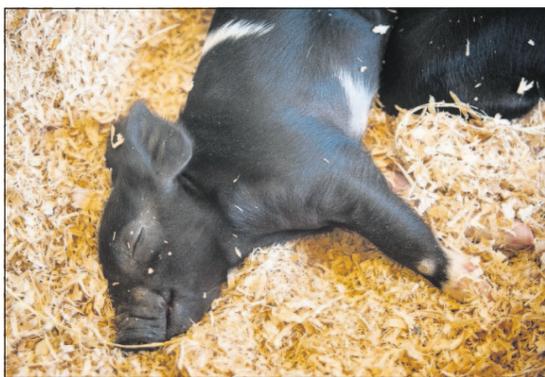




Matthew Ficken, 13, holds his Ameraucana, Charolette, in the stands during the poultry showmanship competition.



An 18-day-old Hamp York Cross piglet, owned by Cole Biamont, rests during the Clatsop County Fair Wednesday.



Jack Phillips, 11, cleans his pig, Sally, before competing in the swine showmanship competition.

POULTRY AND SWINE SHINE AT FAIR

Photos and story by
JOSHUA BESSEX
The Daily Astorian

Primed and poised poultry and pigs took center stage Wednesday at the Clatsop County Fair for the showmanship competitions.

Kids, dressed to the nines, showed off their animals to judges for the chance to win ribbons and the Grand Championship.

In the swine showmanship competition, 4-Hers led their pigs around the arena following a judge who asked each handler questions related to handling and raising pigs. Today's competitions will include rabbit and cavy showmanship, alongside several horse competitions.



From left: Emily Bergeron, 12, Cole Biamont, 11, Marlee Walter, 13, and Juan Jimenez, 14, work with their chickens during the poultry showmanship competition at the Clatsop County Fair Wednesday.

Joshua Bessex
The Daily Astorian



LEFT: Maddie Sisley, 11, tries to guide her pig, Peaches, away from the rail during the swine showmanship competition at the Clatsop County Fair Wednesday. RIGHT: Kids participate in the swine showmanship competition at the Clatsop County Fair Wednesday.



Highway 420: 'The future of medical marijuana is uncertain'

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Eventually, they found their current location on Roosevelt Drive at the intersection with Avenue S. The spot met the criteria to be a medical marijuana dispensary, as per the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program, and the couple applied for that status two years ago.

"It costs a lot of money to become compliant with the state," Geiger said. "They demand a whole lot of things that are very expensive. It's not easy. It's not something you just throw together."

He described the paperwork to register with the Oregon Health Authority as "a cross between a tax audit and a mortgage agreement." Everything — video surveillance, security, safes, alarms — has to meet high standards of oversight.

Surviving the moratorium

The next hurdles the business encountered were at a local level. In 2013, the state gave municipalities the ability to enact a moratorium of up to one year on licensing medical marijuana dispensaries while they worked to establish "reasonable regulations."

Not wanting to lose their location on U.S. Highway 101, the Geigers continued to undergo inspections by the Oregon Health Authority and pay an annual licensing fee of \$4,000 even during the moratorium.

"It wasn't easy. We've got a



Katherine Lacaze/EO Media Group

Evee Geiger is the co-owner of Highway 420, Seaside's first legally operational medical marijuana dispensary since the local moratorium on such facilities was lifted.

very big space and a small store to support it," Geiger said.

Seaside's moratorium expired May 1. Even then, though, the Geigers were unable to operate as a dispensary, because the city's general business license ordinance prohibits activities that violate local, state or federal law. Marijuana is still a schedule I drug at the federal level.

The waiting continued, Geiger said, as the Seaside City Council grappled with adopting provisions to control how, when and where dispensaries could be operated within city limits. Even after an ordinance was adopted in May, it took 30 days for that to go into effect. Highway 420 was then subject to a surprise inspection by the Oregon Health Authority and local law enforcement, as well as background checks for all employees.

"We have been thoroughly searched, investigated, looked at

up and down for weeks, months and years before we were finally able to get this," Geiger said.

He believes the tenacity was worth it and the feedback he has received has confirmed that. Many customers have expressed gratitude that the couple put up a fight and the dispensary is now running, Geiger said.

"That part of it has been very rewarding, because every day people are coming in here and they're happy," he said. "That's what we wanted to achieve and we've done it."

