

Club from A1

cially not next door to it — especially where we share a property line.”

Perry took issue, too, with the very nature of the business.

“We understand that a business needs to be a business. ... However, the explicit nude dancing, the adult, sexually-oriented business activity, is something that we definitely oppose,” he said, searching for a solution. “There’s got to be something reasonable that we can fairly exert.”

Perry also complained that he had picked up trash and beer cans after Top of the Bowl’s soft opening on June 5 and that motorcycles woke people in the neighborhood after midnight.

Community member Myndee Ferrill then asked the council to reevaluate zoning laws and look into business licensing.

Citing a statistical increase in crime rates of 12 percent caused by the opening of similarly themed businesses, Ferrill claimed that laws had already been broken by the establishment, which included “...the employment of uncertified bouncers with felony records and noise complaints.”

Ferrill also appealed to a debate the city has already had about the proximity of food trucks to schools.

“I find it incredibly sad that we have arguments against a food market in a certain location and that our food trucks have to be 500 feet from a school because of the fact that they’re not healthy enough when the schools are serving chicken nuggets and pizza,” she said. “So if we will stand up for our children’s healthy diets and we won’t stand up against something that will possibly bring in sex trafficking, child endangerment, all sorts of other things that go along with that — frankly, being a fifth-generation citizen of this

town, I’m disappointed.” Chamber of Commerce Chairperson Bonnie Morgan expressed to the council her support for the 500-foot ordinance, as did other commenters at the meeting.

Additional concerns revolved around Top of the Bowl bringing more strip clubs to town, increased expenditures for law enforcement and religious freedom of speech were also raised during the discussion.

“This is going to really, really hurt Drain and I am not okay with this,” said a youth leader from Drain’s First Baptist Church. “What about my freedom of speech or [Perry’s] freedom of speech as a church?”

Several community members also expressed their desire to personally help fund attorney fees to fight any legal battle which may result from the issue.

Limitations on the time and place alcohol can be served were also brought up, though Mayor Justin Cobb said the council would be looking for other solutions.

“The problem with that is if we go that route, it is going to affect other businesses as well,” he said. “There are other options.”

Technical difficulties prevented a full recording and online streaming of the council meeting. How-



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

**Aside from dancers, the night club will feature a variety of other special events day-to-day including live music, Sunday poker tournaments and sports viewing parties.**

ever, City Administrator Steve Dahl confirmed he was, in the end, directed by the council to draft an ordinance creating a 500-foot distance between sexually-oriented adult entertainment businesses and churches, parks or places where children congregate.

Dahl was also directed to assemble a citizen’s committee to develop a rule which would prevent situations such as this in the future.

**Top of the Bowl Response**  
Henricks and Marin have watched the controversy unfold with equal parts bewilderment and amusement at what they feel are unsubstantiated attacks on the business.

The couple categorically reject the allegations of potential crime and youth exposure leveled during the City Council meeting and were mystified by the degree of local criticism they have received.

“I have no idea why,” said Henricks, who also owns the building, which includes the downstairs bowling center. “I don’t think there’s going to be any of [those problems].”

Henricks and Marin believe the controversy ignited when a Facebook post by a family friend alleged that the upstairs business was a “strip club.”

The establishment, however, has been presented to the city as a “bar or restaurant with special events.”

Top of the Bowl spans the entirety of the building’s upstairs, comprised of a bar area, full kitchen, board and card game room and a spacious lounge complete with a stage and catwalk.

While Henricks and Marin state that special events will from time to time include both male and female nude dancers, they pointed out that the events will only feature topless nudity and will, in any case, not be the main form of entertainment.

Aside from the dancers, Henricks and Marin plan to incorporate a variety of events into the business, including Sunday poker tournaments, burlesque shows, drag shows, live music and sports viewing parties.

On top of the soft opening, the establishment has already tested out these events on small scales.

“Everybody that has come here has had fun. We’ve had no problems,” said Henricks. “There’ve been no drug deals. There’s no sex going on. There’s no crime.”

Part of the reason for starting the night club, said Henricks, was to begin producing revenue to keep the building afloat.

