

Two day cares reopen following alleged abuse

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Two of four child care facilities operated by a Keizer woman reopened Thursday following a three-day closure based on reports of alleged abuse and neglect.

Enchanted Child Care & Preschool facilities were closed May 15 after several parents filed complaints alleging instances of isolation, hair-pulling, and "flicking" children in the mouth as forms of punishment.

None of the allegations were made about staff at the two facilities on Dietz Road NE and Shangri La Avenue NE that reopened Thursday.

Two other centers on Chemawa Avenue in Keizer and Bartell Drive NW in West Salem remain closed.

Owner Michelle Long and the Oregon Department of Education reached a settlement late Wednesday that allowed 75 children of frontline workers to return.

"We're withdrawing the revocation orders for (two) facilities to operate as emergency child care with conditions," said Melanie Mesaros, communications director for the Oregon Department of Education's Early Learning Division, Office of Child Care.

The four day cares located in Salem and Keizer were initially closed May 15, leaving about 100 children of frontline workers without care.

Long, 41, denies the allegations in the two orders filed by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and said she was notified of the closures just before 5 p.m. May 15.

Long's Central Background Registry, a background check database for child-care providers, was suspended the same day due to the alleged findings, prompting the additional closures of the facilities on Dietz and Shangri La.

"An individual is not eligible to provide Emergency Child Care if the individual's enrollment in the Central Background Registry was denied, suspended, or removed, or the individual or entity's child care facility license was previously denied, suspended, or revoked," according to the ODE order.

Mesaros emphasized the department of education has only revoked the approval to provide emergency child-care services, but once the state of emergency is over, the facility can continue operating under a regular license.

The settlement allows the two facilities to resume emergency child care operations, with the condition that Long will not set foot at either property anytime children are present or "direct the caregiving of children in any manner."

The order lists Shannon Sanchez as the director and operator of the two reopened locations in the interim.

"We're so happy for our families," Long said. "That is the positive that's coming out of today."

Enchanted Child Care & Preschool is Salem/Keizer's largest state-certified child care center, according to the website. The family-owned day care service has five locations and 45 employees.

The abuse allegations against Long and her staff were reported on ODE's Child Care Safety Portal by multiple people after the emergency child care period began, though not on the same day, Mesaros said. However, some of the alleged incidents included in the complaints date back to before the emergency care period.

No bathroom time, screaming staff

The following are some of the accusations outlined in ODE's report at the Enchanted Child Care & Preschool III lo-



The Enchanted Childcare & Preschool's license to provide emergency license is currently revoked in West Salem on May 20, 2020. MADELEINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

cation on Chemawa Avenue:

■ At least two children wet themselves during nap time and another child experiences pain because they were not allowed to use the bathroom. The children were required to stay on their nap mats and not use the bathroom for periods of two hours or more.

■ A staff member reportedly grabbed the arms of multiple pre-school and school-aged children as a form of guidance and discipline, and on multiple occasions, dragged them from one place to another.

■ The same staff member "flicked" children in the mouth with her fingers as a form of guidance and discipline.

■ Long reportedly withheld afternoon snacks as a punishment for children who did not remain on their mats and stay quiet during naptime.

■ Children were isolated in separate rooms on multiple occasions as a punishment during naptime.

■ A staff member and Long have reportedly "screamed" at children. The staff member makes "a mean face" and Long kneels on the floor at eye-level with children and grits her teeth in children's faces.

■ The same staff member has made degrading comments to children who've had toileting accidents such as "Ugh, why are you like this?" "What is wrong with you?" and "Are you kidding me?"

■ Multiple parents noticed their infants and toddlers with significant amounts of dried mucous on their faces and sometimes in their hair by the end of the day.

■ Alternative quiet activities were not offered to children who did not fall asleep during scheduled naptime and were instead required to stay on their nap mats.

The following are some of the accusations outlined in ODE's report at the Enchanted Child Care & Preschool West Salem location on Bartell Drive NW:

■ Staff observed a one-year-old repeatedly hitting his head against the floor, causing a large bruise, a raised

bump, and a swollen eye. Staff did not intervene, provide first aid or notify the parent.

■ A staff member pulled a one-year-old child's hair as punishment for the child pulling the staffer's hair.

■ Long continued to allow a different staff member to have unsupervised access to the children after the staff member smoked a vaporizer in the toddler classroom while children were present.

Other allegations include restricting parents' access to their children during hours of operation, having an insufficient amount of paper towels at the facility, deviating from the planned menu for snacks and meals displayed to parents, and giving each child one disposable cup to use throughout the day.

West Salem resident Jillian Barnhart said her then-1-year-old daughter attended the Bartell Drive NW facility between Aug 2019 and the end of February.

