News Release

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OLCC joins regional response to retail theft

Agency maintains stopping "sales to minors" focus

Bottle Bill Program management transitions

PORTLAND, Ore. – At the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission (OLCC) on September 22, 2022, liquor store owners added their voices to the chorus of complaints about retail criminal activity going unprosecuted. The owners asked if there was action the Commission could take to stem the increase in liquor store theft. Commissioners also received updates on minor decoy operations, transitions in the Bottle Bill program, appointed a new liquor store owner, approved rules and ratified stipulated settlement agreements.

Liquor stores, particularly those in the Portland Metro area, told Commissioners they have been beset by blatant strong-arm shoplifters and robbers stealing product, damaging their businesses, and intimidating liquor store employees.

In response Jason Hanson, the OLCC's Compliance Director, reported that the agency has joined the Oregon Retailer Crime Association (OR-ORCA). That group is made up of national and regional retailers, along with local law enforcement and district attorneys who are collaborating on a unified response to the increase in retail crime as well as sharing information about organized crime operations.

This past summer the OLCC restarted its minor decoy program, which tests licensees on their ability to prevent sales of alcohol and cannabis to minors. As previously reported, the results have been abysmal for alcohol licensees, with a compliance rate of 63% for the whole state. "We're not going to stop these increased operations until these rates improve," said OLCC Executive Director Steve Marks.

Possible steps the OLCC may take to prevent underage sales include: providing licensees with increased education about ID checking, more communication with the industry about alcohol service oversight, and increasing the penalties for businesses that sell to minors.

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The Commissioners also took action on three rule packages that included viticulture specific wine labeling language, marijuana transfers between state and tribal licensees, and the strengthening of the bottle bill redemption network.

Commissioners also recognized the service of OLCC's first Bottle Bill Program Manager Becky Voelkel, who will retire at the end of September after 36 years of service with the state of Oregon, including more than 27 years with the OLCC. OLCC Retail Services district manager Jim Helget will move over to managing the program after Voelkel's departure.

Voelkel was instrumental in guiding the program holding retailers accountable while ensuring that consumers received their redemption deposits. The Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative (OBRC) told the Commission that Voelkel was both a "referee" and a "shepherd" for the program.

"The bottle bill has gone through enormous change since 2016 through today. We had to go from a nickel to a dime, we had container expansion," said Jules Bailey, OBRC Executive Vice-President. "You want someone who's fair, firm, and fast. She has a fair but firm shepherd's hook. And that's what it takes to run the best bottle deposit system in the nation, somebody like Becky."

In other action, the Commissioners appointed Paul Pastor to take over as owner of the Cannon Beach liquor store, after the recent passing of his father. Dave Pastor was the first liquor store owner in partnership with the OLCC to operate a satellite liquor store, which is typically open just part of the year during tourist seasons.

The Commissioners also ratified the following stipulated settlement agreements (detailed information on specific cases can be found on the OLCC website):

Alcohol Stipulated Settlement Agreements

PARKSTONE WOOD KITCHEN & TAPS (F-COM) in Portland, will pay a $1,485 fine **OR** serve a nine-day license suspension for one violation.

MAIN STREET PIZZA II (L) in Tillamook, will pay a $1,485 fine **OR** serve a nine-day license suspension for one violation.

MID VALLEY MARKET (O) in Odell, will pay a $2,250 fine **OR** serve a nine-day license suspension for one violation.

THE ROCK WOOD FIRED PIZZA & SPIRITS (F-COM) in Hillsboro, will pay a $2,145.00 fine **OR** serve a 13-day license suspension for one violation.

LA PARRANDA NIGHTCLUB (F-COM) in Woodburn, will pay a $2,310.00 fine **OR** serve a 14-day license suspension for two violations.

Marijuana Stipulated Settlement Agreements

PANGAEA ORGANICS a marijuana processor, will pay a $4,000 fine **AND** serve a five-day suspension **OR** serve a 21-day license suspension for one violation.

ROOTED COAST CANNABIS a marijuana retailer in Coos Bay, will pay a 9,000 fine **OR** serve a 36-day license suspension for four violations.

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