Initially rented from the Masons, who originally owned the building, Henricks’ mother has operated the downstairs bowling alley, Family Fun Bowling, for the past six years.

About two years ago, Henricks bought the entire building from the Masons as they moved out.

Keeping the lights on was proving a financial burden, however.

“The bowling alley doesn’t really pay any bills,” said Marin. “Bowling really isn’t that popular. ... To keep the bowling alley open, Jamie and I work here for free.”

Henricks began renting out the upstairs area for birthday parties, weddings and other parties, “but that didn’t cut it,” she said.

Unable to make ends meet, the two decided to do something different with the space.

“And so our venture upstairs is hopefully to save the whole building and keep everything open,” Marin said.

Henricks also cited her mother’s health as a driving reason to start bringing in more revenue. Following her mother’s four-way bypass heart surgery and now facing an upcoming leg operation, Henricks said the stress on her mother of trying to maintain the bowling alley had become too much.

“So, she’s excited to let us pay the bills,” said Henricks.

Top of the Bowl obtained its liquor license and was approved by the city before Oregon’s

COVID-19 lockdown began in March. It has since been waiting for the phased reopening to allow the business to open and has scheduled for a grand opening on July 3.

The recent pushback from the community due to the presence of nude dancers, however, was another unforeseen obstacle. Despite this, the couple said they are determined to push forward and are adamant that crime will not become an issue.

“I really don’t feel like the crime rate is going to change,” said Marin. “Our target is the 20- to 40-year-old people who leave town [for entertainment]. And none of them are committing crimes.”

As for the risk of youth exposure, Henricks and Marin assured that the door linking the bowling alley to upstairs is always locked, preventing an accidental entry to the upstairs business.

“Anyway, if your children are sitting outside a bar at 11 o’clock at night, then maybe you need to be doing something about your parenting skills,” Marin said.

To address drunk driving, Henricks and Marin also purchased a shuttle bus which will go as far as Rice Hill to pick up people at a truck stop.

“We will be busing trucks here, but we will be busing them back to their trucks,” said Henricks. “They can’t get in too much trouble doing that.”

The couple also added that they do not employ any bouncers, and any allegations about uncertified employees were a misunderstanding about a doorman checking identification.

“People don’t realize, I think, that it’s going to bring money to the city, too,” said Henricks. “I think it’s going to be a good thing for the city.”

Marin also felt that people would warm up to the establishment if they knew more about it.

“I think that anybody that has an issue with us needs to come by,” said Marin. “We’ll take them on a tour and I believe I can change their mind and thought process — of what’s going on in their heads and the rumors that they’re hearing — just by coming and taking a look.”

Though an ordinance is set to be drafted restricting Top of the Bowl’s proximity to certain areas, a memo written by the city administrator acknowledges that the ordinance would not be enforceable due to an Oregon Supreme Court ruling, making its passing purely symbolic.

“Based on the memo from the attorney, I don’t feel that we can pass an ordinance that would stand up to a court case if it was filed,” Dahl wrote in his memo to the city.

Still, the controversy shows no sign of ebbing among concerned locals and the determination of Henricks and Marin to forge ahead will undoubtedly force the issue to the forefront of many Drain conversations for some time to come.

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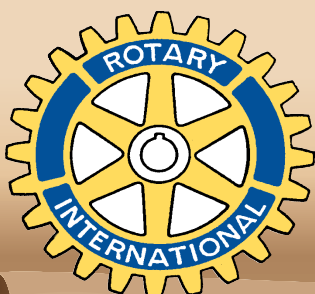
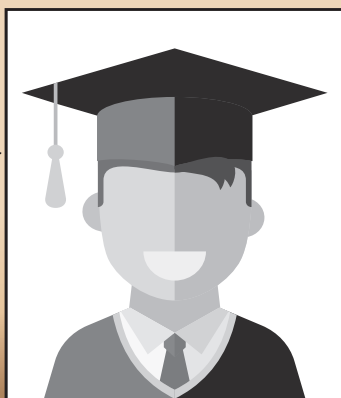


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