

DEQ fines Cottage Grove \$4,500

By Caitlyn May
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Cottage Grove has been fined \$4,500 by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Initial reports claimed the city was fined for dumping excessively contaminated sewage wastewater onto city-owned park lands. However, Cottage Grove City Manager Richard Meyers said that's not entirely true.

"It was the golf course," Meyers said. "If we had been using river water, the contamination would have been higher."

Fines stem from June 8 through 10 and according to Meyers, Cottage Grove informed DEQ that it had violated its allowed levels. Further, Meyers said those violations were not bacterial, but rather, related to temperature. "We had some high temperature days and it was temperature related, there was no bacteria," he said.

As for the bacteria-related violations, Meyers said they were due to an equipment failure which has since been rectified.

"We're going to ask to use that money, instead of paying DEQ, to make further improvements to deal with the temperature issues," Meyers said.



Cottage Grove was fined \$4,500 by DEQ. Shown above, a pool at the city's wastewater treatment facility taken in January. The fines are related to incidents in June.

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City Manager debriefs on City Day

By Caitlyn May
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Mayor Jeff Gowing and councilors Mike Fleck, Jake Boone and Kenneth Roberts accompanied Cottage Grove City Manager Richard Meyers to City Day at the state capitol earlier this month.

The event, sponsored in part by Oregon League of Cities, aimed to get local city government officials in the same room as state officials to discuss the issues important to them and the overall concerns of the state.

"I've been attending these for a few years and this was probably the biggest," Meyers said.

Cottage Grove officials spoke with state senator Floyd Prozanski and representative Cedric Hayden about issues facing the city and correlating state legislation, in particular, Senate Bill 504 which concerns recreational immunity.

"Representative Hayden said he was with us on restoring recreational immunity," Meyers said. He noted that Prozanski said he needed further research and would form a working group to explore the issue.

Meyers has said that should recreational immunity not be restored, Cottage Grove may be forced to close its parks to avoid

the legal costs associated with potential lawsuits. Essentially, the change to recreational immunity allows individuals who injure themselves while recreating on city-owned land, to sue city employees. Previously, cities were protected from such lawsuits by recreational immunity, citing the inherent nature of recreation and the possibility for injury.

City officials also met with several other state officials, including hearing from Governor Kate Brown.

However, Meyers said it was clear that "lines had been drawn" between the two parties concerning several issues and that he hoped those lines could be crossed to come to a resolution on what was best for the state of Oregon.

Other issues discussed at City Day included the lack of affordable housing in the state, an issue that hits close to home for Cottage Grove where local nonprofits are teaming up to propose a tiny home village to address the growing need.

"From my perception," Meyers said, "and I think from the councilors' perception, it would have been nice to get all the state representatives in a room and say, 'You can't leave until you talk to each other.' It would have been nice to hold them all in a room and have them talk to each other so we can figure out how to move forward."

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National issues come to PeaceHealth

By Caitlyn May
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PeaceHealth employs thousands of individuals and locally, operates the health facility in Cottage Grove. However, after recent events surrounding immigration came to light, PeaceHealth Chief Administrative Officer for Cottage Grove Community Medical Center reported that executive orders from Washington D.C. had far-reaching effects.

"Forty-one percent of our providers are foreign-born," Herrmann said. He noted that he inquired as to the statistic after reading a national statistic that reported 41 percent of all medical providers in the United States are foreign-born.

The issue came to light after President Donald Trump signed an executive order barring individuals from seven Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States for a period of 90 days. As a result, reports of green card holders being detained in airports began to circulate.

While the hype has died down slightly concerning the national outcry against the order, Herrmann said diversity is a part of PeaceHealth.

Unable to speak for the company as a whole, Herrmann said, "Inclusivity is important in terms of our mission. This company started with immigrants from Ireland."

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For Cottage Grove, Thompson is working on assessing its challenges and benefits. "Cottage Grove has a lot of things going for it," she said. "Cottage Grove is on I-5 and close to a metropolitan area, has already increased access to broadband Internet fiber, has good city planning and business folks that are focused on community prosperity. Forming a community development corporation and a main street program are impressive accomplishments for a city the size of Cottage Grove. There are a lot of draws for tourists and Cottage Grove has done a good job of promoting tourism and working with Travel Lane County. A strong chamber of commerce partner is a plus as well."

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