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CANNABIS: City officials are studying practices

Continued from page 1

Councilor Blum. “I didn’t meet one person resembling Cheech and Chong.”

Ryan remarked on the sophistication of the businesses and the professionalism of the ownership and management.

“There are some very smart business people engaged in this industry, and the progress that has been made is impressive,” Ryan said.

Another consideration that everyone thought important, and that impressed them, was in the area of regulation and compliance.

“The State is doing an amazing job of regulating the marijuana industry,” said Kucera. “I don’t know many businesses that have to work under such strict rules.”

Blum added, “The labs are controlled by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) ... and their equipment is calibrated to the same standards, so there is no ‘shopping around’ for the most favorable lab.” She also explained that the OLCC has a tracking system which follows a marijuana product literally “from seed to sale.”

From a community development perspective, Davenport highlighted the “nearly zero discharges to the sewer system, except for the regular office-employee use at the production facility.”

Both Davenport and

Kucera classified the grow and lab facilities as low- or non-intensive uses. The production businesses do use a substantial amount of electricity for their grow lights but, with new technology and the use of all LED lights, Kucera predicted less impact on power needs in the future. One business uses a lighting manufacturer located in Sisters, Smart Grow Systems. The smell of marijuana can be a concern for a community. However, the odor control systems work very well, according to Davenport and Kucera.

“The grow operation has installed scrubbers in their HVAC system which eliminates odors almost completely. There was no odor detectable when standing outside the facility, and they have received no complaints,” Kucera stated.

Naturally, security is an important factor for these businesses and they adhere to control measures and video surveillance as required by the OLCC.

The production and processing facilities were located in light-industrial areas of Bend, and the lab blended into a commercial district.

“From the outside you would never know what was going on inside the building,” said Kucera.

Blum added, “I was surprised with the way the production/growing and processing operations easily fit into existing light-industrial areas. There were no obvious signs that these businesses were anything different from the plumbing shops, brewers, and

auto shops that surrounded them.”

The three businesses visited last week are all thriving and already in the process of expansion and looking forward to the future.

When queried about why the people who own the facilities in Bend got into the business, Blum said, “The most common reply was that they had a family member with a debilitating issue who had been helped by using marijuana and they felt it should be made available for everyone.”

The two councilors and two City staff all agreed that the tour was well worth the time spent, prior to the Council holding deliberations regarding licensing of marijuana facilities within the city limits.

“ I felt I needed to see, firsthand, what kinds of businesses we would be talking about. – Andrea Blum

“I felt I needed to see, firsthand, what kinds of businesses we would be talking about,” said Blum. “I feel much more informed about the businesses behind the marijuana retail stores and will have a much better understanding of the proposals we are likely to discuss should we agree to have these types of businesses in Sisters.”

Ryan concurred: “The more we understand, the better we will be at making informed decisions.”

Blum plans now to look at the retail side of the business as well, “since that is where most of our community’s concerns have been expressed to me.”

Kucera told *The Nugget*, “The City has lots of discretion in regulating businesses through design standards, location, signage, and hours of operation.”

Davenport suggested Council might want to consider spacing standards or some version of a “cap” on retail concerns. He doesn’t foresee a large influx of applications for grow or processing facilities because “there are so many operations in Bend, and large production sites already in service in the rural county.”

He concluded, “With respect to the operations themselves, personally I don’t have any concerns regarding their impact on the city infrastructure. My main concern is the effect on our community — if the Council allows these operations, that they be allowed in a manner that fits, as best as possible, with our community.”

Ryan concluded by saying, “I think we need to keep an open mind and learn from what has transpired already with neighboring cities and, in the end, recommend what we think would be best for Sisters.”

He believes that Sisters’ unique dependence on tourism must be taken into consideration.



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