

RE: Illegal Cannabis

Ag zoning – This should be for real ag areas, not neighborhoods

Dear Supervisors and in particular my representative – Supervisor Susan Hoek,

It is time to really seriously rethink the cannabis business here in Nevada County. It is out of control and we are in danger of greatly affecting the attraction of Nevada County and our way of life here to the detriment of everyone not in the dope business.

We were PROMISED only a few years ago that the county would make lots of money on permits and taxes. We spent at least a million dollars or more on a “set of rules” which, from my observations, were mainly dictated by the Cannabis Alliance. Now, no big surprise, only 2% of our 3500-4000 grows are permitted. This means over 3500 illegal grows. Where is the revenue? Who got rich from this? Certainly not the County of Nevada!

I went to the planning meetings and saw growers in the meetings openly carrying large knives on their belts?!?! I even complained about this to one of the sheriffs in attendance – who simply shrugged. I bet if a few people showed up at your meetings with knives like that openly displayed, one or all of you would demand that the sheriff disarm them at the least.

I live on a short private road in Rough and Ready off Valley Road and in the last few months a number of really large grows have appeared in the area. I have tried to get the sheriff to look at the grows. Several times a couple of years ago I was with the sheriffs (who did respond at that time) and we went to a driveway with a single chain across but easy to walk around and they had to give up and leave – “we can’t go on private property unless we see them breaking the law” – ie more than 6 plants.

It is ridiculous that an illegal grower – with say 20,000-40,000 sq ft of grow on a few acres can put up a really ugly fence and gate and then the police cannot even enter because “we can’t see anything.” In addition, these people do not care one whit for the neighborhood well being or rural quality of life. If we make a code complaint the same issues apply as Mr. Merriman’s office is similarly constrained.

I am distressed by how far this illegality has come. How many brand new full size pickups or fancy beemers do you see on the road paid for with non-taxed, criminal income at our expense. Enough!

Please

1. Change the rules so that enforcement is not based solely on citizen complaints. We can never trust the idea that our names will be "held in confidence" and we know if a trial ever occurs then discovery will override the confidence. Let the sheriff and code compliance actively look for these people. A simple small aircraft flight at greater than 500 ft will easily suffice to identify grows. Google Earth also works for many established grows. You can also buy at very reasonable cost up to date hi res satellite photos.
2. Change the rules so the sheriffs and Mr. Merriman's people can look at a property based on a drone flight OVER the property.
3. Change the rules for "sufficient evidence." We all know that the grow houses (the white or blackout hoop houses) are 99.9% for marijuana, so why even ask? If a sheriff officer can see a grow house this should be plenty of evidence to investigate. If it's only tomatoes no harm done.
4. Make the penalties for continuing non-compliance severe – big fines, possible jail time. Turn them in to the FTB and IRS.
 - a. For multiple evasion of permits - forfeit the property, certainly cut down all the plants and destroy the non-permitted facilities, in addition to criminal penalties.
 - b. If no permit is obtained after the first offense then they should never get a permit – only fines and jail time for being a scoff law.
5. Change the Ag zoning rules – please relook at this. I live in an AG zone (2-5 acres typical) and it is really a neighborhood, not as expensive but nonetheless much like Sunshine Valley, 6B Ranches, and Oak Meadows. Marijuana has changed the area from a neighborhood into a semi-commercial and run down area. The growers have increased the traffic dramatically, the private road is getting lots of wear and the growers refuse to help. No one cares if someone grows tomatoes or a few MJ plants, but hundreds plus the processing houses? Of course we care and of course we are frightened. In the winter a single grow and processing unit uses 400 gallons or more propane a week. The big propane trucks are ruining the roads. Another grow on our same road trucks in water in large 4000 gal trucks! Another one blew up the transformer because 15 KVA was too small! They are all using up our groundwater as well. How can you ask us to conserve water and power when these people pay no attention to actual rules and regulations.

The growers have an "it's illegal but no one cares" mindset so they don't care about their neighbors or Quality of Life in our county.

Supervisor Hall: I strongly support Supervisor Miller - he is on the right track. Go after the illegal grows now! Change the zoning! Supervisor Hall, I understand that marijuana is treated as ag, but seriously, rural neighborhoods were zoned ag so people could raise a few sheep, have a few cows, grow tomatoes, etc. The idea that someone would put up fences and

gates and convert 25-50% of their property to a labor and water intensive, smelly commodity such as marijuana was never contemplated when the original rules were conceived. We will never be the tech center we dreamed of if our primary products are marijuana based and our culture is dominated by the drug culture.

The situation is now changed and it is your duty to respond affirmatively to the new situation on our behalf.

Thanks for your help.

Thomas Wolfe