

Yakima City Council Meeting – August 21, 2012

Public Hearing – 6-month Moratorium on the licensing of a new strip club in Yakima

My name is Danielle Surkatty, and I live at 101 No. 58th Ave. in Yakima. I am speaking today as the Advocacy Chair of the Zonta Club of Yakima, a local service club, which focuses on improving the lives of women in the Yakima Valley.

While we understand that the law allows strip clubs to exist, let me state clearly that we are strongly opposed to the opening of a strip club. We support the six-month moratorium on the licensing of any new strip clubs in Yakima.

While I know the City Attorney has provided you with hundreds of pages of information on ordinances and findings from cities around the country, I've gathered information for you on the sexual violence and human trafficking that strip club dancer's experience. The packet includes:

- 1) Handouts which detail the links between Strip Clubs and Sex Trafficking.
- 2) A handout on the "10 Things that Men and Boys can do to Stop Human Trafficking". You'll note that point 3 speaks specifically to strip clubs.
- 3) Advice from one of the foremost experts on prostitution in the US, which has references linking strip clubs and prostitution to recommendations for cities.
- 4) You'll also see a Legislative Record from Federal Way's City Attorney, which details adult entertainment findings related to strip clubs and other adult venues in cities in their area. I just wanted to bring your attention one particular section of this report which I've highlighted on page 3 which states: "The record reflects that there has never been an instance when an undercover officer has entered an adult entertainment establishment in the City when a criminal act was not occurring."

Strip clubs utilize a business model that is based, by its very nature, on the commercial sexual exploitation of women. Furthermore, whenever force, fraud, or coercion are involved in luring a woman to dance in a strip club, the act can be defined as human trafficking. Young women and minors about to turn 18 are often lured into the work with the promises of the great money to be made. While this may be the first venue where they are exploited, studies show us that other forms of exploitation will soon follow, including pornography, escort services, prostitution, and labor or sex trafficking.

We have reviewed city ordinances on adult entertainment from Bellevue, Everett, Kent, Mukilteo, Oak Harbor, Renton, and Snohomish County and the ways these cities and county have strengthened their ordinances to increase protections for women.

In the packet on the left you'll find six recommendations that we feel strongly will greatly increase the safety and security of the women working in any future strip club in Yakima. We'd

like the city council and city attorney to revise our ordinance to incorporate these additional protections for women.

These recommendations cover: Alarm Systems, Barriers, Entertainer's License, Inspection, Interior Signage, and Proximity of Dancer to Patrons. I've put our current city ordinance section at the top, followed by related excerpts from the other cities' ordinances. At the bottom in the box you'll see our recommendation for the revision.

Our laws recognize the rights of cities to protect their citizenry against the secondary effects of strip clubs, this includes the women that work there! We recognize the distinction between laws that allow free speech protection for the dancers, and the fact that the misconduct of customers is entirely outside the protection of the first amendment and the State Constitution.

In the packet you'll also find a study entitled "*Strip Clubs According to Strippers: Exposing Workplace Sexual Violence*" which details their actual working conditions. While strip clubs are popularly promoted as providing harmless entertainment and as places where customers go to watch and talk to women, the study shows that this is NOT the case.

One hundred percent of the women in the study experienced physical abuse AND sexual abuse while working in strip clubs. One hundred percent experience verbal harassment in the strip club and one hundred percent reported being propositioned for prostitution. Seventy eight percent were stalked and sixty one percent reported that someone attempted to sexually assault them.

These realities of the strip club work environment speak loudly to the need for the strongest possible ordinance. When you read the quotes from the women in the study, you'll see that the degree of violence perpetrated against strippers absolutely explodes the myths about stripping as harmless entertainment.

In fact, strip clubs by their very nature create an environment where women are treated in a manner that would be ILLEGAL in any other work environment, relationship or business model.

Again, we support the moratorium on the opening of a strip club in Yakima, so that city officials can prepare the strongest possible licensing provisions to protect the women that work there and develop review criteria to the fullest extent allowed under law.

Thank you for considering our suggestions for revisions to the Yakima Ordinance on Dance Studios.

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