

Closing Arguments

Cabana Blue shuts its doors, for now.

BY MELISSA BEARNS

The sign announcing the June 9 grand opening of Cabana Blue, a restaurant at 174 W. Broadway, is still hanging on the outside of the building above the door. But inside, the room is empty, and in the window hangs another sign denouncing the city of Eugene for forcing the closing of "another minority owned business."

On a Wednesday afternoon in mid-July owner Lisa Sanchez was finishing the cleanup and move-out, the last steps in closing the business just a month after it officially opened. Sanchez says that when she opened up the business she went to the city, county, OLCC and others and got all the necessary permits. According to Sanchez, a few weeks after she opened, the city came down and told her she needed various permits and upgrades in order to continue to operate. The grand total to keep her doors open, Sanchez says, would be about \$7,000.

Steve McGuire, the city's plan review supervisor for the city's Building and Permit Services, says the city is just trying to enforce the building code and make sure the space is safe for the public. According to McGuire, before Sanchez moved in, the location was used as office space by Symantec Corp.

"The building code is in place to ensure that a building is safe based on the way it's being used," he says. For example, when the space was an office, it might have had a maximum of 20 or so people in it at one time. But for a restaurant, McGuire says, they assume a higher occupancy rate. So the building code is set up to make sure a building can handle the estimated maximum number of people based on the use.

He says he's gone over to Cabana Blue to talk to Sanchez and try to help her bring her space into compliance with the city building code. When asked about the signs in the window, he responded, "She absolutely has a right to put them up. But it may exemplify her awareness or lack of awareness of what the codes are and why they exist. Because we're not trying to put any business out of business. We're trying to make sure buildings are safe for the public."

Sanchez says regardless of the reasons for the additional fees, it's not worth it for her to stay in the location and try to bring her restaurant into compliance with the building codes. Instead, she's planning to move into a new space that's already approved for restaurant use. ★

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