The dispensary carries 20 strains of medical marijuana, as well as oils, edibles and other items. His products come from several sources, including some in the local area, Portland and southern Oregon.

"We're getting new products all the time," Geiger said. "When you're brand new, you can't just open up and have a



Katherine Lacaze/EO Media Group

Steve Geiger's business has been licensed with the state to operate as a dispensary for about two years.

store full of stuff. You have to go through the process, and it takes a little bit of time, if you do it legally and correctly."

When it comes to pricing, he said, the Oregon Health Authority requires dispensaries to derive a formula based on what they pay for their product, their operating costs and what it would take to turn a profit. After calculating costs, Geiger said, they determine what to charge per gram based on what they paid per pound.

Recreational sales?

Only a few weeks into operating their dispensary, the Geigers are faced with the decision of whether to start selling recreational marijuana in October. Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill into law Tuesday that allows existing dispensaries to sell limited quantities of dried marijuana, seeds and starter plants to all

adults beginning Oct. 1.

"When we got into this, we never had an interest in recreational," Geiger said. "We got into this to help people and we were interested in the medicinal side. But now that things have changed dramatically, the future of medical marijuana is uncertain."

As a business person who has invested heavily in a medical marijuana dispensary, he added, "we're really forced now to consider the recreational end, because if we don't, we won't survive."

The new law allows local governments to adopt ordinances that prohibit sales of limited marijuana retail products.

Geiger hopes the city will not choose to do so, especially considering approximately 59 percent of Seaside voters approved of Measure 91 legalizing marijuana last November.

"Maybe it's time to start looking at marijuana different-

ly than we have in the past, and instead of recoiling from it and thinking it represents something it doesn't, embrace it and let the money that's going to come from it, come to our town," he said.

An uncertain future

Recently Seaside voted to ban medical marijuana dispensaries in the downtown core, and could consider enacting limits on the sale of recreational marijuana. Geiger said there are other factors that make the future uncertain for Highway 420.

It is very expensive and time-consuming for patients to get their medical marijuana card every year. Many will continue to benefit from having a card because taxes for medical marijuana will be significantly less than taxes for recreational marijuana. On the other hand, Geiger said, because people now can grow their own plants and possess marijuana in multiple forms, the medical card "doesn't have near the value it once did."

Geiger still seeks answers to the following questions: How many patients will continue to pay to keep their cards? How will the Oregon Liquor Control Commission address medical versus recreational marijuana? What fees and taxes will the state establish?

"All those are questions that are still left to be answered, and as a business person there's no way you can do any sort of profile or business plan around something that doesn't exist yet," Geiger said.

Probe: Credits issued from 2006 to 2014 could cost the state up to \$968 million

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The state awarded the tax credits to owners of renewable energy and efficiency projects, such as a cellulose ethanol plant and public transit districts across the state. The owners could use the credits to offset their taxes, or sell them at a discount to raise cash.

Helped find buyers

The Department of Energy

traditionally helped project owners find buyers for their tax credits as part of the state program, but private brokers started to negotiate the deals as early as 2009. The department does not verify the sales prices of credits sold in private deals, and energy officials quietly stopped enforcing pricing rules for the sales in 2009, the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau reported in June.

The agency is now in the process of retroactively changing pricing rules going back to mid-2012, so deals that violated the rules in place at the time will be legitimate.

Business energy tax credits issued from 2006 to 2014 could cost the state up to \$968.1 million in tax revenue, according to the Department of Energy. A majority of that cost — \$703.6 million — comes from tax credits that

were sold to investors.

Not an audit

Although an auditor is conducting the investigation, it is not an actual audit, according to energy agency spokeswoman Rachel Wray.

"Those forms were pulled because the Secretary of State's office has some questions about our processes," Wray said. "It is not an audit." Wray referred other ques-

tions about the inquiry to the Secretary of State's office.

Tony Green, a spokesman for the Secretary of State's office, declined to comment on any aspect of the auditor's work, including the timing of the investigation and what prompted the probe.

"As you know, the Audits Division has some investigatory responsibilities that are confidential in nature until resolution is reached,"

Green wrote in an email Tuesday.

The Secretary of State's office operates the state's government waste, fraud and abuse hotline. Under state law, those complaints and the investigation findings are confidential until the agency completes the inquiry.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.