

Commissioner Greg Nelson
615 West Smith Street
Ukiah, California 95482

March 30, 2021

Mendocino County Supervisors

I am compelled to send you a minority opinion on the cannabis ordinance the Planning Commission heard on March 19th. I must say, in all the years I've been on the Commission I have never been motivated to write such a letter. My concern is about Appendix A.

We had a very long agenda which meant we didn't get to the cannabis issue until after a half hour lunch break. There was a very impressive and well organized lobbying effort by the cannabis community. We had hours of testimony so we didn't get to discuss the item until after a dinner break. There are two topics that we had absolute unity on.

1. No amount of legislation is going to fix the cannabis issue until the county allocates enough resources to control the illegal grows.
2. By the time the commission started our discussion we were all too tired to think clearly.

My first concern is about the type of use permits required on Appendix A. We made changes to the use permits required with virtually no discussion. When it was asked why a more expensive and stringent permit was suggested, no answer was offered. I trust the original permit types were based on the amount of staff work and time required to complete the permit. Therefore, I believe the Board should consider using the permit types in the original document. I'm afraid that at this late hour our decisions were made in haste and without justification.

My last concern is about the size of grows on range land, upland residential and agricultural zones. I'm afraid our positions were heavily influenced by the amount of testimony for a single position rather than on the facts of the matter. I have always believed the job of the Commission was to make rather cold hearted, practical, technical recommendations to the board based on logic and facts. The board then makes adjustments based on the political environment.

My position is these zones should allow cannabis to be farmed on 10% of the acreage for the following reasons.

1. Cannabis should not be produced near residential and rural residential areas for nuisance and criminal reasons. Rangeland, especially, is a more appropriate place to grow cannabis.
2. In spite of the fact that these zones appear to promote large farms the actual farmable acreage is vastly reduced by the restrictions of water availability, steep slopes and tree free open space.

3. Much of the testimony was concerned that the increased production would drive their prices down. My opinion is that their competition is not within the County but from areas such as the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. If you want to reduce the available acreage in Rangeland just decrease the allowable slopes.
4. A large amount of the testimony was focused on saving the small cannabis grower from competition. Although popular, I don't believe this is economically possible.
5. I don't think it's fair to the producer that wants to increase the size of his operation.
6. I don't think it will provide economies of scale that will allow our producers to compete with the rest of the State and Nation.
7. A small cannabis farm could be a helpful diversification on a cattle operation which is a very challenging occupation.

I would like to close by saying that my years on the Planning Commission have been very rewarding and enjoyable.. The staff have all been very professional, talented and always patient and helpful.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gregory T. Nelson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Gregory T. Nelson