

# Senior meal program in financial crisis

Nonprofit may have less than a year left

By ERICK BENDEL  
The Daily Astorian

Columbia Senior Diners, a nonprofit that serves meals at the Astoria Senior Center and brings them to homebound residents, may have to close within a year due to a severe budget shortfall.

Every month, the program provides more than 550 meals on site and delivers more than 250 meals within city limits, functioning as a local Meals on Wheels. Except for a salaried chef, the business is all-volunteer.

For clients confined to their homes — some of whom have a disability or are recovering from injury or illness — the program's drivers may be the only human contact they have that day.

And the home-delivery feature is also a check-in service: When a client doesn't answer the door, the volunteers notify a family member or guardian.

But despite its popularity, Columbia Senior Diners has not broke even in several years. The nonprofit is losing about \$1,000 to \$2,000 a month, and has nearly exhausted its once comfortable reserves, according to Board Treasurer Steve Mills.

"We've only got about eight months, and we're going to be out of money," Mills said.

Established as Loaves & Fishes in 1973, Columbia Senior Diners has been a thriving



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

Columbia Senior Diners provides meals to the Astoria Senior Center as well as seniors in their homes.

enterprise at times. Within the last decade, it took in more than \$100,000 several years in a row.

But as the cost of food and other expenses have risen, and the business saw fewer clients, revenue began to drop. By 2012, gross receipts had fallen to about \$57,000.

The program relies on an annual \$4,000 grant from the city, a \$6-per-meal charge and private donations. But "donations are not terribly large," Mills said, "and I think this is coming to a head."

### 'A critical situation'

Earlier this year, the program relocated from the Peace Lutheran Church on 12th Street to the newly renovated senior center, where Columbia Senior Diners leases the kitchen.

The move grew their customer base, and revenue is expected to return to the \$70,000 range. But the business would still have a roughly \$20,000 deficit, Mills said.

The Astoria Senior Center received a federal block grant, through the city, of \$1.5 mil-

lion for the building remodel. One of the stipulations is that the center must provide at least one meal a day, five days a week, to seniors.

If Columbia Senior Diners goes under, the center will have to find a way to fill the gap, Larry Miller, the center's executive director, said.

Many senior center members show up for activities — line dancing, say — and stick around for lunch, he said. Some members eat their soup and salad at the center, then take the main course home for dinner, he said.

The current board members — many of whom, like Mills, are relatively new — acknowledge that the nonprofit has not monitored expenses as closely as it should have.

"I think we weren't really aware of how bad the situation was," Becky Johnson, the board vice president and secretary, said. "It's been a slow bleed, and now we realize that it's a critical situation."

The business is developing a logo and marketing strategy while actively looking into extra grant funding and working to increase clientele. From one month to the next, though, it can be difficult to know how many customers the business will have, especially during the wet winter months.

"I'm afraid, before we can get the ship turned around, we're going to run out of money," Mills said, adding, "Unless we secure additional revenue, we will not make it through the year."

Board President Steve Swenson said, "It would be a shame to see it go away. I'm sure it would be missed."

# Chiropractor found guilty of abusing more patients

Victims now number a dozen

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
For The Daily Astorian

A Warrenton chiropractor convicted in 2014 of harassing eight female patients has been found guilty of sexually abusing four other patients.

A six-person jury determined Thursday that Adam Lopez, 61, was guilty of seven counts of third-degree sexual abuse, which are class A misdemeanors. Lopez will be required to register as a sex offender and could face as much as one year in jail for each count of sexual abuse.

"It's really appalling that it's only a misdemeanor," said Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown, who prosecuted the case.

The four female patients had all come to Lopez seeking relief from pain, putting their trust in him to help them feel better as they recovered from, in some cases, car acci-

dent injuries, he said. "They came out of there feeling worse than when they went in."

The chiropractor already served around 90 days in jail in 2015, according to Brown, and is still on probation for sexually harassing eight female patients during appointments dating back to 2009. It was after this first case

had closed that the other victims came forward and the state pressed new charges against Lopez.

These victims said Lopez touched them and made them touch him sexually during appointments between 2009 and 2013.

The state originally charged Lopez with 11 counts of third-degree sexual abuse, but four charges were later dropped, one because the statute of limitations had run out. For a class A misdemeanor the statute of limitations is four years.

Lopez will be sentenced on Dec. 19.

"We're going to be recommending a substantial jail sentence," Brown said.



Adam Lopez

**'We're going to be recommending a substantial jail sentence.'**

Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown

# Yes on 97 campaign will push Legislature to boost taxes

Union-backed group wants corporations to pay 'fair share'

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — In the wake of its defeat in passing a \$3 billion corporate sales tax measure, A Better Oregon announced Thursday it plans to push for legislation next year to boost state revenue and increase corporate income transparency.

During a press conference Thursday at a Planned Parenthood in northeast Portland, the union-backed coalition, which sponsored Measure 97, released no details about possible proposals.

Coalition leaders said the 10-to-15-percent cuts to state services that Gov. Kate Brown has said will be needed to balance the state budget are unacceptable.

"The issue is our largest corporations are not paying their fair share," said coalition leader Linda Roman, director of health policy and government relations for the Latino Health Coalition. "We cannot continue to tax working families and small businesses. That is just too large of a burden for Oregonians."

The messages Thursday seemed to echo many of the coalition's campaign slogans. But coalition leader Andrea Paluso, executive director of Family Forward Oregon, said A Better Oregon is willing to negotiate with businesses and corporations that opposed the ballot measure on a potential revenue package.

Lawmakers have said they plan to consider a revenue package next year to help fill a nearly \$1.4 billion revenue shortfall on maintaining existing services.

Coalition leaders said they plan to unveil A Better Oregon budget in coming weeks, revenue package pro-

posals and legislation to disclose what corporations pay in taxes to the state. Some of the revenue proposals already exist, but A Better Oregon has not yet released them, Roman said. The coalition hopes to work with a bipartisan group of lawmakers on the legislation but was not prepared Thursday to name any sponsors.

The coalition has no existing plans to propose another ballot measure to raise revenue. Leaders are waiting to see what the Legislature will

come up with next year.

Coalition leaders will be looking for "real attempts at and success in raising revenue that closes some of our budget shortfalls but also looks to the future," Paluso said.

"It's not enough anymore to just stop cutting," she said. "We actually need to invest in the future."

One of A Better Oregon's proposals will aim at making public the amount of taxes corporations pay the state, Roman said.

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