

July 20, 2020

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors:

John Haschak, Ted Williams, Carrie Brown, Dan Gjerde, John McCowen

Re: Cannabis Ordinance Dissolution (under 5b)

Dear Board,

I am writing to discuss the current Cannabis Ordinance 10A.17 and the proposals for its elimination and replacement. This is a very important issue for our County, and we must take our time to get it right. I would propose to “table” the voting on this item for the next Board meeting to give some time for public response and thoughtful considerations of the best path forward.

The current Ordinance protects rangeland and forestland and gives the County control over the different aspects of cannabis cultivation such as: allowable grow size per parcel, setbacks, visual and environmental impacts etc. If the County does what was suggested in the June 10th meeting, the “how it is grown” will be left up to the State and the County will therefore lose control. Much has gone into the creation of this ordinance and to throw it out now would leave our communities at high risk of another wave of uncontrolled cannabis growth, and to be clear, it is now “out of control” in certain parts of our County, and by opening it up to increased size and less regulation it will accentuate the problem, create more environmental degradation, more crime, with little or no enforcement.

I would advocate for fixing what is not working. If the “ministerial” permit system is not working, then change it to a ‘use permit” system, but let’s keep County control.

If I were to apply for a Coastal Development Permit, I would most likely have to hire a professional to do the paperwork necessary to comply with that process. When there is a difficult permit process in anything other than “cannabis” we are told “that’s the way it is”, with cannabis, the County looks to help, streamline, cater to, fund, give loans to etc. etc. etc. Where is the equality here? There are 87,000 residents of our County and 800 applicants that are having a problem. You owe it to the other 86,200 residents to take the time to make sure that any changes that are made are done so with the best interests of the “entire” County and “all” of its residents in mind.

This is important enough to have a community discussion about this before a vote is taken. Table the voting for now, talk to the Community, inform the people, in clear layman’s terms, about exactly what changes will take place if the ordinance is deleted, listen to people’s concerns and feedback, and only then move forward with a vote.

Best regards,

Ron Stark
Albion 5th Dist.
Covelo 3rd Dist.