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Subject: Opt-In/Opt-Out Overlay and Citizens' Advisory Groups

Dear Board of Supervisors:

I plan to read this letter during public comment on September 24, 2018.

This is in regards to the Opt-In/Opt-Out survey the County and Baker Intl. did and about the Opt-In Citizens' Advisory Group.

First I want to appreciate everything you, as our Board of Supervisors, are doing to bring as many small-parcel, heritage growers into the regulated system through the overlay process.

However, it doesn't appear that County staff has this same desire as exemplified by their actions.

Specifically:

1. Public Meetings for the Opt-In/Opt-Out districts:

Mendocino County and Baker Intl. were supposed to hold public meetings to inform the public about the Opt-In/Opt-Out districts and present the regulations framework for feedback.

a. County Staff sent out an "Email Blast" and News Release just 6 days before the meetings. Here were the problems:

i. The "email blast" that I received consisted of 78 total emails. They included 1 library, 1 school, 1 senior center, 1 hotel, 1 water district, 2 police departments, 13 newspapers and radio stations, 23 county employees, and only 35 individuals community members of which I am one.

ii. The news releases appeared in county newspapers the day of or the day before the scheduled meetings.

b. Of the reported 14 people that showed up for the Laytonville meeting, there was 1 BOS, 1 supervisor candidate, 2 county employees, 2 employees of Baker Intl. and only 9 community members, 5 of whom I personally called to inform them of the meeting.

c. My questions to you are:

i. How is the community supposed to participate when the meetings are scheduled for 10am on Thursday and Friday? Many cannabis growers also have regular jobs and couldn't get off work with no notice.

ii. What are you paying Baker Intl. to do? They need to have a dedicated website with contact information where folks can go and educate themselves and participate and give feedback. This needs to be a lot more transparent. I know the County has a page for this on the County website, but there is very little information about the overlays and it is hard to find.

2. Post-Card Survey:

a. Prior to these post cards coming out, we were using the terms "Cannabis Zoning Overlays," and "Opt-In/Opt-Out Zones." Suddenly the post card renames them "Cannabis Combining Districts." When did that happen? This confused the issue.

b. The post cards look like junk mail. Several of my neighbors threw them away as such. One neighbor had to dig back through his trash and retrieve his. There is nothing personalized about them.

c. Several parcel owners think they never received a post card.

d. Tenants had no clue that their landlords were receiving these cards. Those I talked to I encouraged to contact their landlords to do the survey.

e. The link that was supplied to do the survey had to be put into your computer or phone search engine "search box," not Google. I made that mistake. A friend finally showed me where to put the link. A bunch of my neighbors made the same mistake as me and gave up trying. When I got phone calls from some of my neighbors about this problem, I was able to tell them where to put the link on their computer. This should have been a lot easier to do.

f. I emailed Paul Junker about these problems and he got staff to extend the deadline one more week, from Sept. 17th to Sept. 24th or so I thought. I got more phone calls on Monday, Sept 24th telling me the survey had been closed. I contacted Paul Junker again, and he said he would take their information and enter their survey.

g. I did find out from Baker Intl. that Laytonville achieved their minimum 60% yes from the survey.

3. Opt-In/Opt-Out Zoning Overlay Citizen's Advisory Groups:

a. County staff limited the number of participants for each advisory group to only 7 people for Opt-In and 7 people for Opt-Out who would be allowed to participate in the conference calls and regulation-framing work. We were given 4 days to respond to an email saying we wanted to be one of the seven. I responded on the 5th day so I wasn't included.

However, once the Opt-In group got started, a couple of people realized they didn't want to participate. I asked county staff to be swapped into the Opt-In group. I was told in an email that those people had committed themselves and they were required to serve and there was to be no swapping. Baker Intl. also asked staff if I could be swapped in and they told them no. Basically, the Laytonville area had no local representative.

Finally – While I appreciate all the work County staff does, I feel they have been unwilling to work with the volunteers in the Advisory Groups and have hamstrung Baker Intl. to do the same. By giving short notice or no notice of the promised public meetings, they undermine the trust of the community and create further frustration and anger which ends up landing in the laps of the Board of Supervisors. While I'm glad Laytonville achieved their 60% response to the post cards, it was an exercise in frustration and last-second street pounding to get the word out to respond to this survey.

Thank you for your consideration in addressing these issues with County staff and to remain open to working with the public and the Advisory Groups.

Valerie Edwards

