

Fewer vehicles on roads could mean future DMV office closures as revenue falls

ODOT's July revenue forecast reflects the financial losses the State Highway Fund has sustained due to the economic downturn. This update to the April forecast increases the total estimated revenue loss to \$170 million for 2020 and 2021. Because the state's

projected economic recovery will extend into 2024, the impact will expand as well, increasing to a total of about \$250 million in lost revenue from 2020 to 2024, when compared to the October 2019 forecast. This amount is split between cities, counties and ODOT, so the im-

pact will be felt statewide. "Certainly we will need to review the plans, projects and programs we had in place with the previous budget to determine where we need to make adjustments," Brouwer said. "We'll be working on specifics in the next few months."

Most road projects are paid for with federal dollars and with money allocated by the Legislature to specific projects, so it can't be used for anything else without a legislative change. However, the reduction in overall funding could impact some of ODOT's projects.

Facing a long-term budget shortfall that has been made worse by COVID-19 and the economic downturn, the department established a Budget Task Force earlier this year. The group has been working through ideas for reducing costs, adjusting programs and

more. This week, ODOT will be sharing these initial ideas with the Oregon Transportation Commission during its virtual meeting as well as discussing next steps to address the budget situation.

Drain from A1

sits some 25 feet from the adjacent church, it would fall into this category. However, because the business has already opened, the question of whether the ordinance could be retroactively enforced remains to be seen. "I'm not sure on that," said Drain Mayor Justin Cobb, adding that other layers of law enforcement may complicate the matter. During the July 13 meeting, councilors and staff heard testimony from Ray Hacke, an attorney with the Pacific Justice Institute who responded to a letter sent

by the Gateway Family Fellowship church. Pacific Justice Institute is a nonprofit legal defense organization specializing in the defense of religious freedom and parental rights. The nonprofit works pro bono in cases which involve the exercise of religion and other civil liberties and made headlines in May when it filed suit against Governor Kate Brown, challenging her emergency powers during the pandemic. Hacke surmised that Drain's proposed ordinance would pass muster in court. The attorney also voiced his concern about the indecency of Top of the Bowl's nude events. "An adult entertainment business has no business setting up shop



right next to a church. It has no business setting up next to any place where children congregate," he argued. "These places do attract sexual predators." Hacke also referenced certain vulnerable populations who go to and from drug, alcohol and sex addiction programs at the church. "Here you have temptation coming right to their doorstep," he said. Meanwhile, City Administrator Steve Dahl commented there was a concern with an Oregon Supreme Court case which would turn the ordinance into a freedom of expression issue. "My recommendation, when it comes down to it, is not to get the city sued," said Dahl. "And I'm afraid that if we

go with that ordinance, that we will have a suit against in the city in that direction." Cobb, however, felt differently. "While the Supreme Court has ruled that adult entertainment businesses are a form of free speech and cannot be outright banned, they can be regulated with a 'time/place/manner' ordinance, which is enforceable," he said. Cobb went on to explain that, as far as he understood the law, such restrictions would be constitutional if the city allows for some space within the jurisdiction on which the business could be established. Hacke, too, said that a "time, place and manner" restriction would not violate freedom of speech and that, regardless of a lawsuit, the ordinance would win in court.


Cobb then asked Barker, Dahl and Hacke to work on a final version of the ordinance to be proposed at the next City Council meeting. Councilors also considered introducing business licenses to Drain as another strategy for restricting nude entertainment in the city, though the mayor said he was doing it reluctantly. "I'm a staunch believer in very limited government control," said Cobb. "So enacting a business license to me just feels wrong. It's against my better instincts to want to do this." Cobb recommended that the city confer with local business owners on the topic before making a decision. "If we're going to do business licenses, I want it to be as clear-cut and easy of a process as possible," he said.

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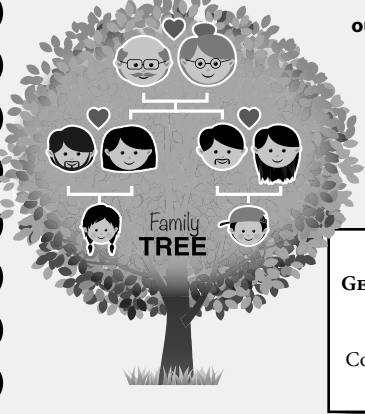



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