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Officials Dragging Feet on Court Ruling

By Jerry Garner

Residents living in the Eliot/King neighborhoods have been trying for years to close down the Walnut Park Adult Movie Theater located at 5029 N.E. Union Avenue. They complain that the sex theater, which is in the vicinity of a grade school, church, and residential area, is a haven for prostitutes and crimes associated with prostitution.

The residents' assessment of the role the theater plays in the area's prostitution problem is correct. After viewing sexually explicit movies in the theater, a majority of the men (mostly White men who live elsewhere) cruise down Union Avenue seeking the service of a prostitute, getting their sexual desires fulfilled in vacant lots, church parking lots, and even in front of resident's homes. By soliciting the service of a prostitute, they also contribute to the growing drug problem in the area, since many prostitutes are addicted to heroin and crack.

For years, residents were told by city officials that nothing could be done about the theater because city zoning laws permit such establishments in the area. This argument doesn't hold water anymore due to a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision.

In March of this year, the nation's high court rules 7-2 that city officials could "restrict the placement of adult sex theaters as long as cities had reason to believe that such establishments contributed to crime or reduced property values."

The high court's decision was based on a Renton, Washington case. Renton officials changed their anti-smut zoning laws after a theater owner converted two downtown movie houses to adult sex theaters. The zoning change resulted in a 520-acre area for x-rated movie theaters located near factories, offices and warehouses. The owners challenged the city ordinance claiming that it infringed on the first amendment's right to free speech. The Supreme Court rejected this argument.



Photo by Richard J. Brown

Despite the court's decision, Portland city officials have been dragging their feet in using the high court ruling to eradicate theaters such as the Walnut Park Theater from residential areas.

Shortly after the court's decision, Portland Mayor J.E. "Bud" Clark said he would have the city attorney's office look into the ruling to see how it could be used by the city. It has now been more than 4

months and the Mayor hasn't issued any statements on the matter. In the meantime, the Walnut Park Theater continues to contribute to the prostitution problem along Union Avenue.

Small Business Subject of Forum

Many have criticized Oregon's economic development efforts for paying insufficient attention to small business, though eighty percent of the net new jobs now being created in the United States are created in companies with less than 20 employees and annual sales of between \$1 and \$5 million.

On Wednesday, August 13, from 5:30 - 7:00 pm, the City Club will hold a program examining the concerns of small businesses and perceived constraints on small business development. The program will be held in the Multnomah Room of the Portland Center Red Lion, 310 S.W. Lincoln. The public is invited. There are no reservations and the \$3.50 admission includes light food.

Panalists will discuss: 1) Liability insurance—What are the alternatives to skyrocketing and reduced coverage liability insurance? 2) Competition from tax exempt organizations—Should the laws and regulations governing determination of tax exempt status be changed? 3) Taxation—To what extent does the workers' compensation insurance system hinder small entrepreneurs? Would an Oregon State tax investment credit for capital purchases help small businesses? 4) Financing—How can new, as well as established, small businesses overcome the reluctance of traditional sources of capital (i.e. banks) to fund capital requirements? Should banks be encouraged to make more equity investments? 5) Regulation—Do Oregon's planning and environmental regulations help or hinder small businesses? Should Oregon's Economic Development Commission use its resources to retain and encourage existing small businesses?

Panalists will bring a variety of perspectives: Allan L. Cole, President/General Manager of Premier Gear & Machine Works, Inc. since 1969, has extensive involvement in shaping public policy relating to small business including chairmanship of the State of Oregon Economic Development Commission; Ann L. Gardner, Business Assistance Coordinator, Portland Development Commission, has a broad vision of the situation of small businesses developed in her work with a wide range of small businesses; and Douglas Leonetti, Treasurer/Controller of Leonetti Furniture Manufacturing Co., has extensive experience in negotiating the financial and regulatory hurdles facing small businesses. Moderator is John L. Frewing, who served previously as coordinator of Club economic development activities.

PPIC Offers Adult GED Program

BY Jerry Garner

The Portland Private Industry Council (PPIC) has developed a unique GED program for adults. PPIC's GED program differs from other such programs in two major ways.

First of all, to be eligible for the program, not only must the participant be from a low income household, their reading levels must be in the 4th to 6th grade range. "Our other contractors were focusing on people with 7th grade reading scores at entry in order to assure successful completion. This left a large percent of people not eligible for the GED programs with which we had contracts," said Carla Sosanya.

Carla Sosanya developed the GED program and is also an instructor. She said the program provides an invaluable service to adults. "Without a GED completion, most of them would not be able to obtain desirable employment because of a lack of skills. When, added to this, these people generally have little or no work experience, most of them would be practically 'unhirable'."

Another unique feature of the program is that it is free. PPIC also provides materials for students to use, plus a \$10 a day stipend to those people eligible for the payment to allow them the time and a little support to help them gain success.

The PPIC GED program has been in operation since January of this

year. Each participant has 22 weeks to complete his or her GED, and the program has an open entry-open exit policy. The program is designed to accommodate 30 students at any one time. So far, six students have completed the GED program.

Sosanya said the program has given the students a sense of self-assurance. "Many of the students have gained a lot of confidence and have been successful in going on to jobs or further training."

One such individual is 29 year old Ruthie Ocsa. Ocsa, who has been in the program for 3 months, said she has benefited immensely from the program. She said the reason she entered the GED program was because she was tired of working minimum wage jobs and wanted to better her education. Ocsa said, "Once I get my GED, I would like to get into computer programming."

Sosanya said people who may be eligible for the GED program and other services are not aware of their existence. "It is especially difficult to recruit people for our program, many who are eligible do not read well. They may not read the posters we hang up."

In order to be eligible for the GED program, an individual must be from a low-income household, at least 21 years of age, and have a reading level range of 4th to 6th grade. Individuals who receive food stamps or welfare are automatically eligible.



Adults take advantage of PPIC adult GED program.

Photo by Richard J. Brown