

## **Supervisors turn focus to commercial cultivation of recreational marijuana**

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Yolo County supervisors likely will vote next month on an interim ordinance banning commercial cultivation of recreational marijuana, a move that follows voter approval of a statewide measure last month allowing recreational marijuana use.

Proposition 64 legalized recreational pot-smoking among adults and allows individuals to grow up to six marijuana plants indoors for personal use. Left to local governments to decide is whether to allow, limit or ban outdoor cultivation for either personal or commercial purposes.

Local governments would need ordinances in place by January 2018, when the full scope of Proposition 64 is expected to take effect.

Yolo County already has in place an interim ordinance limiting commercial cultivation of medical marijuana to about 100 growers who were grandfathered in when the ordinance banning future commercial cultivators went into effect last month. Those growers are operating pot farms ranging in size from 1,000 to 43,560 square feet.

The interim ordinance also allows individuals to grow medical marijuana for personal use on up to 100 square feet outdoors.

Supervisors moved to enact the ordinance following what some termed a “land rush” as folks interested in growing marijuana commercially began buying up agricultural land in Yolo County to go into business.

Yolo County Agriculture Commissioner John Young requested the interim ordinance to stop the rush while the county continues to hammer out a permanent marijuana ordinance, complete with licensing fees.

That permanent ordinance is still in the works, but Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis requested during Tuesday’s board meeting that staff bring back an interim measure banning commercial cultivation of recreational marijuana.

“My concern is we have prohibited cultivation of medical marijuana in this ordinance with the exception of those we’re grandfathering in,” Provenza said. “As of the date it becomes legal to have cultivation of recreational marijuana; if we do nothing, we will be prohibiting medical marijuana and have no prohibition against recreational marijuana.

“My suggestion (is) that you come back with a ban on non-medical marijuana, not necessarily as a final decision, but that we just create that status quo so going forward ... we will have all options before us.”

From the start, as supervisors have addressed commercial marijuana cultivation, Provenza has been vocal about Yolo County not becoming the “marijuana capital of California.”

He reiterated that concern on Tuesday, saying “I would not want the public to get the impression that because we’ve done this temporary ordinance and we’ve grandfathered in some growers of medical marijuana ... that we’re going full bore on cultivation of marijuana, because we haven’t decided that, and I haven’t decided that.”

While Supervisors Oscar Villegas of West Sacramento and Duane Chamberlain of the rural 5th District expressed support for Provenza’s position, Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis did not.

“I would like (the public) to think that we will not completely move away from the promise and the possibility,” Saylor said.

Saylor noted that there have been estimates that as many as 20,000 jobs could be generated in the six-county Sacramento region as a result of legalized marijuana.

“From my perspective, here in Yolo County, we’ve seen agricultural products shift from one commodity to another ... and I think Yolo County should be open to the possibilities,” Saylor said. “We want to do it smartly, to protect public safety, and I actually think that we can do that.

“I think there will be opportunities with research, with UC Davis located in this region, with the MIND Institute and the medical school, with plant sciences — (with) the constellation of innovation across disciplines that exists for all the industries we have in this region,” he continued.

Provenza countered that “there are so many unintended consequences that we have to take into account and we have a lot of jobs in the agricultural industry, and I would hate to see those jeopardized by expanding too quickly and in too great a manner into cultivation of marijuana.

“I think we have to be very careful about that and that’s why I urge the public not to get their expectations (up) that we’ll become the marijuana-growing capital of the state,” Provenza said.

The board likely will return to the matter in January when staff will bring back an interim ordinance banning commercial cultivation of recreational marijuana.