

**Proceedings of the Santa Cruz County  
Cannabis Cultivation Choices Committee (C4)  
Tuesday, September 22, 2015  
Action Summary Minutes**

- I. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. Roll call was deferred to a later time, and when taken, all members were present.
- II. No changes were made to the Agenda.
- III. *Oral Communications* – Staff invited the public to address the Committee for a period of up to three minutes on items not on the agenda.
- IV. *Comments Regarding Compromise Medical Cannabis Legislation:* Staff provided a brief overview of the status of the three bills in the recently passed “Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act” package, and confirmed that the bills’ content had been posted on [www.scc4.us](http://www.scc4.us) with summary highlights. A summary from the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and article from Mother Jones were distributed. Staff will provide additional information upon the Governor’s signature of the legislation. A member of the public provided additional information regarding the status of this Legislation.
- V. *Review of County’s Current Ordinance:* Chief Assistant County Counsel Jason Heath and County Counsel Dana McRae provided the Committee with an overview of the County’s current cultivation ordinance. Following are a few highlights:
  - a. Qualified medical cannabis cultivation is allowed with restrictions
  - b. Commercial cultivation is illegal in Santa Cruz County
  - c. Despite it being illegal, limited immunity from prosecution is provided for based on compliance with a set of regulations
  - d. There is a different set of regulations for a qualified patient grow and a commercial grow, and they are treated differently.
  - e. For commercial grows, there are different amounts of square footage of canopy allowed on different size parcels, with different setbacks from habitable structures, and there is always a limit of a total of 99 plants.
  - f. There is no outdoor commercial cultivation permitted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District, commercial grows cannot be located within the Urban or Rural Services Line, or on parcels that are not in the SU, TP, CA, A, AP, RA zoning districts.
  - g. Gardens cannot be visible from the public right of way, and they must be secured behind a 6’ tall fence with a locked gate
  - h. Businesses must be collectively growing for members or for sale to Santa Cruz County dispensaries, and cannot operate in violation of Title 16.10 and relevant sections of Title 7 related to use of waterThe presentation was followed by a question and answer period.

- VI. *Context for Conversation:* C4's consultant introduced the concepts of getting to the biggest challenges by being courageous about acknowledging "the elephant in the room", ways to creatively use and respond to change, and the concept of triage to identify the issues and needs that require immediate attention, as well as those that will require more time to fully explore. The consultant asked members to pull identifiers from a hat to divide members into small groups for activities and field trips that would be conducted on alternating weeks to Committee meetings, with more information to follow.

*Panel Presentation, Conditions in the Field:* The County's Sr. Civil Engineer in Environmental Planning, the Principal Planner directing Code Compliance, and the CAL FIRE Division Chief/Forester spoke and presented a number of slides to demonstrate environmental degradation at several grow sites (there are an estimated 200 non-compliant sites), and it was explained that mitigation of damage to fragile ecosystems in the Santa Cruz Mountains can take years. The Chief discussed the fire dangers associated with non-permitted installation of electricity, the presence of chemicals and toxic materials, and houses and commercial buildings that have been converted to non-compliant grow sites. The presenters estimated that the amount of time and resources now required to address illegal cannabis cultivation had grown significantly over the last two years.

The Chief compared the current environment of the cannabis industry in the Santa Cruz Mountains to where the logging industry was several decades ago, prior to the current regulatory framework which had emerged to address "bad actors" in forestry practices. The Chief also expressed that the conversion of forest land to cannabis production takes forest land out of its primary role of watershed health and production, lessens the ability to reduce runoff and flooding and improve soil and water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife.

The presentation led to a question and answer period, and a discussion of how to develop a pathway to legitimacy, and provide education and Best Management Practices to those in the industry, and strategies to bridge the gap between those who are complying with the current ordinance and those who are not. Members expressed the importance of understanding the impact of the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act legislation on developing local regulations, the need for more information on the role of certification programs, local demand and production, the allocation of Measure K funds, and a better understanding of the needs of cultivators (high, hot, dry).

- VII. *Prioritization of Community Needs and Issues* – Due to time constraints, this topic was not engaged.

- VIII. *Scheduling and Closing Remarks* – A proposed schedule was distributed that suggested a look at environmental issues over the next two meetings with a discussions of watersheds, BMPs for forest management, information on the impacts of grading and intrusion into riparian areas, followed by sustainable agriculture methods, the organic certification process, resource conservation (energy, water) and the roles and advantages of third party certification. Members expressed a preference for a look at best practices currently deployed by cannabis industry members, and it was agreed by consensus that C4's cannabis industry representatives would pull together a Cannabis 101 presentation for the meeting scheduled for September 29<sup>th</sup>. C4's consultant will rework the proposed schedule of meetings for presentation at the next meeting.
- IX. *Closing* – After thanking Committee members and members of the public for their participation, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:40 p.m.