

Item 16-0209

Board Members, County Employees and Members of the Public,

I am Jim Wassner, your recently retired Sup. Code Enforcement Officer. During my 18 years working in El Dorado County Code Enforcement, I was involved in the prosecution of numerous large commercial marijuana grows in our County. These are not the small "Mom & Pop Grows" that our previous local ordinance was meant to address. I witnessed firsthand the danger that can be caused by unpermitted grading activities, unsafe electrical wiring, and illegal structures that are sometimes associated with these large commercial grows. There is also an environmental concern over the use of herbicides, fertilizers, and poisons used for pest control. Due to the large amount of money that can be made by the growers, we must add the danger of violence due to marijuana cultivation thefts and home invasions. Neighbors also complain of the odor during the grow season that can prevent them from enjoying the use of their property. I think we can all agree that there are many safety issues that we are obligated to address.

While I was in high school, marijuana was easily available to any student that wished to use it. During the last 45 years, our "War on Drugs" does not seem to have had any effect on this availability. A recent survey stated that 23% of 11th graders at a local high school have admitted to using marijuana in the last 30 days. I think we can agree that this issue is not going away, and may get worse in the future with possible legalization in our state.

If we admit that there are inherent dangers associated with large commercial marijuana growing operations, and that these grows are not going to go away, then we have to agree that we must do what we can through a regulation and licensing process to try and mitigate these dangers. I feel the ordinance recently adopted by the City of Sacramento to license and regulate their commercial marijuana growing operations addresses many of the danger issues and is a good place to start. Under their ordinance, commercial marijuana grows can only be done indoors and in commercial zoned districts, with "no exterior evidence of cultivation". Ventilation and filtration systems are required to prevent odors from exiting the building. The operations must obtain a license and also comply with local Building and Fire Codes. Other local jurisdictions such as Sacramento County and the Cities of Elk Grove and Rancho Cordova have enacted similar ordinances.

Thank you for your time.

Jim Wassner

Sup. Code Enforcement Officer, Retired