



County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 500, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4069
(831) 454-2200 • FAX: (831) 454-3262 TDD: (831) 454-2123

JOHN LEOPOLD
FIRST DISTRICT

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SECOND DISTRICT

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FOURTH DISTRICT

BRUCE MCPHERSON
FIFTH DISTRICT

AGENDA: 10/27/15

October 23, 2015

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER AN INTERIM
ORDINANCE TO LICENSE THE COMMERCIAL
CULTIVATION OF MEDICAL CANNABIS

Dear Members of the Board:


In August of this year, the Board completed appointment of the 13-member Cannabis Cultivation Choices Committee (C4), charged with reviewing cultivation models and making policy recommendations to our Board to reasonably regulate the commercial cultivation of medical cannabis. The Committee has been working diligently, meeting every Tuesday for several hours to develop a common understanding of the law, the needs of cultivators, and the impacts of the practice in our community. They have a website (www.scc4.us) and all of the materials they have discussed are available for any member of the public to read.

Soon after the start of the C4 Committee, the State Legislature passed a suite of bills to finally develop a statewide regulatory system for cannabis. This long sought-after legislation was developed with strong support from local government, law enforcement, the cannabis community, and the Governor. The legislation covers many areas of commercial cannabis cultivation, distribution, and transportation and is premised on a licensing system. It also establishes the Bureau of Medical Marijuana Regulation and is designed to go into effect at the start of 2018.

Although the legislation gives deference to local regulations in the area of cultivation, the legislation requires that local governments must have their own regulations in place by March 1, 2016, or the State will become the sole licensing authority for cannabis cultivation in Santa Cruz County. At this point it is unclear whether our limited immunity model would qualify as adequate local regulation. If we want to preserve our ability to craft local legislation, we must be prepared for adoption of new rules before the deadline.

The C4 Committee is charged with coming back with recommendations in December. Although their work might not be completely finished, our Board needs to begin the process of considering their initial recommendations and directing our counsel to craft regulations that would be recognized under the guidelines from the State. This would hopefully be done with the expectation that any interim ordinance the Board adopted would be refined and amended over time once we have an underlying framework in place, and have heard the input of the C4 Committee. Therefore, we recommend that the Board schedule a public hearing to be held at our meeting of December 8, 2015, at 1:30 p.m., to consider an interim ordinance for licensing the commercial cultivation of medical cannabis and to evaluate the future direction of the C4 Committee.

Sincerely,


JOHN LEOPOLD, Supervisor
First District


BRUCE MCPHERSON, Supervisor
Fifth District

JL/BAM:ted

cc: Members, Cannabis Cultivation Choices Committee
Eric Olsen
County Administrative Office

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