

# DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH



Photo courtesy of Keizer Little League social media.

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI  
Of the Keizertimes

Community members and city councilors didn't see eye to eye on much at Monday's city council meeting, but there was one thing that everyone agreed on: alcohol and adults at Little League games don't mix well.

While the city of Keizer has already come to a tentative agreement with operators For the Love of the Game to manage the Keizer Little League Park, whether or not to allow them to sell alcohol at the park during adult events was up for debate at Monday's meeting.

After a short discussion, the Keizer City Council directed staff to reject the provision and prohibit the sale of alcohol at the

fields.

The sale of alcohol, however, isn't what brought over a dozen concerned community members to the Sept. 20 meeting.

In 2020, the city sent out a Request for Proposals for management of the Keizer Little League fields and received two responses. The city chose to go with For the Love of the Game, a company created by Jerry and Lisa Walker, owners of the Mavericks League (formerly the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes), and their son Mickey.

Multiple community members expressed their objection to the selection of For the Love of the Game and a process they felt was rushed.

"At this point it feels like we are choosing the best of the worst," said Shane Diarmitt,

president of the Keizer Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth leagues. "I don't know about you, but that's not what I want for my kids, my organization or for my city. I don't want the best of the worst."

Public speakers also expressed

reservations about For the Love of the Game being a for-profit company, and the possibility of them not reinvesting into the fields. The contract says the operator "may retain net revenue in excess of what is required" for field maintenance, repair expenses and capital improvements.

"Everything we generated for the complex, stayed with the complex. Why as a city would you allow money that needs to go back into those fields to go anywhere else?" said Kyle Quiring, president of the Keizer Little League.

Mickey Walker spoke both before and after public comments and tried to alleviate some of the public's concerns. He said the goal is to put as much money back into the facility as possible because "we want it to be something we can all be proud of."

Walker also spoke on comments that softball didn't seem to be a priority in the company's proposal, emphasizing that he has two daughters of his own that he hopes will one day play softball.

City staff will continue to work with the Walkers to finalize the contract — which will be for 10 years. City Recorder Tracy Davis said the final approval of the contract will most likely come during a city council meeting in October.

"It's a learning curve for the city, it's a learning curve for your organization, and it's a learning curve for Keizer softball leagues," said Councilor Laura Reid in closing comments. "We need to work together."

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