

Keizer Diversity Committee holds first meeting

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI
Of the Keizertimes

When attendees walked into the Community Diversity Engagement Committee's first meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 25 they were given statistics. 71% white, 23% Hispanic and 12% multi-racial; statistics that outline the demographic makeup of the 39,376 people in the city of Keizer according to the 2020 U.S. census.

Compared to the state as a whole, Keizer is diverse. The 2020 U.S. census revealed that since 2010 the white population in Keizer has decreased by 10 percentage points, while the Hispanic,

Asian, Native, Black, Pacific Islander and multi-racial populations have all increased.

The Keizer City Council spent over a year developing the diversity committee that will work in an advisory role to the council. In December and early January, council members appointed six community members and one high school student to sit on the committee and on Jan. 26 they met for the first time.

The Diversity Engagement Committee wasted no time in shaking things up, opting to sit in chairs from the audience assembled into a circle

rather than sitting on the council dais.

"This dais system is not conducive to community conversations, hence this situation," said Keizer City Councilor Laura Reid, one of the two councilors that sit on the board.

The new committee began by voting on leadership, electing Dr. Anthony Rosilez as chair and Claire Snyder as vice chair. Rosilez is the executive director of the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission while Snyder is a lifelong Keizer-resident and activist—which she combined to create and organize Keizer's first Pride fair.

The majority of the meeting centered on establishing the committee's purpose, as defined by its members, as well as how to improve community engagement.

"We can't do this in these four walls. I'll be the first one to step to the microphone and be very honest with you. We're gonna have to go out there. It's gonna have to be out in the community and we can go two-by-two, three-by-three, but it will have to happen," said committee member Markey Toombs, owner of The Chicken Shack in Keizer.

Members favored moving meetings to outside of city hall to a location where more community members would be likely to attend. They opted to make a decision at the next meeting, which will take place on March 1 once

again at the city hall. The group invited community members to speak at the next meeting with suggested gathering locations.

The group also discussed what the committee would be able to accomplish within the parameters set by the council. Bringing in guest speakers, organizing community events and reviewing heritage month celebrations within the city were some of the ideas discussed.

"Anything that we are looking at doing should really be centered around our key purposes, which are how can we help the council make the best decisions for the community members and how can we use our expertise and our experiences in helping the council make those decisions," Rosilez said.

City financial director Tim Wood, who participated in the meeting, said one of his main concerns was the scope of a group with endless opportunity because "there's so much that we can possibly do as a group that we could spend three, four, five hours together."

To be set up for success, Woods said the group should aim for meetings to be around an hour and a half with time for public comment.

The committee's next meeting will take place at the Keizer City Hall at 6 p.m. on March 1. The agenda will be available on the city's website and public comment is welcome.





The Community Diversity Engagement committee meets in the council chambers on Jan. 25.
Photo by JOEY CAPPELLETTI of Keizertimes

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(R)MICAH

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Age: 6 months



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