

MARIJUANA: Council likely to refer matter to voters

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6:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Resolution 2018-14 would approve referral to the voters of the City the question of allowing marijuana establishments within the city limits. Resolution 2018-15 would refer to voters the question of imposing a 3 percent tax on the sale of marijuana items within the city limits. Both resolutions, if approved, will appear as ballot measures on the November 2018 general election ballot.

Despite the fact that Sisters voters approved State Measure 91 in 2014, making recreational marijuana legal, with a 51-49 percent split in favor, and the measure carried statewide, Mayor Chuck Ryan told Council at their March 14, workshop he thinks lots of things have changed since that vote.

"I think we owe it to the public to put it (allowing marijuana businesses) to a vote," Ryan said in March.

Councilor Andrea Blum suggested at that same meeting, "We need to take the temperature of the community again."

"I always hate it when government makes a decision for the people," said Councilor Richard Esterman. He agreed the people should get to vote. "When this many people show up (indicating a full chamber) we need to vote."

Council President Nancy Connolly countered that she had been out in the community talking to a wide range of citizens. Many of them support allowing marijuana-related businesses in town but they don't attend the public meetings to speak in favor due to the stigma attached to marijuana by some people.

Councilor David Asson did not want to see a vote because the results would be "unpredictable." He would rather have the citizens express their thoughts and feelings thoroughly at that time in public meetings and not wait until November for a vote.

Although voters said yes to recreational marijuana in 2014, they did vote down amending the City code to allow medical marijuana dispensaries, indicating mixed reactions to marijuana in this community. Ballot measure 9-101 was defeated 42.38 percent for medical marijuana dispensaries to 57.62 percent against.

Even though recreational marijuana is legal statewide, the previous Council maintained the status quo

by relying on the wording in the City's business license application to keep marijuana-related businesses from opening in Sisters. The current wording states that no business will be issued a license if what it does is against any local, state, or Federal law. Marijuana is listed as a Schedule 1 drug by the Federal government and therefore, a banned substance.

If Federal law were to change, as things currently stand, Sisters would no longer be able to deny business licenses to marijuana businesses on the grounds of not being federally legal.

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— Richard Esterman

Since the March 2018 meeting, Council, in an attempt to be fully informed, examined current City and state codes as well as proposed bills at both the state and Federal levels regarding marijuana production, processing, sales, and taxation that could impact Sisters' current stance. They have also toured facilities and retail

establishments in other cities to observe and ask questions. And they have heard from their legal counsel regarding appropriate wording of the ballot measures.

If marijuana businesses, in any format, are allowed in the city, the Development Code must be amended to authorize specific marijuana businesses in specific areas. New regulations regarding time, place and manner of sale (TPMs) are currently being created for the Development Code, which would go before the Planning Commission for review and approval and then to the City Council for adoption.

TPMs regulate things such as where retail outlets or growing and processing operations may be located, distance from parks and schools, and which areas or streets of town. They also regulate hours of operation, signage, appearance of storefronts, and elimination of processing and growing odors and waste.

By developing TPMs now, before the November election, should voters approve the ballot measure to allow marijuana businesses in Sisters, the regulations will be in place as of day one. If voters defeat the ballot measure, and at some time in the future the Federal government legalizes marijuana, the regulations will then already be in place.

Former superintendent fired in Albany

Former Sisters Schools Superintendent Jim Golden has been fired from Greater Albany Public Schools, according to a report from the *Albany Democrat-Herald*.

The paper reported that "Members of the Albany School Board voted unanimously in a special meeting Thursday (July 12) to terminate Superintendent Jim Golden's employment contract, based on unspecified charges provided to him in writing on May 21."

The issues surrounding Golden's termination reportedly center around alleged instances of "gross insubordination, neglect of duty and conduct seriously prejudicial to the district."

Golden reportedly vigorously challenged the accusations and *The Democrat-Herald* reports that Golden's attorney has said that he plans to sue for damages.

Links to *Albany Democrat-Herald* coverage of the termination may be found at www.nuggetnews.com.

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