



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY BOARD WEIGHS CULTIVATION ORDINANCE

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday reviewed a medical cannabis cultivation ordinance that protects the interests and neighbors and patients while providing for a safe, environmentally friendly and transparent industry.

The new ordinance establishes seven classes of licenses based on existing zoning regulations, requires growers to obtain both local and State cultivation licenses, and provides for safety; property setbacks; buffers from schools, parks and libraries; and water and other environmental protections. The proposed ordinance must undergo a full Environmental Impact Review before becoming law.

“The EIR will give us an accurate picture of how this ordinance will impact our County, from neighborhoods to timber production,” Board of Supervisors Chair Bruce McPherson said. “This ordinance is carefully designed to address concerns from all members of the community, and while we have some more miles to travel down this road, I believe we have drafted something that we can all feel good about.”

“We’re at the end of this phase of a very long discussion,” Supervisor John Leopold said. “We’ve taken an extraordinary amount of input from the community, law enforcement, experts on land use and the environment, the cultivation community and more to prepare an ordinance that we think will work for all parties. The EIR will tell us whether we’ve achieved our goals.”

Under the ordinance, qualified medical cannabis patients would be allowed to continue growing cannabis for personal use. Commercial operations would be prohibited in the Coastal Zone plus a one-mile buffer.



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Where allowed, the ordinance limits outdoor cultivation to minimum lot sizes ranging from one acre to 10 acres, depending on the license type. In any case, no cannabis canopy may exceed 22,000 square feet, or less than half the size of a football field.

Cannabis sites must also be set back from public rights of way and neighboring habitable structures, and be no less than 600 feet from any municipal boundary, school, library, alcohol or drug treatment facility or park.

Water must also be derived from approved on-site sources, and the use of generators in all but emergency situations is prohibited. On-site sales and the on-site production of cannabis products such as tinctures, candies, etc. is also prohibited.

The ordinance also requires growers to have been farming cannabis or standard crops since before January 2013, and requires them to register their sites to be eligible to apply for a full license.

As part of the licensing process, growers must provide their name and location, information on prior cannabis-related law enforcement activity at the site, background information as required by the Licensing Official, security plans and more.

Before returning to the Board, the draft ordinance was reviewed by the County's Fire Advisory Commission, Water Advisory Commission, Agricultural Policy Commission, Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Commission on the Environment. It was also reviewed by the State Water Resources Control Board, the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the San Lorenzo Valley Water District.

The registration deadline is Nov. 6. Go to <http://www.santacruzcounty.us/cannabislicensingoffice.aspx> for more.