The family was on a waiting list for another day care at the time.

"Things came to our attention little by little...that just weren't sitting well with us," Barnhart said. She said she always heard teachers in the toddler room yelling at kids.

One day, Barnhart was notified that her daughter would no longer be allowed to have a morning snack.

"Apparently the owner decided she didn't want her staff to give (my daughter) a snack...she didn't even call me to talk to me about it," she said.

When Barnhart asked why, the aide said Long, who made a visit to the location, told staff to not provide the child a snack.

Besides withholding a snack, Barnhart said her daughter never experienced any of the other allegations that were outlined in the order and did not file a complaint.

Long said the accusations stemmed from a Facebook Messenger group created by a number of disgruntled employees and parents.

"These disgruntled employees that are posting on social media, some were

with us for less than four months," Long said. "Some employees have been with me for five or six years. They've worked for me for a long time because they love what they do, they're proud of what they do."

Albany resident Kaitlin Green said her two children have been enrolled in the Enchanted Child Care & Preschool program for close to five years. Her children attend one of the two facilities that are not involved in the allegations.

Green, a healthcare employee, said the allegations were "shocking to hear as a parent," but her children experienced any issues with the program.

Her children were back at the facilities when operations resumed Thursday.

"I've never had any concerns, honestly," Green said. "I always felt that my children were well taken care of."

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Long said she plans to request a "second-level review" with the office of child care. She's also requested a hearing regarding the legitimacy of losing her Central Background Registry and into the allegations.

"The office of child care allows this to happen because the don't have any repercussions for information that comes in that's wrong and they continue to perpetuate this."

To the parents, she said, "We're so sorry for the stress and hardship that this caused for them and we're working as quickly as possible to get this situation corrected. We appreciate what they're doing for the community and we're doing our part to get this piece dealt with."

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Levies

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An expiring four-year operations levy, which was passed in May 2016, taxed property at 71 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value of homes.

The district has sets of bonds that were used to purchase and maintain equipment that were approved in 2008 and are expected to be retired in 2022 and 2023.

If passed, the new levy would cover that same equipment costs as well as the new hires and potentially could save property owners money in a few years.

Stayton city levy

An operations levy to fund Stayton's library, pool and local parks is failing by a slim margin in Tuesday's early returns.

Stayton voters passed an operations levy for Stayton Public Library, Stayton Family Memorial Pool and local parks six times since 1998.

The voters are being asked to pass an increase in the tax rate to 70 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value on homes in the city and extend the levy another five years.



City Hall is on Third Street in downtown Stayton on Jan. 13, 2020. A proposal for an overlay district, intended to make the transition from First Street to Third Street more user friendly, was shot down by the Stayton city council.

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The assessed rate on homes in Stayton currently is 60 cents per \$1,000.

The increase in taxing rate would fund deferred maintenance at the pool, with 45% going to the library, 45% going to the pool and 10% going to parks operations.

Stayton Fire District levy

Stayton Fire District's operations levy was failing in early returns.

The levy is intended to replace an expiring bond measure and allow the department to hire an additional three full-time firefighters with a slight increase in cost to property tax owners.

The levy would replace a bond, which was passed in 2015 and is set to be paid off in June that was used to purchase equipment like fire engines and made significant repairs to the main fire station including the fire sprinkler system.

The operational levy would tax homeowners at 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value and replace the bond, which taxed residents at 24.5 cents per \$1,000.

The fire district currently has five full-time firefighters and they staff its stations from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Stayton Rural Fire District covers 107 square miles of Marion and Linn counties, including Stayton, Elkhorn, Mehama and the Little North Fork recreation area.

Hubbard Fire District levy

The Hubbard Fire District's operations levy was passing by a 3-2 margin in Tuesday's early returns.

Hubbard Fire District is seeking to

pass its first operations levy, which would allow it to staff the station 24 hours per day and provide funding for required maintenance of equipment and purchase personal protective equipment.

The district currently has 27 volunteers, but can't join into mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire districts in Woodburn and Aurora due to lack of permanent staffing.

The Hubbard Fire District has passed several bonds, including an ongoing one that taxes residents 27 cents per \$1,000 that is set to expire in 2023.

Detroit amendment

Detroit's amendment to the city charter to allow three city councilors who don't live in the city year-round instead of two is failing by a 2-1 margin.

Detroit was asking to amend the city charter to require four city councilors to have the city as their primary residence. Instead of five. Currently, five of the seven city councilors must live in the city over six months each year in the vacation hotspot. If the measure passes, four of the seven city councilors will be required to live in the city over six months out of the year.

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