Marion County (at time of press) conspiracy theorists will often throw out the line, "I have a right to my opinion."

While freedom of speech is a First Amendment right, there are consequences for the words people choose.

"It's a tough thing, you're talking about some government official saying, 'Hey, limit your speech,'" said Keizer

Police Department (KPD) Lt. Bob Trump.

(NOTE: The KPD is not directly involved with the handling of the wildfires across the state. The Keizertimes chose to speak with them about the dangers of misinformation in ongoing investigations in general because they are a local agency.)

"In a general sense, whenever the conversation would come up we would remind people that it's not helpful to the investigation to speculate and spread things," Trump said.

Various county sheriff's offices have taken to social media to plead with people to stop spreading rumors. According to a post made by the Douglas County Sheriff's Office people have been overwhelming 9-1-1 and the non-emergency line asking about a false report claiming six Antifa members were arrested for arson. It delayed people experiencing actual emergencies from getting help.

"We join with our law enforcement partners in basically reminding people not to speculate as to the cause or origins of fires until there can be a complete investigation done," Trump said.

Trump said the KPD has not been overwhelmed

with calls about a particular case in the way Douglas County described, but he does think social media plays a role in the rapid spread of unconfirmed or not true information.

"People have a voice, a direct voice to the community and they can say literally whatever they want to say," Trump said. Though everyone is free and able to express their opinion, that doesn't mean every opinion is helpful—or even rooted in fact.

"There may be facts or circumstances about a case that we want to communicate to the public and that story is already being told across social media before I, as a spokesperson, have all the facts of what happened," Trump said.

Social media gives users the ability to spread information quickly, but investigation and fact finding take more time.

"I need to report things based on what actually occurred and so I'm gathering all of that and there is already some speculation, people talking about things that I just know patently aren't the facts," Trump said. He said the department then has to play "catch up" and attempt to stop the spread of the false

information and promote the spread of the actual facts.

In cases like the Clackamas County deputy, who was placed on administrative leave and then resigned after sharing a video in which he made claims that Antifa was setting the fires, misinformation can harm the relationship with the community and damage a department's reputation, though Trump said it is difficult to measure that damage.

As far as the KPD is concerned, its leaders want to be transparent. Trump encouraged community members with questions about ongoing cases to call and ask, though there is a chance that the department may not be able to answer certain questions because it is an ongoing investigation.

In times like these it can be confusing on who to trust. While government officials tend to be more credible than a friend of a friend of a friend's Facebook rant, there is a middle ground full of news stories debunking rumors.

"The closer the person or speaker is to the facts of the investigation, the more reliable that information is," Trump said.

## CHURCH, continued from Page A1

Effort (CCDRE) contained buckets full of cleaning supplies, gallons of bleach, long-handled scrubbing brushes, rakes and wheelbarrows.

Those in need of assistance can visit the church, 5405 Ridge Drive N.E., Mondays and Wednesdays between 10 a.m. and noon or 4 and 7 p.m. or Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Target donated a dedicated phone to the church's response effort, call 971-375-5285 outside of operating hours. Busch said church elders are making themselves available for counseling, those in need can call the same number to reach a church elder.

"Disaster Relief is an effort we've supported as a congregation in the past, but we'd only seen what they do on slides during presentations

as (CCDRE representatives) toured congregations to raise money," said Darren Williamson, who has organized the relief effort for the Keizer church. Right before he was interviewed, Williamson was on the phone with a pastor from Mill City and planning how the churches could partner to assist those who lost everything in the fires.

The whole operation got underway about five days prior to the delivery Saturday, Sept. 12. The northwest director of CCDRE reached out to ask if the Keizer church wanted to be part of the relief efforts. After a meeting of the church elders and a night of prayer, Keizer Church of Christ agreed to accept the delivery of relief goods.

"The truck arrived at 10 a.m. and we had 28 volunteers who helped unload it in an hour," Williamson said. A donated forklift from Keizer's

Herc Rentals helped make the task easier.

The church can also accept donations from outside organizations to support relief for evacuees.

A congregant of Portland-based Southwest Church of Christ, who lived through a fire that destroyed her home, sent along more wheelbarrows with notes of encouragement from her church's youth group.

"She also donated hard candy so people can suck on those while they clean up. She said one of the hardest things about her situation was the smell of burned plastic," said Bob Busch, another congregant.

Like Colleen, Williamson said he was set on his heels when he realized how many

aspects of the potential need the CCDRE delivery covered.

"We know people are going to need diapers and food, but then you realize someone is going to have to clean up their garage that burned down," Williamson said. "So we have all these things we never thought about sending to a disaster relief area before."

Members of the church responded in such overwhelming numbers that Williamson doesn't foresee the need for additional help to assist in the operation, but Busch said that the donations from CCDRE will keep coming until the need subsides.

"They've told us they are in this with us for as long as they are needed," Busch said.

## 13 days left to take part in U.S. Census

The deadline to complete the U.S. Census has been moved up a month to Sept. 30.

The Keizer Community Library is a resource for anyone needing internet access to complete the United States 2020 Census. Computers will be available by appointment Mondays from 1-4 p.m. and Thursdays from 3-6 p.m. The library is on the ground floor of the Keizer Cultural Center, 980 Chemawa Road N.E.

To make an appointment, call the library at 503-390-2370 and leave a message; or 503-363-4548. The email address is info@keizerlibrary.org. Information is also available at www.keizerlibrary.org. The Census questionnaire can also be completed online, even from a mobile device, at census2020.gov.

Taking part in the Census has an impact on almost every aspect of government from city to federal levels and, for the first time, completing it can be done online in about 10 minutes.

The questionnaire asks for the names, gender, age (including date of birth) and race/ethnicity of each person living at the residence, whether residents own or rent and for a phone number in case there is

a need to follow up. There is no question about citizenship status.

Census results determine congressional representation, the allocation of Electoral College votes, and is used to draw boundaries for state and local election districts. Nonprofits and businesses use Census data to help determine where to build health care facilities, child care and senior centers, grocery stores and new factories. The demographic information informs how the cities like Keizer engage with the its residents at nearly every level.



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