The Belfry will operate under OLCC suspension

The popular community venue The Belfry will not be able to serve alcohol for 55 days starting December 20, under a settlement agreement with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.

The settlement resolved two violations regarding a lapse in the Sisters venue's liquor liability insurance from November 2014 to February 2016. According to OLCC spokeswoman Christie Scott, that is a category-one violation that could have resulted in revocation of The Belfry's license. A second violation involved a false representation on paperwork that indicated that The Belfry had insurance when it did not.

Angeline Rhett, owner of The Belfry, told *The Nugget* that the insurance on her other business renewed automatically and she had assumed that the same was the case for the liquor liability at The Belfry. She said she thought she did have insurance when she provided incorrect information to OLCC. She also said that she had not been informed by her insurance company of the lapse, and neither had OLCC.

The suspension could have been appealed, but Rhett chose to accept it and move forward. Rhett emphasized that she takes full responsibility for the lapse.

"Yes, there are extenuating circumstances, but in the end it's my business and I accept responsibility for dropping the ball," she said.

Scott noted that OLCC did not shut the venue down, and Rhett said there are still events set for the period of suspension.

"We have a yoga retreat, we have maybe a couple of workshops and couple of movies," she said. "We're going to be doing some work inside the building."

Desserts and coffee will be available.

"We just can't serve alcohol," Rhett said. "I am sincerely sorry if it has negatively impacted anyone and will work even harder to continue to keep The Belfry up and running for all of our community events."

No reconsideration of pipeline

By Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — Federal regulators on Friday refused to reconsider a 230-mile liquefied natural gas pipeline that would have terminated in the southern Oregon coastal town of Coos Bay, handing a serious setback to a multi-billion project to deliver the gas to markets in Asia.

In a 15-page opinion, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission denied requests from the Jordan Cove Energy Project, the Pacific Gas Connector Pipeline, the State of Wyoming and the Wyoming Pipeline Authority to reopen the case and reaffirmed the agency's decision from earlier this year.

In that March 11 ruling, the agency found there was little evidence to support the need for a pipeline and not enough public benefit from the project, which has been tied up in a legal fight for several years.

Supporters of the pipeline, however, challenged the decision in an appeal and also moved to swing public opinion to their side.

Wyoming, which was among those challenging that ruling, argued that FERC should have considered the economic benefit from the pipeline to its residents from increased natural gas production, royalties and taxes.

Colorado sent representatives to Oregon to lobby for the pipeline this fall, and Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper asked federal regulators to take another look at the $7 billion project, which would allow it to ship natural gas to markets in Japan.

TV advertisements touting the pipeline's potential economic benefits aired in Oregon during last summer's Olympic Games.

Veresen Inc., the Calgary, Alberta-based company, said in a statement Friday that it would consider another appeal or might submit a new application to FERC.

"Veresen remains committed to this important energy infrastructure project," said Don Althoff, Verensen's president and CEO. "We are very disappointed by FERC's decision, especially in light of the significant progress that has been made in demonstrating market support for the project and the strong showing of public support for the project."

The pipeline route would have stretched from the farming town of Malin east of the Cascade Mountains, just north of the California border, to Coos Bay on the southern Oregon coast. The route, which was opposed by private landowners and environmentalists, would have crossed rivers, mountain ranges and a mix of private and public lands.

Regulators said in the ruling that the pipeline would affect nearly 160 miles of privately owned lands and about 630 landowners.

Environmental groups applauded the decision, saying the pipeline would have hurt Oregon to benefit out-of-state corporate interests.

"Our state should be focused on creating good-paying jobs in improving energy efficiency and the expanding clean energy industry, such as solar power, not on new fossil fuel projects that hurt us all," said Hannah Sohl, director of Rogue Climate, one of the organizations that opposed the liquefied natural gas project.