File #: 19-1754, **Version:** 1

Planning and Building Department recommending the Board approve and authorize the Chair to execute agreement 4314 for the provision of imagery services with Planet Labs, Inc., which will be used for geographic information systems to provide updated satellite imagery of the County for the primary use of identifying illegal cannabis cultivation, in an amount not to exceed $491,827 for the period of three years upon final execution by both parties.

FUNDING: Commercial Cannabis Tax. (General Fund)

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

During cannabis meetings in the County over a three year period, the subject of illegal cannabis grows was a major topic. These grows threaten County neighborhoods by not following health and safety rules. In addition, with the regulated commercial cannabis market coming to El Dorado County, the illegal grows will be undercutting the legal market.

To help combat the illegal cannabis grows in the County, staff have been looking for innovative methods that are not as resource intensive and reach more illegal grows. Currently, Code Enforcement and Sheriff's Office staff take complaint calls on illegal grows, which takes considerable time and resources to verify and complete the investigations. In an effort to find a more efficient and effective method to combat illegal grows, staff in the Chief Administrative Office, Planning and Building Department and Sheriff's Office collaborated by calling other counties to study their operations. Through conversations with other counties, staff was able to identify the high resolution satellite data method that Humboldt County was using to actively identify and monitor permitted and unpermitted cannabis cultivation operations.

Humboldt County has been obtaining satellite data through a contract with a private satellite provider. Humboldt County owns the 70 cm data and imagery collected by the satellite provider. Through the data, it was able to digitize and integrate the information into its Geospatial Information System and create detailed overlays for in depth, near real-time analysis with other digital information such as permit status, building permits, zoning etc. to quickly assess the status and condition of a parcel with a cannabis operation signature. From desktop computers, Humboldt County can identify the existence of unpermitted cannabis operations, generate and send Notices to Abate Nuisance and Notices of Violation in a systematic and deliberate way to reduce the environmental impact through remediation of civil code violations.

Humboldt County found that most counties have code enforcement, and many also permit cannabis cultivation, but they were the first in the country to purchase satellite time to collect data for the specific purpose of identifying and monitoring cannabis cultivation operations on a trans seasonal cadence to determine compliance with existing ordinances. Additionally, using the sensor data and imagery, drastically reduced the time investigators had to spend driving from site to site, while concurrently increasing tenfold the volume of cases that could be processed in the same amount of time and staff. This technology and digital overlay processes from their multiple data sources are also used to monitor the permitted cannabis cultivation operations to facilitate compliance within the

parameters of their permits.

The cost of the imagery is less than two full-time staff and even with two additional staff Humboldt County could not accomplish through traditional code enforcement practices what has been achieved through the new program. While not the objective, the civil fines and pe43141nalties collected from violations also vastly exceeded the cost of the imagery and staff time used to conduct the pilot year. The environmental impact reduction from remediation of hundreds of properties previously in violation is difficult to quantify, but arguably invaluable.

In the pilot year, more than 600 unpermitted cannabis cases were identified and noticed. More than half of those properties were abated or are being remediated through compliance agreements with the property. The total impact is hard to quantify because there are stories of many more cultivators who have stopped illegal cultivation to avoid enforcement action. The reliable and timely data, large area and spatial resolution provided, at the price enabled Humboldt County to meet or exceed the pilot program objectives while providing a viable deterrent to potential violators.

The El Dorado County Procurement and Contracts unit issued the RFP for imagery services on June 25, 2019 and posted it on the County's website until July 17, 2019. Only two proposals were received in response to the RFP. A team including representatives from the following departments were on the evaluation team: Information Technology, Planning and Building, Sheriff's Office, and Surveyor's Office. The team recommended that an Agreement be entered into with Planet Labs, Inc. (for more information please see agenda item 19-1429).

ALTERNATIVES
The Board may choose to deny the Agreement with Planet Labs Inc. If this was to occur then the County would not be able to bring as many illegal cannabis cultivation operations into compliance.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION
N/A

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT
The Sheriff's Office, Information Technology, County Counsel, Chief Administrative Office, and Surveyor's Office.

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS
It is recommended that the Board approve this item.

FINANCIAL IMPACT
There is no change to Net County Cost associated with this item. It is recommended that the Board use funds from the Commercial Cannabis Tax to combat illegal grows in the County. Although Humboldt County was able to cover the costs for the satellite imagery with fines, this is not being budgeted at this time due to the uncertainty of fines.

In the first year of the program, there is a chance that the Commercial Cannabis Tax and the fines might not cover the cost. If this occurs, the General Fund could have to cover some of the costs. However, this will be recovered with the Commercial Cannabis Tax in following year(s).

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT
Infrastructure, Public Safety, and Good Governance

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