

From: Marilyn Magoffin

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Covelo Ca

To: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

501 Low Gap Road

Ukiah, CA 95482

Re Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance, 7/21/2020 BOS meeting, Agenda Item 5b

Dear Chair Haschak and Members of the Board,

I am writing in support of keeping the Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance and not repealing it.

The Cannabis Cultivation ordinance is described by County staff and some supervisors as being too cumbersome to facilitate the permitting of the 1000 applicants applying for a permit to grow cannabis. It should be noted that, despite having not completed the permitting process, these people are growing cannabis under their "pending" status. Problems associated with the ministerial permitting process v.s. a more flexible discretionary permit, which would be allowed if the ordinance were repealed, are legitimate. However, our current Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance has protections built in it that insure the protection of our land and water resources. Additionally, abandoning input on "how" cannabis is grown and only focusing on "where" it is grown (as stated by Supervisor McCowen, June 16, 2020, Discussion for Possible Action Including Direction to Staff Regarding the Potential Re-Direction of the Cannabis Cultivation Program) further relinquishes County control over cultivation sites and leaves no mechanism in place for a disaffected neighbor to use to complain about a grow next door. That this permitting process has not worked well, because of lack of staff and/or resources to complete the permit process, speaks to the lack of readiness of our County to manage this huge undertaking.

As a resident of Covelo since 2012 and a frequent visitor since 1990 I have watched the town and surrounding land become dominated by the presence of marijuana grows. When I voted against measure AF in 2016, it was because I wanted cannabis cultivation to be contained and regulated so as to protect our land and water resources, also while allowing measured growth of the cannabis industry. I do support the legal grower who cares about our land and our community. Cannabis is an important agricultural product and has been the main reason our little town of Covelo has continued to be viable. Unfortunately, because of the remote location and lack of enforcement of the current regulation, there are unsightly multiple grows that distract from surrounding beauty of the valley. Add the 24/7 lights, guard dogs, gunfire and the overall sense un-safeness of the illegal grows, there is a feeling of being held hostage in my own community.

Repealing the current Cultivation Ordinance will also allow expansion of grows into the rangelands. We are in a drought with more limits on our water, increased algae in our rivers and now with a pandemic, less manpower and enforcement hours, to deal with addition of new grows in our remaining open spaces. Replacing the current ordinance with "Use Permits" that allow County staff more leeway to work around regulations, is not what is needed. Decisions made now cannot be walked back later. We may find ourselves with cannabis grows that are not in harmony with the non-growing community. The culture of our Covelo town, as a town that supports a variety of agricultural endeavors, families and quiet rural living, is being eroded by the problems associated with the inadequate enforcement of the illegal cannabis grows. Many people have left our valley or are thinking of leaving, because of having the misfortune of a neighbor now growing cannabis next door.

The County needs to demonstrate to the community that it can enforce our current cannabis ordinance and protect our land and water resources before expanding the areas that cannabis can be grown. Sheriff Kendall's recent shut down of 2 large illegal grows in Covelo has been a good start. Allow him the time and give him the support he needs to continue his enforcement. Our previous Sheriff, Tom Allman, stated at the December 2019 BOS meeting, that the decision to expand cannabis cultivation into the rangeland "should be voted on by the public" and not left for the County alone to decide. Minimally, any changes to the permit process need to be presented to the public, describing a clear process of who, what, when, where and how so we can make an informed decision regarding any proposed changes. I would request that the vote on the Cultivation Ordinance, scheduled for the Aug 4 BOS, be tabled until such a discussion can be arranged.

The non-growing community has been mostly sidelined in the process of developing the cannabis industry. Not by intent but because we were not growing cannabis ourselves. We have no business lobby or professional organization to offer money or incentives to the County. But like the Legacy growers we are taxpayers too and deserve equal representation.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Marilyn Magoffin

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