

SAFETY: Department seeks to help facilities comply

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to feel comfortable having the fire department come in and consult on an operation to make sure its safe — and not to think of them as the long arm of the law looking to come down hard on a violator.

“Our goal is to find a code path to *allow* them to do (a particular use) rather than a code path to shut them down,” Marshall said.

Marshall cited the example of the local effort to establish a cold-weather overnight shelter in Sisters, possibly at Westside Church. The church is not permitted as a “residential occupancy,” so Marshall needed to consult with the church on what would be required to make the facility safe for a different-than-normal use.

Marshall notes that if the fire department consults, inspects, and approves a use, the fire department then assumes liability for that decision.

Ad hoc music venues are common across Central Oregon, as a thriving house concert circuit has developed in the region. That poses some issues regarding “assembly occupancy,” which code puts at 49 people or more.

Some house concerts are held in outbuildings; some are held inside peoples’ homes or in their yards. House concerts typically do not have a cover charge or a ticket — attendees are asked to make a donation, which is usually given directly to the performer. So it’s not exactly a commercial enterprise.

Marshall explained how the fire service views such events.

“I believe if the residence is operating as a commercial

business, such as advertising and selling tickets to the public, the owner/manager of the structure is now using a residence as a business and it would be in violation of the building, planning, and very likely the fire code,” he told *The Nugget*. “But to inspect that residence, since the residence has an occupancy permit as a one- or two-family dwelling or ‘private residence,’ the fire department would need to acquire an administrative warrant from a judge to inspect for fire safety concerns.

“The fire department would most likely also need to demonstrate that there is an ‘imminent hazard to life or property’ to prevail and to receive an administrative warrant.

“...If the venue was not advertising and taking money for the performance, it probably would not be considered a business, trade, or commerce. Therefore the fire department would not have authority to engage in any type of inspection by ORS 476.030. If there was a legitimate complaint regarding fire safety, I believe it would be resolved in a professional manner with education as a first attempt and using enforcement powers as a last resort by the appropriate agencies to find some type of resolution and compliance. Normally education works, as the owner usually just did not know. Performances in residences attract some attention and the owner or occupants of the structure should

know that they will be the responsible party.”

Music venues and large gatherings are not the only area of concern.

“We have people living in garages,” Chief Johnson said. “It’s a tight home market and they feel like they have to do what they have to do to survive and get by.”

Such living quarters are quite likely not inspected and approved, but the fire department can’t just go in to a private residence and inspect it.

What kinds of concerns does the fire department really need to hear about?

Exits are critical, according to Chief Johnson. Loss of life tends to occur in places where egress is compromised. Exits that are blocked off or chained up need to be looked into.

And Chief Johnson encourages people to look to their personal situational awareness. Know where your exits are and make sure you are aware of at least one alternative to the way you came in. Both Marshall and Johnson noted that in many disasters, people pile up where they came in, when there were alternative exits that went unused.

Fire safety has improved steadily over the decades, and mass casualty events like that which occurred in Oakland are rare. The Sisters fire department wants to help the local public keep things that way — not through draconian enforcement measures but through education and collaboration.

DYSLEXIA: Some have difficulty with fluid and accurate reading

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instruction to a student’s needs, such as dyslexia.

Sanford Shapiro, founder of the Bend Learning Center, which includes in its offerings tutoring for dyslexic students, said he’s thrilled to see the legislation come through.

“It’s kind of a hidden disability,” said Shapiro, who has worked with dyslexic children for 30 years. His son is also dyslexic.

He also discussed how dyslexia is genetic.

“Humans are wired for spoken language; babies learn to talk unless they’re raised by wolves,” he said. “But you have to be taught to read. Our brains are not wired to read unless you’re taught.”

For people with dyslexia, there’s a difficulty in fluent and accurate reading and writing.

“It’s a sort of struggle to manage speech sounds within words,” Shapiro said. “They don’t understand the code of speech, of letter sounds with printed symbols.”

Just as Thomas-Beck noted, Shapiro said students with dyslexia have no shortage of intelligence or

comprehension. “Kids can tell you all about the lunar landing module, but they can’t spell the word ‘ship,’” Shapiro said.

Shapiro said whether it’s in Oregon or someplace else in the country, many schools have not really recognized dyslexia until this point.

“They’re naming the word dyslexia, which is really important,” Shapiro said of legislators.

He’d like to see all children taught to read in the same way he teaches children with dyslexia. Unlike many public schools, the technique he uses, called the Orton/Gillingham-based approach, doesn’t require kids to memorize. Children are often taught to memorize so-called sight words such as “are,” “of” and “for.” Instead, Shapiro’s technique focuses on breaking down words into parts, teaching children to read in a way that’s similar to how you would teach them a foreign language.

But for now, he’s glad there’s progress at the state level. Shapiro is pleased to see the legislation requires teachers who receive training related to dyslexia will need to have training that follows an international standard.

It will help him and other educators be on the same page when it comes to educating students with dyslexia.

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