

# Elevator: Those with mobility impairments were offered first-floor apartments, but no one moved

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Elissa Gertler, who took on the role as the housing authority's executive director in July, said the company had initially promised a three-week timeline to deliver the part and restore service. She said the age of the elevator and global supply chain issues were the reasons for the delay.

Gertler, who joined the housing authority after serving as the planning and development director for Oregon Metro, said the agency appreciates the patience of residents as staff worked to get the elevator fixed as quickly as possible under challenging circumstances.

"We are continuing to ensure we maintain and upgrade this aging building so that it is able to withstand future weather-related occurrences and so that it is a safe place for all of our residents," she said in an email.

To prevent a similar situation from happening again, Gertler said the agency is conducting annual systems reviews on the building in August to make sure things are working properly.

In particular, the agency will look for anything else that may have been affected by the power outage, such as the generator system, or things that might be vulnerable to a power outage or extreme weather.

Gertler noted the generator did work as expected in June by allowing the elevator to return to the first floor.

### Staff help

To help ease the challenges associated with the elevator outage, a staffer was made available about four hours a day to help residents up and down the stairs, carry groceries, deliver mail and packages and carry laun-

dry to and from the laundry room.

The housing authority offered to reimburse delivery fees for groceries and medications and worked with Clatsop Community Action to provide outreach to residents with mobility impairments.

Those with mobility impairments were offered first-floor apartments, but no one moved. While all the apartments comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the housing authority said, the first-floor apartments do not have roll-in showers for people in wheelchairs.

Only three of the units in the building are designed for wheelchairs and include roll-in showers and low kitchen countertops. While the first-floor apartments were not ideal, the agency said it would have at least allowed residents with mobility impairments to come and go from the building.

The agency also said it was unable to find any area hotels that have roll-in showers and low countertops.

The housing authority borrowed a stair climber from Columbia County that would have allowed a staffer or emergency personnel to manually roll someone in their wheelchair up and down the stairs.

The agency said given the space and structural improvements needed, the installation of a permanent electric stair lift along the staircase was not feasible.

### Distressing

While residents are relieved the elevator is operating again, the experience has been especially distressing for some.

When the elevator was out, some residents at the building told The Astorian they were concerned about accessing medical appoint-

ments and other necessities.

Some residents with mobility impairments compared the past six weeks to prison. They said the inability to go outside has been particularly difficult during the summer, especially after already being isolated so long because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some were critical of the housing authority's response and communication.

The situation has highlighted the age and considerable work needed to upgrade the apartment complex, formerly St. Mary's Hospital.

The housing authority applied for state funding in April to update the building and add a new, four-story, 50-unit apartment project called the Owens-Adair Annex.

The buildings would mirror each other and likely serve low-income seniors and people with disabilities earning 30% to 50% of the area median income.

The housing authority expects to learn whether the application for funding has been approved by August. If the government funding is awarded this year, construction could begin by the summer of 2023 and the project could be completed by 2024.

Since the elevator outage, Jim Evans, who has served as the housing authority's interim director, said the agency is looking at how to build redundancy in the project and other housing projects. He is looking at adding an elevator or lift in between the two buildings, so if one elevator goes out, another one can be available.

Evans, a director at Quadel, a Washington, D.C., based management and consulting firm that was hired by the housing authority in 2020, will continue to work with the agency as a consultant.

# Psilocybin: 'The clock is ticking to put anything on the ballot'

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and manner restrictions that go beyond the state's regulations.

A temporary freeze would give local governments time to review the issue.

County commissioners will discuss a two-year moratorium in unincorporated areas at a meeting next week. The Seaside City Council is also moving toward asking voters for a moratorium.

Warrenton plans to craft time, place and manner restrictions, treating psilocybin in the development code the same as the city does marijuana.

"Time, place, manner restrictions just provide an avenue for what is technically legal," Mayor Henry Balensifer said, adding that it also allows the city to collect tax revenue on the sale of the product, "like we do with marijuana, without having to have the unfettered loss of commercial space to pop-up drug stores, basically."

Local governments have to move quickly to qualify measures for the November election.

"The clock is ticking to put anything on the ballot," County Manager Don Bohn said at a work session on Wednesday.

County Counsel Joanna Lyons-Antley recommended the moratorium, which commissioners could lift before the two years is up if the county works out the local restric-



Peter Dejong/AP Photo

**Several counties and cities in Oregon may ask voters to temporarily ban psilocybin manufacturing and service centers.**

tions first.

Psilocybin, like marijuana, remains a Schedule 1 drug under federal law. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, however, has designated psilocybin a breakthrough therapy for forms of depression. Studies suggest the drug can also help treat other disorders.

The conversation around psilocybin comes while Oregon communities deal with the consequences of Measure 110, which voters also approved in November 2020. That measure decriminalized drugs such as heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine and sought to divert money usually budgeted for enforcing drug laws, as well as tax revenue from marijuana sales, to addiction treatment. But little money has reached treatment providers and few addicts have voluntarily pursued treatment.

Overdoses, meanwhile, continue to rise statewide, driven in part by the presence of the synthetic opioid

fentanyl in illicit drugs.

County Commissioner Lianne Thompson said the county is in no hurry to replicate the unintended consequences of Measure 110.

Sheriff Matt Phillips, who opposed measures 110 and 109, told commissioners on Wednesday that, at minimum, a moratorium on psilocybin would be the right thing to do.

He shared statistics from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health for Oregon residents 12 and older. In the 2021 survey, Oregon ranked first in the nation in the number of residents with an illicit drug use disorder in the previous year.

"Oregon has a long history of having very permissive attitudes toward substance abuse," Phillips said. "And while I understand the philosophy of reducing stigma to increase access to treatment, we're building this negative feedback loop where we're basically, in my mind ... reducing the barriers to starting a substance abuse problem to build an industry to correct it at the end."

"And if we really want to address the problem, we wouldn't have such a permissive attitude toward substances everywhere and the message that it's OK to be altered all the time," he continued, "especially if you're raising a family. You see that all the time in law enforcement."

*R.J. Marx and Ethan Myers contributed to this report.*




## August 2ND - 6TH, 2022

### \$10 Admission

### 10AM - 10PM

# DAILY FAIR EVENTS 2022

**TUESDAY AUGUST 2**  
**4PM - PIG ROAST • 6PM - STICK HORSE RACE**  
**7PM - PERRY GERBER: COUNTRY**

**WEDNESDAY AUGUST 3**  
**NOON, 5PM - PERRY GERBER: COUNTRY**  
**7:30 - MEMO: MARIACHI BAND**

**THURSDAY AUGUST 4**  
**11AM, 1:30PM, 4:30PM, 7:30PM - LOUIS FOX: MAGIC SHOW**  
**NOON, 3PM, 6PM - BRIANA RENEA**

**FRIDAY AUGUST 5**  
**10AM, 1:30PM, 8:30PM - LOUIS FOX: MAGIC SHOW**  
**11AM, 4PM - BRIANA RENEA**  
**1PM - ARRON CRAWFORD**  
**7PM - TRACE ADKINS**

**SATURDAY AUGUST 6**  
**11AM - LOUIS FOX: MAGIC SHOW**  
**11:30AM - FASHION SHOW**  
**12:30PM, 4PM, 7PM - JOEL GIBSON**

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