

Commissioners look to change zoning to stop marijuana extraction

Jason McMillen
IVN Contributing Writer

Spring of 2016 the county commissioners decided that processing cannabis, with the intent of extraction, was similar to meat packaging as far as zoning law was concerned and as such was permitted to take place in commercial zones. Previously, extraction was limited to land zoned as farm or industrial. However, Julia Schmelzer, Josephine County’s director of community development, raised concerns that the processing of cannabis would “degrade” commercial areas by reducing the amount of businesses that cater to commercial needs.

“We didn’t want to see our commercial zones become de facto manufacturing areas and be left

with no land or buildings to meet commercial needs,” Schmelzer said. Over a two week period this past month the county has received 14 applications for the establishment of a cannabis processing facility. Seven of these applications were for commercial zones.

However, the commissioners recently have clarified the code via an order which forces cannabis processing facilities in commercial areas into having a retail or service component to their business. Schmelzer added that processors have been receptive to the requirement and some have actually been eager to add such a feature to their establishment. “Requiring the retail or service element meets the intent of the commercial zone and should help retain its character,” Schmelzer said, concluding the topic.

The order that was made by the county commissioners went into effect April 17, 2017.

“We were also concerned about the safety aspect. Because of the gases used in the process, we know that a ‘flash’ can occur, start a fire and even cause death,” Schmelzer said. She further elaborated by saying that these concerns are heightened in commercial zones because the buildings are typically closer to each other, as compared to other zone types, and because population density is higher than farms or industrial areas. Although Josephine County has not experienced, to Schmelzer’s knowledge, an incident with the allegedly dangerous process of cannabis extraction in industrial or commercial areas, Schmelzer said that they have happened elsewhere in the state and in the county.

To address this concern the county began having applicants provide a maintenance plan which detailed how the extractors will keep their equipment up to date as well as functioning safely.

However, once an extracting facility has been issued a Certificate of Compliance the county’s role was typically done unless a complaint was filed. This essentially means that there is nobody responsible for ensuring that the facility’s owners are properly maintaining their equipment or undergoing yearly fire code inspections.

To address this problem, the county is working toward adding additional conditions onto the permit so that if the extractors don’t comply the offense can be treated as a violation and the business could, in some cases, get their permission to operate revoked.

Top poppy award winner



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Saturday, April 22 The American Legion Auxiliary Glenn Morrison Unit 70 President Colleen Bouchard (left) and First Vice Cindy Soria (right) awarded Kynan Nordal (center) 2016 Alumni from I.V. High School for winning the National Poppy Poster Contest. Nordal won the Poppy Poster Class VI and Best Overall Poppy Poster for the 2016 Contest. There are 10 districts and approximately 78 units in the State of Oregon. Nordal is the first National winner from the Illinois Valley.



IVHS golf update:

by Jason McMillen

The golf season for Illinois Valley High School (IVHS) is well underway but, like all outdoor sports this year, has been faced with unusual challenges on account of record rainfall. Further compounding the season’s rocky start, a cold has forced some of the students to miss games. The teams have competed in five matches thus far but have not had a member place yet.

This season, there are two girls and four boys on the teams. Coach Bruce Reese said he is attempting to drum up support among the girls of the school and hopes to get five or six next year to round out the team. According to Reese, the students are getting better daily despite not having as much outdoor practice as would be ideal.

“Practice has been the toughest part,” Reese said before elaborating, “Our course is so wet it’s hard to get out on. Some days, if it’s monsoon like, we stay in the clubhouse and putt—talk about rules and etiquette.” Their latest game, April 26 reportedly had decent conditions, however, for a time during the match, it got to the point where it was raining so hard that the players could hardly see.

So far, the teams have been playing individually but when they go to the district tournament May 8 and 9 they will play collectively as a team.

This is Reese’s first season as the coach for the IVHS golf teams though he has around 25 years of experience teaching other sports. Reese has coached baseball, football, plus basketball and is currently the head football coach for the IVHS team.

Reese has been playing golf recreationally for around 53 years and has participated in tournament style game play in the past though, admittedly, it was more for fun than in the spirit of formal competition. Reese attended high school in Grants Pass and has resided in the Illinois Valley now for about three years. Throughout his life he has lived in several different, and distant, locations.

“Nobody applied for the job so I wanted to make sure the program continued on,” Reese said of his motivations, “so I stepped in and volunteered.”

Although Reese has a lot experience coaching youth he said that, “The experience of coaching has definitely helped but the overall team-sport coaching hasn’t carried over at all. It’s completely different,” Reese concluded.

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